

A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Early Spring flower viewing



It's dreary Kyoto in February. It is the plum blossoms to herald the coming of spring at this time.

Their blooming period is different depending on their types, but most of the plum trees are full bloomed from February to March. They color a dreary winter with red, white and pink, etc. by their graceful small blossom flowers.



Plum has been the symbol of the grace and longevity from ancient time. Because even if the plum trees get old to be covered with moss, their noble fragrant plum blossoms solemnly start blooming against the severe winter cold, when many other plants endure the cold and haven't flowering yet. It is said that "flower" used to refer a plum blossom, not a cherry blossom in Nara-era (710-784) in Japan. Plum blossoms were admired as

popular and familiar flowers among people. In Manyoshu –the oldest Japanese anthology of short poems–, more than 3 times of poetries appeared about plum blossoms than cherry blossoms.

There are many famous places of plum blossoms in Kyoto city. Kitano-tenmangu shrine having about 1,500 plum trees of 50 types holds plum blossom festival every 25th February. They also hold a tea ceremony by geiko (geisha in Kyoto) and maiko (apprentice of geiko) from Kamishichiken (geisha district) around the shrine.

February in the lunar calendar is also called Ume-mizuki (plum blossom viewing month) . How about to feel the coming of spring to see the solemn plum blossoms against the cold of winter in February?