

Pebbles from the Pond

Japan For the Artist: by Pam Adams

Japan may not seem to be the place to go to paint, but indeed it can be one of the best. Most Japanese paint traditional, auspicious subjects but there is a wealth of nature in the scenery not far from the bustling scenes usually shown on TV.

In Spring you can sit in almost any quiet side street and the cherry blossoms will be a spectacular display, or you could join thousands in the parks and gardens who sit under the cherry trees to picnic and drink sake. People tend to mind their own business and will not bother you and they also make wonderful figure studies.

In Autumn the colours are truly spectacular and it is a good time to take a trip to Kyoto which is a popular tourist destination, but the gardens are wonderful and the shrines and temples retain an old world atmosphere. For a more rural experience take a trip into the countryside about one hour's bullet train ride from Tokyo. There you can see picturesque rice paddies, thatched farm sheds and weathered country folk as well as rivers and streams, waterfalls and mountains.

Tokyo's small local shrines are tucked among houses, and the large famous shrines and temples are wonderful places to capture people wearing kimono. Festivals are frequent and offer local colour and flavours.

The daily bustling fish market is a hive of activity during the early hours - not a place to set up and paint, but some quick photos can capture the atmosphere.

Ueno Park houses many wonderful art galleries and the Tokyo National Museum has an extensive collection of Japanese art and screen paintings.

Try to avoid going to Japan in summer as it is extremely hot and very humid, but in Winter skies are usually clear and blue. This is the time to venture west where you can view Mt Fuji covered in snow, stay in one of the picturesque ski areas or even head further north to Hokkaido where the annual snow festival takes place in February with giant ice sculptures that have to be seen to be believed.

Pam has recently been on a trip to Japan, which for her was a re-visit to a country where she has spent much of her adult life (17 years in total). It was while living in Tokyo that she began painting in Japanese watercolours following traditional themes of birds and flowers through the seasons. She also learnt woodblock printing using the traditional methods and materials for inspiration from the sense of design evident in everything from packaging to architecture.



Treasures from Japan.

Autumn Leaves a design study

Rice paddies

