

Basho and the Narrow Road to the Deep North

Accompanied by his disciple Sora, Matsuo Basho set off on his *Oku no Hosomichi* ("Narrow Road to the Deep North") journey in 1689 at the age of 46. He left Edo (present-day Tokyo) on May 16, passing through the Tohoku region and completing his 2400 km journey on October 4 when he arrived in the Ogaki region of Mino province (present-day Ogaki city, Gifu prefecture) after over three months of travelling.

During this journey, Basho came to the Yamadera district of Yamagata on July 13. Arriving in the early evening, he climbed the mountain path to Risshakuji Temple that same day. After spending the night in Yamadera, he set off for Oishida the next day. He later composed his famous "cicada haiku" which was based on the impressions he formed during his visit to Yamadera: "*shizukasa ya / iwa ni shimiiru / semi no koe*" (such stillness / sinking into the rocks / the cries of cicadas). He also composed many other famous haiku during this journey, including: "*samidare wo / atsumete hayashi / mogami gawa*" (gathering the rains of early summer / how swift it is – / Mogami River), and "*araumi ya / sado ni yokotau / amanogawa*" (the rough seas / stretching over to Sado / the Milky Way).

Throughout his lifetime, Basho sought to raise the level of haiku poems, and he is considered to have elevated the haiku to the level of an art form through his journey to the Deep North.

Haiku and Japanese "rhythm"

Haiku poems follow a 5-7-5 syllable pattern which comes from the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern of tanka poems, and which is considered an important rhythm in Japanese poetry. Haiku are also distinguished by their use of *kigo*, or seasonal references. Haiku (or "hokku") were traditionally the opening stanza of "linked poems" which were composed by multiple poets, but around the time of Basho, they came to be composed as independent poems.

山寺芭蕉記念館 Yamadera Basho Memorial Museum



Yamadera Basho Memorial Museum

Hours 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Closed December 29 - January 3
(The museum is occasionally closed for exhibition changes or other reasons. Please telephone for details.)

Admission fees Adults - 400 yen / Groups of 20 or more - 320 yen
(High school students and younger – free)



[Access] JR Senzan Line Sendai Station $\xrightarrow{(45-75 \text{ min})}$ Yamadera Station $\xrightarrow{(8 \text{ min walk})}$ Basho Museum
Yamagata Station $\xrightarrow{(15-20 \text{ min})}$ Yamadera Station $\xrightarrow{(8 \text{ min walk})}$ Basho Museum
Bus (Yamako) Bus for "Yamadera (Basho Kinenkan Mae)"
Yamagata Station bus stop $\xrightarrow{(45 \text{ min})}$ Basho Kinenkan Mae bus stop
Yamagata Expressway Yamagata Kita Interchange $\xrightarrow{(25 \text{ min})}$ Basho Museum

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<http://www.city.yamagata.yamagata.jp/yamadera-basho/>

Seasonal Views



Risshakuji Temple

Risshakuji Temple, a branch temple of Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei, is said to have been founded in 860 by Ennin, a famous priest of the Tendai sect of Buddhism. Risshakuji is in fact a temple complex which begins 180 meters from the foot of a mountain and stretches up to its summit, with numerous temple buildings scattered among the large and dramatically-shaped rocks which can be found along the mountainside. Risshakuji is familiarly referred to as "Yamadera" (literally, "mountain temple"), and the Risshakuji mountainside offers beautiful views in all four seasons.

Yamadera Basho Memorial Museum

The Yamadera Basho Memorial Museum opened in 1989. The museum collects and displays the works of the haiku poet Matsuo Basho and his disciples, and the museum collection also includes modern and contemporary haiku materials and artworks such as paintings of the Edo period. Study rooms are available for rental, and visitors may enjoy fresh matcha green tea in a traditional tea ceremony room for a small fee.



Basho-do tea room



Study room 2



Kanpo-tei (large tatami room)



Exhibition room

Monument inscribed with a writing by Edwin O. Reischauer, former U.S. ambassador to Japan

The American scholar Dr. Edwin O. Reischauer (1910-1990) was one of the world's foremost experts on Japan, and during his time as a diplomat he also played a positive role in U.S.-Japan relations. Among his many books and articles on Japan is a writing in which Dr. Reischauer speaks of his admiration for Yamagata and hopes for its future. To preserve his eloquent words for future generations, this writing has been inscribed onto a commemorative monument.



Yamagata – The Other Side of the Mountain

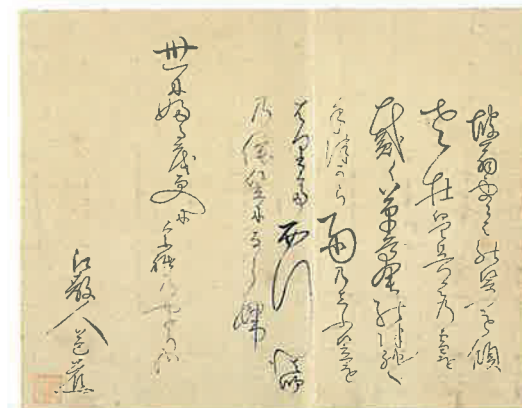
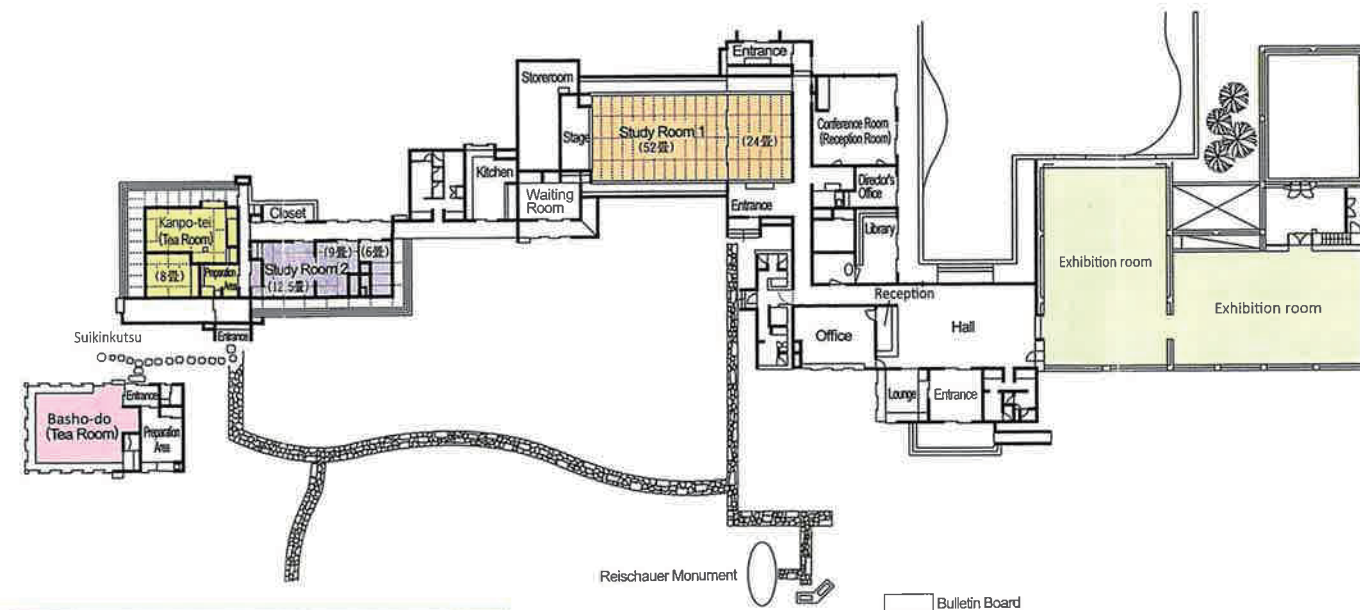
“It is a beautiful land, reminiscent of Japan as it used to be. So it seemed to Basho when he made his famous trip to Yamagata and the northland three hundred years ago, and this is the way I felt when I visited Yamagata a little over twenty years ago. It is not only the land of the past but also, I hope, the Japan of the future, where there is room for growth but growth which does not mar the happy balance between man and nature.”

Edwin O. Reischauer



Uma ni nete (Dozing on a Horse)

Poem and commentary by Matsuo Basho
Portrait of Basho by Gessen



Yo ni furu mo (Life in this World), haiku poem and commentary

Ink on paper
Matsuo Basho
Tenna 1– Jokyo 1 (1681-84)

yo ni furumo / sara ni Sogi no / yadori kana
life in this world / just like a temporary shelter / of Sogi's

TRANSLATED BY MAKOTO UEDA

Haru mo ya ya (Advent of Spring), haiku poem and painting

Ink and light colors on paper
Calligraphy by Matsuo Basho
Painting by Morikawa Kyoriku
Genroku (1693)

haru mo ya ya / keshiki totonou /
tsuki to ume
the advent of spring / revealed in
the sight of / the moon and plum
blossoms

