

# KENROKUEN

Kanazawa City in Ishikawa Prefecture, facing the Sea of Japan, prospered as a castle town of the Kaga Domain from the late sixteenth century. Kenrokuen, a Japanese garden located in the center of Kanazawa City, is a typical *daimyo* (feudal lord) garden. Constructed around 350 years ago, it is classified as one of the “three outstanding gardens in Japan” and is famous in particular for its snow scenery.

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**K**ENROKUEN is said to date back to 1676, when Maeda Tsunanori, the 5th head of the Maeda family of the Kaga Domain, built a garden in his villa facing Kanazawa Castle. Later, it became the private garden

## *The “Outstanding Garden” of the Kaga Domain*

of successive generations of feudal lords and was maintained and extended according to the tastes of the lords of the time, taking on its present form in around 1863.

In 1985, Kenrokuen was designated as a Special Place of Scenic Beauty by the Japanese government.

Kenrokuen is a *kaiyu*-style garden (a garden with circulating paths) where visitors can take a walk and appreciate the ponds, artificial hills and *ochin* rest houses dotted throughout the vast 114,000 square meter site. The islands situated in the various large ponds represent places said to have been inhabited by hermits, reminding us of the wishes of the feudal lords for the prosperity of their families.


The charms of Kenrokuen can be enjoyed throughout the four seasons. Fragrant plum blossoms in early spring are soon



followed by more than 400 cherry trees coming into bloom. In the early summer, water iris flowers appear, then the fresh greenery of trees and moss, which eventually gives way to the colors of autumn foliage.

Kanazawa is located in a region of Japan that has particularly high snowfall, making the winter scenery of Kenrokuen exceptionally beautiful. In preparation for winter, the gardeners at Kenrokuen continue the custom of attaching *yukitsuri* (conical structures made of poles and ropes) to the trees to protect the branches from heavy snowfall. For example, the *yukitsuri* for the 10-meter-high Karasaki Pine Tree, said to have been planted in the first half of the nineteenth century, consists of some 800 ropes hung in a conical formation from which branches are suspended on five poles. When it snows, the snow piles up on the ropes, creating an impression of a modern art sculpture. On occasions in the winter, the trees are illuminated at night, creating a dreamy scene resembling a row of giant Christmas trees. The view from close to the

two-legged Kotoji-toro (a stone lantern), one of the most well-known symbols of Kenrokuen, is magnificent.

The *yukitsuri* are removed in the middle of March, signaling the welcome arrival of spring following the bitterly cold Kanazawa winter. 



View over the Kasumiga-ike Pond in winter (night and day), with the Kotoji-toro (a stone lantern) in the foreground and *yukitsuri* in the background

