

Autumn: the Warmest Time of Year

Hot reds, burnt oranges and fiery yellows. The turning of the leaves in Japan, or the time of *koyo*, is to autumn what cherry blossoms are to spring.

One of the most popular places to admire this seasonal transformation is the Tokyo Metropolitan Government managed Rikugien Gardens, set in a quiet residential neighborhood in northern Tokyo. Established in 1702 during the Edo period, the name Rikugien is derived from the six classifications of *waka* poetry. Within the garden's nine hectares are different areas, which together, reflect a total of 88 scenes from *waka* poems.

Ask any local, and they'll tell you that Rikugien Gardens is one of the city's most beautiful gardens at any time of the year. It's a visit during the time of

koyo, though, that really warms Japanese hearts. In autumn, a wander among the *momiji* (maple trees), over the iconic Togetsukyo footbridge and to the Fukiage-chaya teahouse for a traditional green tea, will almost have you believing that the Edo period never quite ended.

Rikugien Gardens is open nearly every day of the year. The autumnal colors can also be explored after dark from mid November to early December, when the gardens are illuminated with special lighting. A night-time stroll amid the lit-up colors adds a modern feel to this historical landscape.

Autumn is the perfect time of year to visit Tokyo if you wish to experience one of the city's spectacular natural displays.

Rikugien Gardens is one of many historic gardens and parks in Tokyo.



Kyu-Iwasaki-tei Gardens combines eastern and western architectural styles.



Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens is also renowned for its autumnal colors.