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AUGUST 16, 2022

Roku Kyoto Honors the Simplicity of Japanese Craftsmanship

Artistic touches characterize the luxury hotel in Kyoto's Takagamine Mountains

Words by: Joann Plockova • Photos by Ben Richards



Light woods, vertical pillars, and external walkways are all connected by reflective pools and gardens at Roku Kyoto

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WORDS BY: JOANN PLOCKOVA • PHOTOS BY BEN RICHARDS

ARCHITECTURE Tokyu Architect & Engineers

INTERIOR DESIGN Blink Design Group

OWNERSHIP Tokyu Land Corporation

OPERATOR Hilton

CONSULTANTS Takenaka Corporation (contractor), WorkTecht (lighting), + 10 Landscape Associates (landscape)

In the foothills of the Takagamine Mountains on the banks of the Tenjin River, [Roku Kyoto](#), Hilton's first LXR Hotels & Resorts property in Asia Pacific, is surrounded by verdant hillsides and bamboo groves. Located just north of Kyoto, the scenic surroundings were once home to a renowned artist colony, where Hon'ami Koetsu, one of Japan's most influential artists, founded the legendary Rinpa school of painting. The 114-room new-build hotel, which includes a signature restaurant, spa, and outdoor thermal pool, pays homage to this artistic legacy by embracing craftsmanship, simplicity, and the landscape that inspired it.

“By taking a minimalist approach to the design, including honest materials and simple lines, we sought to highlight the essence of the local culture and the beauty of the natural landscape,” says Clint Nagata, founder and director of Singapore-based [Blink Design Group](#), which designed the property. “This allows guests to reconnect with the environment and the deeper spirit of Kyoto, through the inspiration of local artists and artisans who once inhabited the area.”

Light woods and a color palette of warm earthy tones blend indoors with out, as do panoramic windows that frame the view. Tall pitched ceilings, inspired by Kyoto's historical architecture, bring in tranquil breezes and natural light.



The public space nods to Kyoto architecture with high-pitched ceilings, while the reception desk is backed by a bespoke wall made from a Japanese lacquer called urushi

To reflect the various artisanal elements of the Kyoto region and to honor the Rinpa movement through its use of materials, every area of the hotel has its own theme of craftsmanship, Nagata says. The lobby and tea lounge showcase traditional lacquerware, while the spa features bamboo-shaped ceramics, including a bespoke wall made from Japanese tiles baked in a kiln tunnel for more than 24 hours. Reflecting Kyoto's shrines, Tenji restaurant features a bar with blue-rusted copper wine shelves, terrace dining alongside the river, and bamboo weave-patterned screens—a recurring motif throughout.

Japanese culture is also celebrated in the guestrooms and suites. Here, custom designed tea cabinets and open concept bathtubs allow guests to soak up Japanese “ofuro” culture (a ritualistic bathing experience). Further, authentic “karakami,” woodblocks printed on washi paper, are showcased on wallcoverings and ceilings, where a wooden lattice frame evokes the ambiance of the “minka”—the traditional Japanese home. In the suites, Nishijin Kimono fabric is used for the impressive headboards.

“While it is easy for the eye to be attracted to the many beautiful visual elements, the biggest impact is how the resort makes you feel,” says Nagata. “Amid the breathtakingly scenic Takagamine mountains, and divided by the eternal flow of the Tenjin River, this luxury resort feels like a haven of tranquility and creativity.”



The Roku spa reception area boasts a ceramic wall made from Japanese tiles baked in a kiln tunnel for more than 24 hours

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