

Discover Your Favorite Giant Trees!

Hongo and Koishikawa, Tokyo

Tokyo's Giant Trees that Survived the War

Strolling around the Hongo and Koishikawa area



The Hongo and Koishikawa in Bunkyo-ku area has a lot to offer people visiting here, with a complex terrain of plateaus and lowlands. There are lush green gardens spread around, making use of many sloped pathways and green areas, as well as natural water springs.

Since the Meiji period, large old samurai residences on plateaus have been utilized as universities, parks, and land for public use, and many schools have been established in this area.

During the Pacific War, a large part of Bunkyo-ku was burned down by several air raids, but some areas including Nezu, Yayoi, Nishikata, and Hongo managed to escape from being damaged. These are also known as places that are linked to many writers and cultural figures.

Here is a course to stroll around the Hongo and Koishikawa area loved by writers, visiting giant trees that survived the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Great Tokyo Air Raids, escaped being cut down during redevelopment, and can still be seen living among the buildings.



A row of ginkgo trees at the Hongo Campus of the University of Tokyo in autumn

[Access]

•Train: "Myogadani Station", Tokyo Metro Marunouchi Line
This course will start from the station's Exit 1.

1 A precious old tree enjoying peace Ginkgo tree at Koenji Temple (*Ginkgo biloba*)

This was thought to be the biggest ginkgo tree in Japan before the war. However, it lost this status because the top part of the tree had been burned by the Great Tokyo Air Raids and the inside of the trunk had become hollow.

Despite the tree being burned and carbonized, it currently has basal shoots growing up with lush green leaves. This ginkgo is located in the yard of a kindergarten, surrounded by children's lively voices, reminding us of how important it is to have peaceful ordinary days.



[Trunk girth] 740 cm [Height] 6 m

[Est. age] 1,000 years (according to oral tradition)

*Please refrain from visiting on weekdays as this is an active kindergarten. Visiting the giant tree is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays only.

4 Growing up strong and healthy right next to a building Camphor tree in Hongo Yumicho (*Cinnamomum camphora*)

This Camphor tree, although growing right beside a building, is surprisingly growing tall, strong, and healthy. In the past, the name of this area was "Yumicho", which is the reason why this tree has been called "Camphor tree in Hongo Yumicho".

Ryotaro Shiba, a writer, wrote about the history of this tree and its impression on him in one of his essays "On the Highways: Hongo Area (Kaido wo Yuku: Hongo Kaiwai)", stating that this tree, albeit a single tree, gives us the impression that there is a forest in front of us.



[Trunk girth] 850 cm (at the height of approx. 1.5m above ground level)
[Height] 20 m [Est. age] 600 years

*Preservation status : Protected tree designated by Bunkyo-ku

2 Watching over the area since the Edo period Muku tree at Zenkoji Hill Road (*Aphananthe aspera*)

The top part of the tree was burned by the Great Tokyo Air Raids, and about 2/3 of the trunk was cut down between 1955 and 1964, but it still keeps growing very well.

Rohan Koda, one of the writers representing modern Japanese literature, settled down here in 1927 and lived in this location until he evacuated to a safer place to avoid disturbances from the war. After the war, Aya Koda, a daughter of Rohan, lived here, and Tama Aoki, a granddaughter of Rohan, talked about the memory of this Muku tree in her essay titled "Muku Tree (Mukunoki)".



[Trunk girth] 500 cm [Height] 13 m

[Est. age] 400 years

*Preservation status : Natural Monuments of Bunkyo-ku

5 Visiting trees devastated by fire in the birthplace of modern education Chinese pistache at Yushima Seido (*Pistacia chinensis*)

It is said that Kainoki, the Japanese name for the Chinese pistache, is the origin of the Japanese word Kaisho, which is a block style of writing Chinese characters resembling the regular and tidy way branches and leaves of the Chinese pistache. Also, more than a dozen ginkgo trees can be found here in front of the Shrine of Shinno. Although these ginkgo trees were devastated by a fire that happened after the earthquake disaster and parts of the trees were carbonized, they are still powerfully thriving. Access to these ginkgo trees is only permitted once a year at the Shinno Festival.



[Trunk girth] 220 cm [Height] 14 m [Est. age] Unknown

*Chinese pistache is also known as Ranshinboku in Japanese.

3 Giant trees at the Hongo Campus of the University of Tokyo Japanese chinquapin trees in front of Akamon (Red gate) (*Castanopsis sieboldii*)

There are many ginkgo, Japanese zelkova, and camphor trees planted at the Hongo Campus of the University of Tokyo, but it is believed that the Hongo Plateau used to be a forest of Chinquapin trees, a type of evergreen tree. The Japanese chinquapin trees growing on both sides of the famous Akamon (Red gate) are especially picturesque. In addition to these, you can find other giant trees at this campus, including a camphor tree (trunk girth 399 cm) in front of Yasuda Auditorium and a ginkgo tree (trunk girth 497 cm) in front of the Faculty of Engineering Building 1 of the university.



[Trunk girth] Unknown [Height] 11 m

[Est. age] 90 years or older

*Access to the Hongo Campus could be restricted to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Survey on Giant Trees

The Ministry of the Environment has been conducting "the Survey on Giant Trees" since 1988 as a part of the Survey on Natural Environment. It targets trees whose trunk girth is 300 cm or more at the height of 130 cm above ground level.

For information on giant trees, please check out "the Giant Trees Database".
<https://kyoju.biodic.go.jp/>
(Japanese only)



The National Association of the Forest and Big Tree

If you are interested in giant trees and forests, check out "the National Association of the Forest and Big Tree"! The association carries out activities related to giant trees and forests, such as holding observation meetings focused on giant trees and forests, publishing the newsletter "The Forest and Big Tree" and organizing "the National Forum on Giant Trees".
<http://www.kyoju.com/>
(Japanese only)



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Required time:
2hour walk (4 km)

1 Ginkgo tree at Koenji Temple

10 min. walk (650 m)

2 Muku tree at Zenkoji Hill Road

25 min. walk (1.5 km)

3 Japanese chinquapin trees in front of Akamon

12 min. walk (750 m)

4 Camphor tree in Hongo Yumicho

20 min. walk (1.2 km)

5 Chinese pistache at Yushima seido

A Park Worth Visiting for a Stroll-around Senshunen

This park is 5 minutes' walk northeast from Myogadani Station on the Tokyo Metro Marunouchi Line. You will be surprised at seeing such a pleasant green space remains, within just a few minutes' walk from the station. Big trees including ginkgoes are growing around a pond with an island, which creates a calm atmosphere. There is a little notice board saying "Ms. Aya Koda, a writer, planted trees that produce birds' favorite fruits. Please take care of them." This park is an urban oasis that helps people feel comfortable and relaxed while listening to birds singing.



[Address]
3-29 Otsuka, Bunkyo-ku



Champion of the West #1



Champion of the East #2

4 Growing up strong and healthy right next to a building
Camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora) in Hongo Yumicho

Trunk girth 850 cm (at the height of approx. 1.5m above ground level)
Height 20 m Est.age 600 years
Address 1-28-32 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku
*Preservation status : Protected tree designated by Bunkyo-ku

1 A precious old tree enjoying peace
Ginkgo tree (Ginkgo biloba), at Koenji Temple

Trunk girth 740 cm Height 6 m
Est.age 1,000 years (according to oral tradition)
Address Meisho Kindergarten, Koenji Temple, 4-12-8 Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku

*Please refrain from visiting on weekdays as this is an active kindergarten. Visiting the giant tree is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays only.

2 Watching over the area since the Edo period
Muku tree (Aphananthe aspera) at Zenkoji Hill Road

Trunk girth 500 cm Height 13 m
Est.age 400 years
Address Pocket Park, 3-18 Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku
*Preservation status : Natural Monuments of Bunkyo-ku

5 Visiting trees devastated by fire in the birthplace of modern education
Chinese pistache (Pistacia chinensis) at Yushima Seido

Trunk girth 220 cm Height 14 m
Est.age Unknown
Address 1-4-25 Yushima, Bunkyo-ku
*Chinese pistache is also known as Ranshinboku in Japanese.

Let's take a look at how the giant trees looked before the war.

*1 "Tokyo City Photograph Album of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments Vol. 1" (issued in 1922)
*2 "Tokyo City Photograph Album of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments Vol. 2" (issued in 1923)
Photos provided from "Trees in Bunkyo - Now and Past - Pictorial Record of Exhibition" / Bunkyo Museum