

## Jenny's impressions

I came to Kamakura to visit Zuisen-ji on a Sunday afternoon near the end of June. I took the bus from the station to Kamakura-gu (Kamakura Shrine). The way up to Suizen-ji's entrance gates leads through a nice residential area – old Japanese style houses with big gardens, a little stream and abundant hydrangea shrubs. After passing the entrance, I turned to the little forgotten garden filled with hydrangeas and old trees. A small path meanders through it and it feels like a passageway to another world.



**Jenny**  
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At the end of the garden, I walked up a slope on the left hand side which leads to a cemetery and smaller side entrance to the temple. The slope has some nice view points on the mountains around, but it is not the main way to the temple. I entered the garden via a grove of old plum and cherry trees - covered in moss, with low branches, so you have to duck under them.



**Path in the front garden**

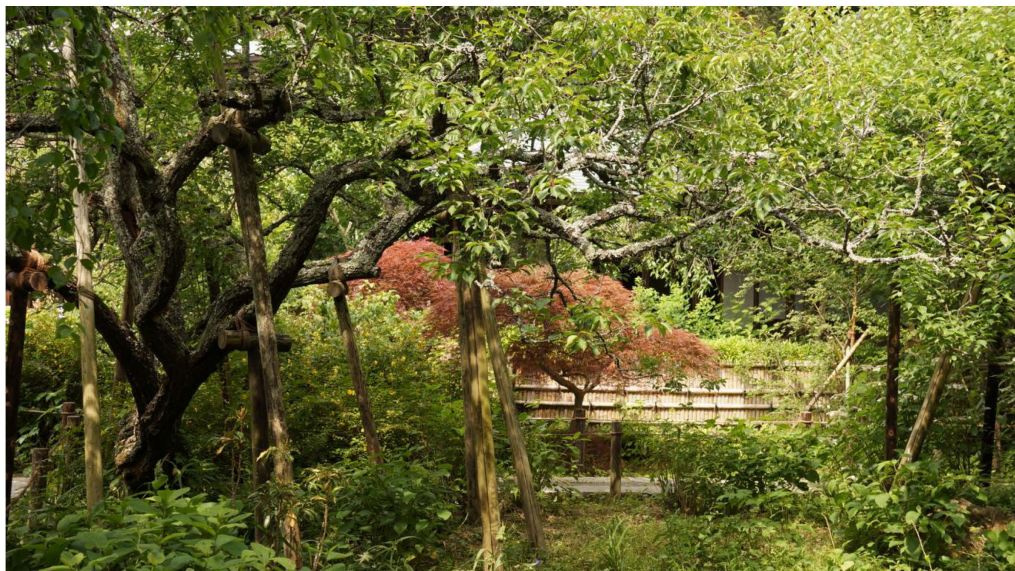
What really surprised me was that there were nearly no visitors in the garden – although it was a Sunday afternoon. Maybe it's because the temple is a long way off the station, maybe because it requires a little climb or because the temple's buildings are closed, but this very important temple in Japanese history seems to be a secret garden.



**Garden stone**

The garden itself is a little unkempt, and I found that a refreshing break from the immaculately maintained gardens of other Zen temples. While I guess the neglect is not entirely voluntary but the result of a lack of financing, I love the enchanted atmosphere it created.

When I looked at the Zen garden at the back of the temple, I was utterly surprised. I saw a cave and a pond and stairs and wild grasses. I was impressed, but I did not really know what to make of it. This triggered me to start researching Musō Soseki's relationship to the temple, his work and life and what academics think his ideas were when he built the garden.



**Old plum trees and a  
Japanese maple**