



Kyoto is home to many National Treasures!
But...what's a National Treasure?

京の国宝はじめてガイド

A Guide to the National Treasures of Kyoto

What is a "National Treasure?"

In order to safeguard important works of cultural heritage, the Japanese government registers certain objects as "Important Cultural Properties" or "National Treasures," giving priority to those in particular need of preservation.

Objects made over the course of history that are thought to have exceptional rarity, refinement, or historical value may be designated as "Important Cultural Properties." Those deemed irreplaceable and of great value from a global perspective are granted the elevated status of "National Treasure."

Categories of cultural properties include architectural structures, paintings and calligraphy, sculpture, decorative arts, and historical materials.



One of the first National Treasures designated after the Pacific War

This rare Heian-period folding-screen, passed down in Tō-ji Temple (Kyōōgokoku-ji), was used in Esoteric Buddhist rituals.

National Treasure Landscape with Figures

Heian period, 11th century
Kyoto National Museum
(On view July 24 – August 22, 3rd floor)

Why Protect Cultural Properties?

Cultural properties need to be safeguarded from a number of dangers, including:

- Natural disasters
- Human-caused disasters (war, theft, accidents, defacement)
- Deterioration and aging
- Neglect and disregard for their importance

The first step in preserving cultural properties for future generations is to make the public **aware** of their existence. This is one of the goals of museum exhibitions, which highlight the contributions of researchers and conservators to increase our appreciation of these important works.



Front

Back

Tablet with Epitaph of Ono no Emishi

After its initial discovery during the Edo period, this burial tablet was returned to its original gravesite, but was later looted and lost during the Meiji period. It was later re-discovered and designated a National Treasure. Today, it is entrusted to the Kyoto National Museum.

National Treasure Tablet with Epitaph of Ono no Emishi

Nara period, 8th century
Sudō Shrine, Kyoto
(On view throughout the exhibition, 2nd floor)

National Treasures from Beyond Japanese Shores

National Treasures are not limited to works produced in Japan. Many objects made and brought to Japan from abroad were designated National Treasures for the significant role they played in Japanese culture and history.

Among National Treasures with foreign provenance are many Chinese works of painting and calligraphy. Others tell of Japan's interactions with the West.



Telling the Story of Japan's Relations with the West

When India was occupied by the Portuguese Empire, the Portuguese Viceroy D. Duarte de Menezes sent this missive to the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The contents of the letter celebrate Hideyoshi's unification of Japan and urge his cooperation with Christian proselytization activities.

National Treasure Illuminated Letter from the Portuguese Viceroy in India

Dated 1588
Myōhō-in Temple, Kyoto
(On view August 24 – September 12, 2nd floor)



Must See National Treasures!



How a Sketch Became a National Treasure!

This ink painting by the celebrated painter Sesshū Tōyō depicting the famous sandbar known as Amanohashidate is believed to have been made as a preparatory drawing. At the time, most landscape paintings portrayed imaginary Chinese scenes, but this work presents an actual view of a real Japanese landmark as if we were looking at Amanohashidate with our own eyes!

National Treasure **View of Amanohashidate**

By Sesshū Tōyō (1420–ca. 1506)
Muromachi period, 15–16th century
Kyoto National Museum (On view July 24 – August 22, 2nd floor)

The exhibition *National Treasures of Kyoto* presents a medley of must-see works. Here are two that stand out:

Enjoying the Heavenly Sounds of Paradise

These and many similar bodhisattva images originally adorned the walls of the Phoenix Hall of Byōdō-in Temple in Uji. They surrounded the hall's main icon Amida Buddha, evoking a paradisaical atmosphere of music and dance. These strikingly three-dimensional sculptures were actually carved in relief from thick boards.

National Treasure

Bodhisattvas on Clouds, North Wall Nos. 16 and 23

Heian period, 11th century

Byōdō-in Temple, Kyoto (On view throughout the exhibition, 1st floor)



© Byōdō-in Temple

Take It Home
and
Color Yourself!

Color Your Own National Treasure Landscape with Figures

How would you color this National Treasure?

- Copy how the original looks now (replica)
- Imagine how its colors and ink lines originally looked (reconstruction)
- Use any colors you like (interpretation)

*You can find a detailed image of *Landscape with Figures* on **e-Museum** (website and smartphone app)
e-Museum <https://emuseum.nich.go.jp/>

*Use [#NationalTreasuresKyotoColoring](https://twitter.com/NationalTreasuresKyotoColoring) to share your completed pictures on social media. Your picture might be featured on the exhibition's official Twitter page!



特別展 京の国宝 守り伝える日本のたから

National Treasures of Kyoto: Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Japan's Ancient Capital

Exhibition period : **July 24, 2021 – September 12, 2021**

Part I: July 24 (Saturday) – August 22 (Sunday) / Part II: August 24 (Tuesday) – September 12 (Sunday)

*Some artworks may be rotated during the exhibition period.

Venue : **Kyoto National Museum, Heisei Chishinkan Wing**

Closed Mondays *The museum will be open on Monday August 9 and closed on Thursday August 10, 2021.

Exhibition Hours : 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Entrance until 5:00 p.m.)

Admission : Adult 1,600 yen / Univ. Student 1,200 yen / High School Student 700 yen

Free admission for middle school students and younger

(A Free Timed Entry Ticket must be reserved in advance for each child.)

Entry priority for the exhibition will be given to ticket holders who purchase tickets online in advance. Please purchase a timed entry ticket before visiting the museum. Timed entry tickets can be purchased through the Lawson Ticket website. For details, see the official exhibition website (Japanese only).

Organized by: Agency for Cultural Affairs; Kyoto National Museum; Japan Arts Council; The Yomiuri Shimbun

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