

# Tatler Homes

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harmony, cultivate  
balance, and evoke calm



# KYOTO'S NEW OLD

Modern teahouses, craft shops, Japan's first Six Senses, art exhibitions—here is what to check out on your next trip to Japan's cultural capital

By Luo Jingmei

With 17 Unesco World Heritage Sites, over 2,000 shrines and temples, soaring mountains, preserved ryokans, the most famous zen gardens, abundant artisanal craftworks and geishas in colourful kimonos flitting about on stone-paved streets, Kyoto has long been a popular destination among those seeking the essence of traditional Japanese culture.

But Kyoto is also a place for reinvention through modern Japanese teahouses, experimental design and creative culinary culture. We bring you a list of very old-meets-new for your next trip to one of the world's favourite cities.



## OGATA AT THE SHINMONZEN

The newly opened Ogata at The Shinmonzen is housed in a Tadao Ando-designed hotel along the Shirakawa River in the historic Gion district. Shinichiro Ogata, founder of Tokyo-based creative studio Simplicity, conceived the brand and also designed this store using Isahaya stone. The stone is sourced from Kyushu prefecture, whose history of importing tea from the end of the Edo Period to the Meiji Period enriches the narrative.

The store is divided into two sections. One sells teas from the brand's signature T Collection and *wagashi*. The flavours of the teas are truly special; for example, No.1 blends sencha, yuzu peel and *kuromoji* twigs, while No. 10 is a decaffeinated blend of Japanese medicinal herbs such as persimmon leaf and *dokudami* with barley, corn and black soya beans. The other section displays an assortment of elevated household crafts and Yoka, Ogata's unique line of fragrances.



## KYO AMAHARE

Located in a 130-year-old *machiya* (traditional Japanese wooden townhouses that functioned as both a residence and a place of business, similar to Singapore's shophouses), Kyo Amahare showcases crafts and art from all over Japan. The first floor sells craftworks like plates from Kasumi, coloured glassware from Dan Glass and cutlery by Yuichi Takemata, while the second floor has art and furniture, such as *washi* artworks by Wataru Hatano and ceramics by Shingo Oka.

In the spring of 2024, a teahouse opened on the ground floor. Here, guests can experience "*Iu/kyo*" (Kyo Amahare's concept of "being with the rain"), with views of internal gardens. Enjoy tea and Japanese confectionery on exquisite tableware that can be purchased from the shop. The teahouse is a collaboration with a tea master from Fukuoka's Man Yorozu tea and sake brewery, Tokubuchi Suguru, while the sweets are made by famous confectionery master Tomonari Kombu.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LUO JINGMEI (KAWA KANUIRO'S HOUSE), MITSUYUKI NAKAJIMA (COMMUNITY STORE TO SEE) AND COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE ESTABLISHMENTS



### SIX SENSES KYOTO

Japan welcomed its first Six Senses property in April 2024. Designed by Singapore-based Blink Design Group, Six Senses Kyoto offers a comprehensive restorative experience within the Higashiyama district. The entrance is discreet, but inside, a courtyard brings landscaped views and light into the blockish plan. An abundance of Japanese crafts and art as well as references to Japanese folklore lend texture and a sense of playfulness.

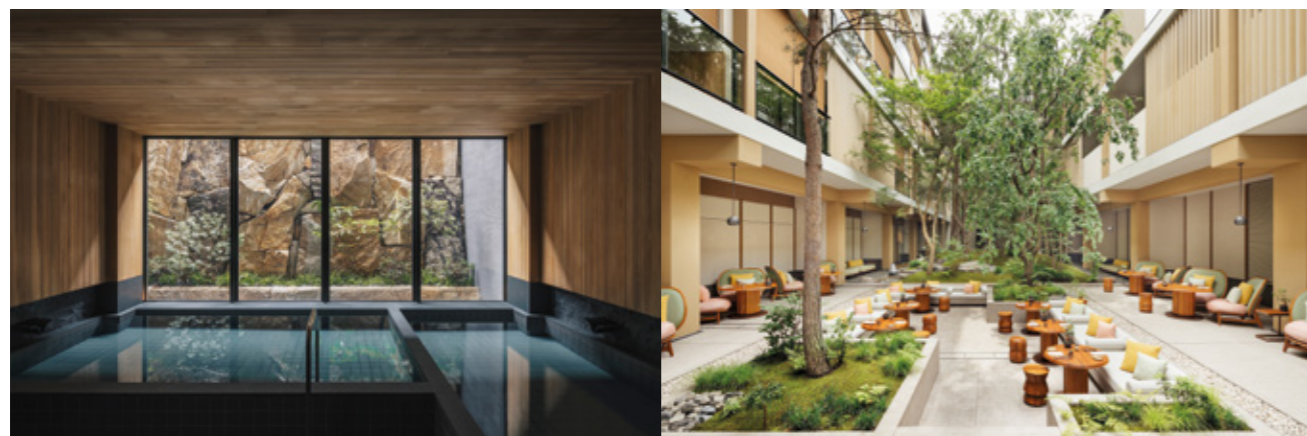
This being a Six Senses hotel, wellness comes first. Guests should set aside extra time for a mind and body reset at the spa and wellness facility featuring a Recovery Lounge with bio-hacking devices, a dedicated *watsu* pool and Kyoto-only treatments involving the concept of *sekk*, inspired by Japan's 24 micro seasons. Gender-separated bathhouses and saunas let guests relax at their own leisure.



### KAWAI KANJIRO'S HOUSE

The former home of the late Kawai Kanjiro (1890-1996) in Higashiyama is worth a trip to. Kanjiro was a celebrated ceramicist and regarded as a master of glazes from the Mingei folk craft movement. In the house he designed and lived in during the 1930s are many of the wooden furniture, pottery and art he made, alongside pieces by folk-craft contemporaries such as Soetsu Yanagi and Tatsuzaki Kuroda, anonymous found objects from around Asia and Western-style furniture.

Japanese *shoji* screens soften the light in the rooms; some are lined with *tatami* mats and others with aged timber floors. Paper lamps hang from time-worn beams that, along with the robust columns, clearly express the house's structural logic. In the rear are Kanjiro's studio space and *noborigama* (ascending kiln). He had actually bought the land for the eight-chamber kiln that he shared with other families in the neighbourhood until it was closed.



### ACE HOTEL KYOTO ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Since it opened in 2020, Ace Hotel Kyoto has been the place in town for the cool set. Housed in Shinpuhan complex on Karasuma Street and incorporating a 1920s structure that once housed the historical Kyoto Central Telephone Office, it features the winning aesthetic touches of Kengo Kuma and LA's Commune Design.

Aside from its creative architecture and design, the Ace Hotel brand also has an Artist in Residence (AIR) programme that has hosted close to 400 creative types over the past decade across its properties. For Ace Hotel Kyoto, Massachusetts-based watercolourist, painter and zine-maker Emma Kohlmann was November 2024's candidate, and the results of her residency will be showcased at the hotel from December 2024 to February 2025. After visiting Kohlmann's exhibition, head to Piopiko in the hotel for tacos and DJ-spun music.



### ARASHIYAMA HOUSE MAMA

Arashiyama is just 30 minutes from Kyoto Station, but it offers much respite with the Katsura River, Arashiyama Mountains and picturesque bamboo forests. A good base for visiting these sights is Arashiyama House Mama. Kyoto-based design and management company Day Inc. turned a former resort facility for Hankyu Railway employees and their families into a modern, 10-room hotel.

The "Mama" in the name comes from the phrase "*sonomama arinomama*" ("as it is" in Japanese), reflecting the hotel's ambition to capture the original spirit of the building and place, as well as to welcome guests to come as they are. Each room is adorned with handcrafted furniture by Kyoto artisans and stone baths looking into private gardens. Head to the buzzy in-hotel restaurant, which delights with inventive pizza flavours such as *shiso*-based creation topped with *kujo* spring onions and baby sardines.



### FUKUDA ART MUSEUM

Located in Arashiyama, Fukuda Art Museum showcases the collection of Kyoto-born entrepreneur and art collector Yoshitaka Fukuda. It comprises some 2,000 works by major artists from the Edo Period to the modern era; some of these have rarely or never been shown before. There is a special emphasis on pieces from Kyoto's known painters such as Kono Bairei and Ito Jakuchu, which provide a history lesson on the nature, culture and imaginations of the Japanese people throughout the ages.

Designed by Yasuda Atelier, the museum was built upon *machiya* architectural concepts. There is a large reflecting pond (or "water mirror"), galleries inspired by traditional storehouses and a glass wall with a wickerwork pattern, as well as a cafe with views of Togetsukyo Bridge. A new exhibition starting 1 February 2025 will showcase the works of Kai Higashiyama and paintings by overseas artists such as Monet and Corot, who influenced modern Japanese painters.

### COMMUNITY STORE TO SEE

Rie Maetani opened Community Store To See with her Kyoto-born husband, Mitsuyuki Nakajima. Maetani is an editor for various culture, music and fashion magazines, while Nakajima is a photographer focusing on art and artists, traditional crafts, as well as architecture and design for magazines. The store was opened to be a place for gathering and interaction, grounded on the connections, knowledge and experiences of the couple through their work.

There are products from artists and designers both in and outside Kyoto, such as Ryo Kodomari, Tetsuya Ozawa and Hiroki Miura. Many of them straddle the fields of design and art, and employ a variety of materials and techniques. "Perhaps, it is because we prefer a slightly experimental or playful style to the more orthodox creations and artists," states Maetani. The second floor houses exhibitions and pop-ups.



### FREITAG STORE KYOTO

Designed by Torafu Architects, the Freitag Kyoto store is a delightful *wabi sabi*-meets-modern space in the city. The bare concrete columns and steel skeleton reflect the ethos of the brand from Switzerland, whose popular bags and accessories are made from common materials used for transportation such as recycled truck tarpaulin sheets, bicycle inner tubes and used car seat belts.

The aesthetic mimics Freitag's logistics warehouse at its Zurich headquarters. Hazard lines painted on surfaces and a full-sized truck drawing on an exterior wall are tongue-in-cheek references to the brand story. Also in the shop is a workstation at which customers can have a go at using tarpaulin offcuts to customise small accessories.

