



Lion Grove

狮子林

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Introduction

Location: Gusu District, Suzhou, China

Construction Year: 1342 (Yuan Dynasty)

Founder: Monk Tianru, funded by his disciples

Style: Classical Jiangnan Garden, rockery maze and Buddhist culture

UNESCO World Heritage Site:
Recognized in 1997, along with other Suzhou gardens



Unique Features

Rockery Maze

- The garden is dominated by rockeries, covering approximately 5,000 square meters.
- Made of Taihu Rocks, creating a complex network of caves, cliffs, deep crevices, and peaks.
- “No clear paths, yet everywhere leads to tranquility” – Visitors can explore the rockery maze, making it an interactive and engaging experience.



Unique Features

Buddhist Influence

- Originally a Buddhist monastery, the garden incorporates Zen(禪) philosophy in its design.
- The lion is a Buddhist symbol, particularly associated with Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.
- Many rock formations are designed to resemble resting, standing, and leaping lions.



Classical Garden Layout

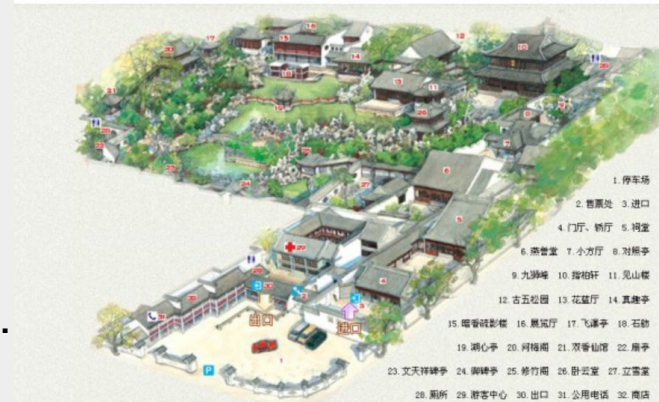
The garden follows a “**Garden within a Garden**” concept, integrating mountains, water, bridges, corridors, and pavilions.

Central Area: The rockery maze (heart).

Western Area: Serene ponds and quiet retreats.

Eastern Area: Scholar's study rooms and artistic halls.

Northern Area: Zen courtyard with a dry landscape.



Poetic and Artistic Influence

- Shizilin has been celebrated in **Chinese literature and art** for centuries:
 - Ming Dynasty painter **Wen Zhengming** created *Painting of the Lion Grove Garden*, a masterpiece of garden landscape painting.
 - Qing Dynasty emperors **Kangxi and Qianlong** visited multiple times and left poems and calligraphy.
 - Emperor Qianlong even replicated Shizilin in both the Old Summer Palace and Summer Palace in Beijing.

Thanks for Listening!

