

SPECIAL VIEW: AUTUMN LEAVES AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE'S INUI STREET

TAKAYOSHI YAMABE

Inui Street within the Imperial Palace was opened to the public in spring 2014 for viewings every spring and autumn. Many visitors now come to see the palace surrounded by beautiful cherry blossoms or colorful leaves. The autumn public viewing is expected to begin soon. Here is the latest information from the Imperial Household Agency.

INUI Street inside the Imperial Palace was opened to the public in 2014 to celebrate the eightieth birthday of the Emperor. The yearly spring and autumn viewings proved to be wildly popular among visitors. These events happen to match up with the Japanese government's new vision for tourism in Japan, as one of the key policies suggested making more of Japan's most beautiful public institutions open to the public. Since then the Inui Street public viewings have become regular events and even been featured on the news.

Inui Street got its name because it connects the Inui Gate and extends to the Imperial Household Agency building from the northwest, which used to be called "the Inui direction." The Imperial family regularly uses this street, and only a part of it can be seen during standard ceremonies. During the public viewings in spring and autumn, however, visitors can walk from the Sakashita Gate to the Inui Gate while enjoying the wonderful views of the cherry blossoms or autumn foliage. It also presents a rare opportunity to use Inui Street to enter the

East Gardens of the Imperial Palace. Visitors should be aware that during the viewing periods the paths from Sakashita Gate to Inui Gate and from Inui Street to the East Gardens are one way.

According to Hayato Hori, the administrative manager of the Imperial Household Agency, in 2014 the Imperial Palace received 385,060 visitors despite being open only from April 4 to 8. The public viewings were suspended between autumn 2016 and spring 2017 to care for the trees, but reopened between December 2 and 10 and welcomed 226,220 visitors. The palace grounds were opened again in the spring of 2018, and organizers are busy planning this autumn's event. The dates will depend on when the trees begin changing colors. The Imperial Household Agency's website provides the latest information about the public viewings at Inui Street in English.

Since the public viewings are so popular, massive crowds are expected, and it may take over thirty minutes just to cover the 750 meters from the Sakashita Gate to the Inui Gate. Hori advises



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- 1 Fall leaves frame an ancient watchtower and Tokyo's skyscrapers
- 2 The public viewings are always a very popular event
- 3 During the spring, visitors can enjoy the delicate cherry blossoms
- 4 Inui Street tinged with fall colors

checking the website prior to visiting to know what to expect.

For centuries the Japanese people have enjoyed cherry blossoms in the spring and colorful maple leaves in the autumn. During the fall months, many spots known for their Japanese maple trees attract visitors. There are approximately a hundred cherry trees along Inui Street and around seventy maple trees. Hori says visitors will be able to enjoy lovely views this autumn. (The number of trees is based on public information released in 2017.)

Hori shares his recommended sights. “Once you enter the Imperial Palace from the Sakashita Gate, you will be able to step away from the busy city and enter a different world. You will first see the palace on the left-hand side, where ceremonies are held. On your right will be one of the few remaining towers from the former Edo Castle, called Fujimi Yagura. Continue on and you will see the Imperial Household Agency’s office that was constructed over eighty years ago. After

enjoying the views of these historical buildings, you will find the Hasuike Moat next to Inui Street on your right.”

The Inui Gate connects the Hasuike Moat to the Inui Moat. You can see the stone castle walls of the former Edo Castle along the moat, and on the left Fukiage Gyoen garden’s many trees come into view.

“The wonderful array of cherry blossoms, maple trees and pine trees look picture perfect by the traditional Japanese structures,” Hori notes. “Another great spot to view the foliage will be at the Shimo-dokan-bori Moat, where you can see the trees reflected in the water. Depending on the type of maple, the leaves change color at different times. It is an opportunity to capture a seasonal view you can only see for a limited time.”

The Imperial Palace is a wonderful spot to bask in nature within the busy metropolis of Tokyo. The autumn viewing at Inui Street is a rare opportunity to enter and marvel at historical and natural sights in the Imperial Palace. **7**

* Inui Street in the Imperial Palace will be open to the general public from December 1 to December 9, 2018. It is open from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (last entry at 3 p.m.).