

Kiyomizudera ("Pure Water Temple") is one of the most celebrated temples of Japan. It was founded in 780 and remains associated with the Hosso sect, one of the oldest sects within Japanese Buddhism.

In 1994, the temple was added to the list of UNESCO world heritage sites. Kiyomizudera stands in the wooded hills of eastern Kyoto and offers visitors a fantastic view of the city from its famous wooden terrace. Below the terrace runs the spring water from which the temple's name originated. The spring water is said to contain healing powers and actually has a unique taste to it as well.

Behind Kiyomizudera's main hall stands Jishu Shrine, a shrine dedicated to the deity of love. In front of the shrine are two rocks, placed several meters apart from each other. If you manage to successfully walk from one rock to the other with your eyes closed, it is said that you will have much luck in your love life.

Part of the fun of visiting Kiyomizudera is the approach to the temple along the steep and busy lanes of the atmospheric Higashiyama district. Unless you're heading there exceptionally early in the morning, be prepared for the hordes of people.

## Western Kyoto

Katsura Imperial Villa (Katsura Rikyu) is one of the finest examples of purely Japanese architecture and garden design. Completed in 1645, the present form of the villa and garden in was meant to be the residence for the Katsura Family (members of Japan's Imperial Family). The actual villa is located in western Kyoto and is accessible either via subway, bus or even walking distance from bus stops.

The villa can be viewed only on tours held by the Imperial Household Agency. Several tours are held daily on weekdays and on some Saturdays. They last about one hour and are held in Japanese only. However, a permission to visit the villa has to be obtained in advance, at the office of the Imperial Household Agency situated next to Kyoto Imperial Palace, and do remember to bring your passport.

## Memoirs of a Geisha

Now who could have missed 'Memoirs of a Geisha' on the big screen? Kyoto is THE setting for this box office hit. Situated in Eastern Kyoto, Gion is Kyoto's most famous geisha district.

To truly experience traditional Gion, don't just stand there and gawk. Head on out, stroll along the Hanami-koji, a street that is lined with beautiful historic old buildings, teahouses and restaurants. Take a step back in time as life slows down for you to really take in the sights. And, although they say that what happens in the movies will never happen in real life, you might actually be able to spot an apprentice geisha, out making her customary visits in the evenings. In addition, the Yasaka Shrine and the Minamiza kabuki theater are some of Gion's other attractions that you could visit.

After you manage to extract yourself out from the mesmerizing glances of the geisha, you might want to head down to the Path of Philosophy, a place famous for its alluring and beautiful cherry blossoms. Do take note that this breathtaking scene is only available in summer.

Kyoto's seasonal change of scenery makes it an all-year prime tourist location. Let's say it altogether now – Banzai Kyoto!

## Key Kyoto Attractions at a Glance

### CENTRAL KYOTO

<b>Kyoto Imperial Palace</b>	The emperor's residence until 1868
<b>Nijo Castle</b>	Kyoto residence of the Tokugawa shogun
<b>Nijo Jinya</b>	Former inn for visiting feudal lords
<b>Toji</b>	Temple with Japan's tallest pagoda
<b>Honganji</b>	Head temple of the Shin-Jodo Sect
<b>Pontocho</b>	Narrow lane that has Kyoto-style nightlife
<b>Nishiki Market</b>	Colourful fresh food market
<b>Kyoto Station</b>	Kyoto's futuristic station building

### EASTERN KYOTO

<b>Sanjusangendo</b>	Hall exhibiting 1001 Kannon statues
<b>Kiyomizudera</b>	Temple famous for its large terrace
<b>Kodaiji</b>	Temple built in memory of Toyotomi Hideyoshi
<b>Gion</b>	Kyoto's most famous geisha district
<b>Yasaka Shrine</b>	Shrine famous for its Gion Festival
<b>Chionin</b>	Head temple of the Jodo sect of Buddhism
<b>Heian Shrine</b>	Shrine in form of the ancient Imperial Palace
<b>Nanzenji</b>	Zen temple with a beautiful stone garden
<b>Path of Philosophy</b>	Walking trail famous for its cherry blossoms
<b>Ginkakuji</b>	Silver Pavilion – not real silver

### NORTHERN KYOTO

<b>Kinkakuji</b>	Golden Pavilion which is covered with real gold
<b>Ryoanji</b>	Zen Temple most famous for its rock garden
<b>Ninnaji</b>	Former imperial residence turned into a temple
<b>Daitokuji</b>	Large complex of zen temples
<b>Toei Eigamura</b>	Theme park and film set combined
<b>Enryakuji</b>	Head temple of the Tendai sect
<b>Ohara</b>	Rural area famous for the Sanzenin temple
<b>Kurama</b>	Rural town with temple and hot spring

### WESTERN KYOTO

<b>Arashiyama</b>	Scenic city area famous for the Togetsukyo Bridge
<b>Tenryuji</b>	Temple in the Arashiyama area
<b>Katsura Villa</b>	Extremely beautiful imperial villa

### SOUTHERN KYOTO AND UJI

<b>Fushimi Inari Shring</b>	The ultimate torii experience
<b>Tofukuji</b>	Temple with spectacular autumn leaves
<b>Daigoji</b>	Famous temple in the southeast of Kyoto
<b>Byodoin</b>	Temple with a beautiful Pure Land Garden
<b>Mampukuji</b>	Headquarters of the Zen Obaku sect