

South, East, and Southeast Asia

Ryoan-ji. Kyoto, Japan. Muromachi Period, Japan. c. 1480 C.E.; current design most likely dates to the 18th century. Rock garden.



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Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji MG 4512"

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Ryōanji (Peaceful Dragon Temple) is a Zen temple and World Heritage Site in northwest Kyoto, Japan. It is best known for its Zen garden, a simple gravel-and-rock arrangement that inspires peace and contemplation. The Ryōan-ji garden is considered one of the finest surviving examples of kare-sansui ("dry landscape"), a refined type of Japanese Zen temple garden design generally featuring distinctive larger rock formations arranged amidst a sweep of smooth pebbles (small, carefully selected polished river rocks) raked into linear patterns that facilitate meditation.

The zen garden is thought to date from the late 1400s. Some believe that it is the highest expression of Zen art and teachings. It is definitely a greatest masterpiece. “The Zen garden is an austere arrangement of 15 rocks rests on a bed of white gravel, surrounded by low walls. The moss-covered boulders are placed so that, when looking at the garden from any angle, only 14 are visible at one time. In the Buddhist world the number fifteen signifies completeness. So you must have a total view of the garden to make it a whole and meaningful experience, and yet, in the conditions of this world, that is not possible (Sacred Destination).”

The garden measures thirty by seventy-eight feet. The garden is located on the south side of the temple. On its north side (the right of side the picture above), the long veranda where the visitors experience the garden is located. To the east, a low wall surrounds the garden. On the southern and western side, a wall topped with thatched roof tile edges the garden. The wall, originally white, has changed with time into a rusty brown color, which allows it to blend well with the garden. The zen garden itself is comprised of fifteen stones, arranged in five groups, placed on of raked sand (Colombia).

Citation:

"Design." *Design*. Web. 29 Mar. 2015. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/ealac/V3613/ryoanji/design.htm>.

"Sacred Destinations." *Ryoanji*. Web. 29 Mar. 2015. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/japan/kyoto-ryoanji>.