Tokyo Travel Guide

Tokyo: Where Ancient Tradition Meets Futuristic Innovation

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Things to do in Tokyo

Landmarks & Monuments

Tokyo's iconic landmarks tell the story of a city that has evolved from feudal fortress to modern metropolis. From the **Imperial Palace** to the **Tokyo Tower**, these monuments define the city's skyline and spirit.



Must See Book Ahead

Tokyo Skytree

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Map

Standing at **634 meters**, Tokyo Skytree is the world's tallest tower and offers *unparalleled panoramic views* of the sprawling metropolis. The tower features two observation decks the **Tembo Deck** at 350m and the **Tembo Galleria** at 450m. On clear days, you can see Mount Fuji in the distance. The complex includes shopping, dining, an aquarium, and a planetarium, making it an all-day destination.



Top Pick

Tokyo Tower

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Inspired by the Eiffel Tower, this **333-meter tall** orange and white landmark has been Tokyo's symbol since 1958. Visit the *Main Observatory* at 150m or the *Top Deck* at 250m for stunning city views. The tower is beautifully illuminated at night, creating a romantic atmosphere. The base houses museums, shops, and restaurants themed around Japanese pop culture and history.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Imperial Palace

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Map

Home to Japan's Emperor, the Imperial Palace sits on the former grounds of **Edo Castle** surrounded by impressive stone walls and moats. While the inner grounds are generally closed, the *East Gardens* are open to the public and feature beautiful landscapes, historical ruins, and seasonal flowers. The palace's **double-bridge** (Nijubashi) is one of Tokyo's most photographed landmarks. Guided tours of the palace grounds are available by reservation.



Notable

Rainbow Bridge

1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

This **798-meter suspension bridge** connects central Tokyo to the waterfront area of Odaiba. The bridge features *spectacular LED illuminations* at night that change colors with the seasons. You can walk across the pedestrian walkway for free views of Tokyo Bay, though the walk takes about 30 minutes. The bridge appears frequently in Japanese films and television as a symbol of modern Tokyo.

Tips for Landmarks & Monuments

- **Book observation deck tickets online** to skip long queues, especially during peak seasons and weekends
- Visit landmarks at *sunset* to experience both daylight and illuminated night views in one visit
- Imperial Palace tours must be **reserved in advance** through the official website availability is limited
- Combine Tokyo Tower with nearby Zojoji Temple for a mix of modern and traditional sightseeing

Museums & Galleries

Tokyo boasts world-class museums covering everything from **ancient samurai artifacts** to **contemporary digital art**. The city's museum scene reflects Japan's dedication to preserving tradition while embracing innovation.



Must See Book Ahead

teamLab Borderless

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Map

An **immersive digital art museum** where boundaries between artworks disappear, creating a continuously evolving exhibition space. Walk through cascading *waterfalls of light*, fields of glowing flowers, and infinite crystal universes. Installations respond to your presence and movement, making each visit unique. This groundbreaking museum represents the future of interactive art and has become one of Tokyo's most Instagram-worthy destinations. Now located in Azabudai Hills.



Must See Book Ahead

Ghibli Museum

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Map

A **magical museum** dedicated to Studio Ghibli and master animator Hayao Miyazaki. Located in Mitaka, the museum features exclusive short films, detailed exhibits on animation production, and whimsical architecture. The rooftop garden has a life-size *robot soldier from Laputa*. No photography inside maintains the mystery. Tickets must be purchased in advance and sell out quickly they're released monthly and often gone within hours. A pilgrimage site for anime fans worldwide.



Top Pick

Tokyo National Museum

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Japan's **oldest and largest museum**, housing over 110,000 artifacts including national treasures and important cultural properties. The Honkan (Japanese Gallery) displays *samurai swords, armor, ceramics, and Buddhist sculptures*. Special exhibitions feature rare items not typically on display. The museum's gardens are particularly beautiful during cherry blossom season. Essential for understanding Japanese art and cultural history spanning thousands of years.



Top Pick

Mori Art Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Perched on the **52nd and 53rd floors** of Roppongi Hills, this contemporary art museum showcases cutting-edge exhibitions from Japanese and international artists. The museum specializes in *modern and contemporary art* with rotating exhibitions that often address social and cultural issues. Your ticket includes access to the Tokyo City View observation deck, offering 360-degree views of the city. Open late (until 10 PM most days), perfect for evening visits.



Notable

Edo-Tokyo Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Reopened on March 31, 2026, after renovations.. When reopened, this museum will once again offer an incredible journey through Tokyo's transformation from Edo-period fishing village to modern metropolis. Features life-size replicas of historical buildings, including a **kabuki theater and Nihonbashi Bridge**. Interactive exhibits let you experience daily life across different eras. The museum's architecture itself is distinctive, designed to resemble an elevated storehouse.

Tips for Museums & Galleries

- **Reserve Ghibli Museum tickets** exactly when they're released (10 AM JST on the 10th of each month) or through authorized travel agents
- Many museums are *closed on Mondays* plan your itinerary accordingly
- teamLab requires advance booking and **timed entry**; weekday mornings are less crowded
- Check for a **museum pass** offering discounted admission to Tokyo museums and attractions
- Wear comfortable shoes museums like Tokyo National Museum require extensive walking

Religious Sites

Tokyo's temples and shrines offer peaceful sanctuaries within the bustling metropolis. These sacred spaces showcase stunning architecture, beautiful gardens, and centuries of spiritual tradition, from **Shinto shrines** to **Buddhist temples**.



Must See

Senso-ji Temple

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Tokyo's **oldest and most significant temple**, founded in 645 AD, dedicated to Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy. Enter through the iconic *Kaminarimon (Thunder Gate)* with its massive red lantern, then walk down Nakamise shopping street lined with traditional snacks and souvenirs. The main hall features elaborate decorations and is constantly filled with worshippers and tourists. Visit early morning or evening to avoid crowds. The adjacent five-story pagoda is stunning when illuminated at night.



Must See

Meiji Shrine

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

A magnificent **Shinto shrine** dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken, set within a 170-acre forest of 120,000 trees in central Tokyo. Walk through towering *torii gates* along peaceful gravel paths to reach the main shrine buildings. Witness traditional Shinto weddings, participate in purification rituals, and write wishes on wooden ema plaques. The Inner Garden requires a small fee but offers beautiful iris fields in June. Free admission makes this an accessible cultural experience.



Top Pick

Nezu Shrine

45 minutes-1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

One of Tokyo's **most photogenic shrines**, famous for its tunnel of vermillion *torii gates* winding up a hillside. Founded over 1,900 years ago, the current buildings date from 1706 and showcase Edo-period architecture. The shrine is especially spectacular during the **Azalea Festival** in April-May when 3,000 azalea bushes bloom. The atmospheric torii tunnel and traditional architecture make this a favorite for photographers. Less crowded than Fushimi Inari in Kyoto but equally beautiful.



Notable

Zojoji Temple

45 minutes-1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

A historic Buddhist temple with **Tokyo Tower as a dramatic backdrop**, creating one of Tokyo's most striking photo opportunities. Founded in 1393, Zojoji served as the family temple of the Tokugawa shogunate. The impressive *Sangedatsumon Gate* survived WWII bombings and dates from 1622. The temple grounds feature hundreds of small Jizo statues dressed in red bibs, memorializing deceased children. Particularly beautiful when illuminated at night alongside Tokyo Tower.



Optional

Yasukuni Shrine

1-1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

A **controversial but historically significant** Shinto shrine commemorating Japan's war dead, including convicted war criminals. The grounds feature a war museum, beautiful cherry trees, and traditional architecture. While politically sensitive, the shrine offers insight into how Japan remembers its military history. The adjacent *Yushukan Museum* displays military artifacts and wartime exhibits from a Japanese perspective. Visit during spring for stunning cherry blossoms in a peaceful setting.

Tips for Religious Sites

- **Purify yourself** at the temizuya (water pavilion) before approaching shrines rinse left hand, right hand, mouth, then left hand again
- Remove shoes when entering temple buildings with tatami floors
- Visit Meiji Shrine on *weekends* to possibly witness traditional Shinto weddings
- Photography is usually allowed in shrine grounds but **prohibited inside temple halls**
- Senso-ji is least crowded *early morning (6-8 AM)* or after 5 PM
- Dress modestly avoid tank tops and very short shorts at religious sites

Neighborhoods & Districts

Each Tokyo neighborhood has its own distinct personality, from the **electric energy of Shibuya** to the **traditional charm of Yanaka**. Exploring different districts reveals the incredible diversity packed into this megacity.



Must See

Shibuya

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Home to the world's **busiest pedestrian crossing** where up to 3,000 people cross simultaneously every light change. This youth-culture epicenter pulses with energy, featuring *massive video screens, trendy boutiques, and endless dining options*. The Hachiko statue commemorates Japan's most loyal dog. Explore shopping complexes like Shibuya 109, visit Miyashita Park on the rooftop, and experience Tokyo's vibrant nightlife. The district embodies Tokyo's modern, fast-paced spirit.



Must See

Harajuku & Omotesando

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **epicenter of Japanese youth fashion and kawaii culture**. Takeshita Street buzzes with colorful shops selling everything from *gothic lolita fashion to character goods and crepes*. On Sundays, cosplayers gather in Yoyogi Park. Contrast this with elegant Omotesando Avenue, Tokyo's Champs-Élysées, lined with flagship stores by international designers and sophisticated cafes. Cat Street offers vintage boutiques and street art. Meiji Shrine is walkable from here.



Must See

Shinjuku

3-5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Tokyo's **busiest transportation hub and entertainment district** with over 3.5 million daily passengers. East side features department stores, restaurants, and *Kabukicho red-light district* (safe but seedy). West side has skyscraper offices and Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building's free observation decks. Golden Gai's narrow alleys pack 200+ tiny bars. Omoide Yokocho offers authentic yakitori grills. Shinjuku Gyoen garden provides peaceful escape. The area never sleeps.



Must See

Asakusa

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Tokyo's **traditional heart** preserving old downtown (shitamachi) atmosphere with Senso-ji Temple as its centerpiece. *Nakamise shopping street* sells traditional crafts, snacks, and souvenirs. Explore narrow side streets lined with traditional restaurants and shops. Hanayashiki, Japan's oldest amusement park, offers retro charm. The Sumida River offers boat cruises and views of Tokyo Skytree. Experience rickshaw rides and traditional performances. Essential for understanding old Edo culture.



Top Pick

Akihabara

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Electric Town the world capital of otaku culture, anime, manga, and electronics. Multi-story shops sell everything from the latest gadgets to rare vintage games and anime merchandise. Experience *maid cafes, retro arcades, and figure shops* filled with collectibles. Don Don Donki (mega discount store) offers overwhelming selection on multiple floors. Akihabara is a paradise for tech enthusiasts, gamers, and anime fans. The neighborhood transforms at night with bright neon signs.



Notable

Yanaka

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

A **charming old neighborhood** that survived WWII bombings, preserving pre-war Tokyo atmosphere. Narrow streets wind past *traditional wooden houses, family-owned shops, temples, and cemeteries*. Yanaka Ginza shopping street offers local snacks and crafts. The area is famous for its cat population and relaxed pace. Perfect for leisurely strolls and discovering authentic local life. Excellent photo opportunities with traditional architecture. Less touristy than Asakusa.

Tips for Neighborhoods & Districts

- **Visit Shibuya Crossing from above** Starbucks in Shibuya Tsutaya or Magnet by Shibuya 109 for best views
- Harajuku's Takeshita Street is extremely crowded on *weekends* visit weekday mornings if possible
- Golden Gai bars in Shinjuku often charge **cover fees** (500-1000 yen) and some don't welcome first-timers
- Get lost intentionally in neighborhoods the best discoveries happen off main streets
- Yanaka is best experienced in *late afternoon* when shops are open and light is golden

Parks & Gardens

Tokyo's parks and gardens offer **tranquil green oases** within the urban landscape. From **cherry blossom viewing spots** to traditional Japanese gardens, these spaces showcase seasonal beauty and provide peaceful retreats.



Must See

Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden

1.5-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

One of Tokyo's **most beautiful gardens**, combining three distinct landscaping styles: traditional Japanese, formal French, and English landscape gardens. The park features over *1,000 cherry trees* making it a top hanami (cherry blossom viewing) spot. Autumn brings spectacular maple colors. Greenhouse contains tropical and subtropical plants. The spacious lawns are perfect for picnics. Alcohol is prohibited, making it peaceful. A 200-yen admission fee keeps crowds manageable. Essential during spring and autumn.



Top Pick

Ueno Park

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Tokyo's **most popular cherry blossom spot** with over 1,000 trees lining the central pathway. The park contains multiple museums (Tokyo National Museum, National Museum of Nature and Science), *Ueno Zoo*, and Shinobazu Pond with lotus flowers. Free admission attracts massive crowds during hanami season for rowdy picnics. The park has historical significance as a former temple ground. Bentendo Temple sits on an island in the pond. Year-round entertainment and cultural activities.



Top Pick

Rikugien Garden

1-1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Considered one of **Tokyo's most beautiful traditional gardens**, created in 1702 during the Edo period. The landscaping represents famous scenes from Japanese poetry with *carefully positioned hills, ponds, and trees*. Autumn illuminations (November-December) transform the garden into a magical nighttime wonderland. Spring brings weeping cherry blossoms. Walking paths circle the central pond, revealing different perspectives. The tea house offers matcha with traditional sweets. Less crowded than other Tokyo gardens.



Notable

Yoyogi Park

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Adjacent to Meiji Shrine, this **spacious urban park** is Tokyo's hangout spot, especially on Sundays when performers, musicians, and cosplayers gather. Wide open lawns are perfect for *picnics, sports, and people-watching*. The park hosts festivals, flea markets, and events year-round. Harajuku's youth culture spills into the park. Cherry blossom and autumn foliage seasons are particularly beautiful. Free admission and relaxed atmosphere make it accessible to all.



Notable

Hamarikyu Gardens

1-1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

A stunning **Edo-period garden** with a tidal pond that changes with Tokyo Bay. The contrast of traditional landscaping against modern skyscrapers creates dramatic photos. The *nakajima-no-ochaya tea house* on an island offers matcha while overlooking the pond. Cherry blossoms and autumn foliage are spectacular. The garden served as a duck hunting ground for shoguns. Water buses depart from here to Asakusa. Small admission fee. Located near Tsukiji, making it easy to combine with market visits.

Tips for Parks & Gardens

- **Cherry blossom season** (late March-early April) requires early arrival popular spots fill by morning
- Autumn foliage peaks in *mid-November to early December* in Tokyo
- Bring a **picnic blanket** for hanami parties but clean up thoroughly leaving trash is severely frowned upon
- Many gardens offer special *night illuminations* during spring and autumn check schedules in advance
- Visit gardens on **weekday mornings** for peaceful photography opportunities without crowds

Tours & Activities

Immerse yourself in Japanese culture through **hands-on experiences and guided tours**. From traditional tea ceremonies to cutting-edge entertainment, Tokyo offers activities that bring the city's culture to life.



Must See Book Ahead

Tsukiji Outer Market Food Tour

2-3 hours Book Ahead

While the inner wholesale market moved to Toyosu, the **outer market remains vibrant** with over 400 shops and restaurants. Take a guided tour to sample *fresh sushi, tamagoyaki (sweet omelet), grilled seafood, and traditional snacks*. Learn about Japanese ingredients, cooking techniques, and food culture. Tours typically run early morning (7-9 AM) when the market is most lively. Guides provide context and help navigate the overwhelming options. Book through reputable tour companies for best experience.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Traditional Tea Ceremony

1-2 hours Book Ahead

Experience the **art of Japanese tea ceremony (chanoyu)** in an authentic tea house or temple setting. Learn the ritualized preparation and consumption of *matcha green tea* while sitting in seiza position. Ceremonies include seasonal sweets and explanations of the philosophy behind each movement. Many venues offer English-speaking hosts. Sessions range from casual 30-minute experiences to formal 2-hour ceremonies. Some include kimono wearing. Essential for understanding Japanese aesthetics and mindfulness.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Sumo Wrestling Tournament

3-6 hours Book Ahead

Watch Japan's **national sport** at Ryogoku Kokugikan stadium during one of six annual tournaments (January, May, September in Tokyo). Matches run from morning *lower-division bouts to evening top-division matches* featuring grand champions (yokozuna). The ritual, pageantry, and sheer power are mesmerizing. Same-day tickets available but advance booking recommended for good seats. Visit the Sumo Museum inside the stadium. Nearby Ryogoku has many chanko-nabe restaurants serving wrestlers' traditional hot pot.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Tokyo Bar Hopping Tour

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Navigate Tokyo's **nightlife with local guides** who take you to hidden izakayas (Japanese pubs), tiny bars, and local hangouts tourists never find. Visit *Golden Gai's micro-bars, yakitori alleys, or trendy Shibuya spots*. Guides handle ordering and cultural explanations while you enjoy drinks and small plates. Learn drinking customs and phrases. Meet other travelers and locals. Tours typically visit 3-4 venues over 3-4 hours. Great way to experience Japanese drinking culture safely.



Notable

Kimono Wearing Experience

4-8 hours Book Ahead

Rent a **traditional kimono or yukata** and explore Tokyo dressed in Japanese traditional wear. Professional dressers help you wear the complex garment properly and style your hair. Many rental shops near *Asakusa, Kyoto-style areas* offer packages including accessories and bags. Walk around temples and gardens for memorable photos. Yukata (casual summer kimono) are easier to wear than formal kimono. Some shops offer men's kimono too. Return by evening. Popular Instagram activity.

Tips for Tours & Activities

- **Book popular experiences** (Ghibli Museum, sumo tournaments, food tours) weeks or months in advance
- Food tours work best on *empty stomachs* skip breakfast before morning market tours
- Tea ceremony venues may require **removing shoes** wear clean socks
- Shows aimed at tourists are pure entertainment, not culture; adjust expectations accordingly
- Bar hopping tours typically include *some drinks* but you'll pay for additional drinks yourself
- Kimono rental shops near tourist areas are convenient but may be crowded book ahead

Day Trips & Excursions

Tokyo's location provides easy access to **stunning destinations** including Mount Fuji, traditional towns, hot springs, and coastal areas all reachable within 1-3 hours by train.



Must See

Mount Fuji & Hakone

Full day or overnight No Booking Needed

Map

Japan's most iconic symbol, **Mount Fuji** (3,776m), combined with the hot spring resort town of Hakone. Take the *Hakone Loop*: train, cable car, ropeway, and pirate ship across Lake Ashi for spectacular Fuji views. Visit the Hakone Open-Air Museum, relax in onsen hot springs, and stay overnight in a traditional ryokan. The Hakone Free Pass covers most transportation. Best views on clear days, especially winter mornings. Climbing season is July-September only.



Must See

Nikko

Full day No Booking Needed

Map

A **UNESCO World Heritage mountain town** 2 hours north of Tokyo, famous for the ornate *Toshogu Shrine* where Tokugawa Ieyasu is enshrined. The lavishly decorated shrine complex features intricate gold leaf work and the famous sleeping cat and three wise monkeys carvings. Visit Kegon Falls (one of Japan's tallest), Lake Chuzenji, and enjoy autumn foliage. Nikko's natural beauty and cultural treasures make it an essential day trip. Purchase the Nikko Pass for convenient train and bus access.



Top Pick

Kamakura

Full day No Booking Needed

Map

A **coastal town** 1 hour south of Tokyo that served as Japan's political capital in the 12th-13th centuries. Home to the iconic *Great Buddha (Daibutsu)*, a 13-meter bronze statue. Visit numerous Zen temples including Hasedera and Kotokuin, hike the Daibutsu hiking trail, and explore Komachi-dori shopping street. Enoshima Island nearby offers beach views, caves, and a shrine. Perfect combination of history, nature, and seaside relaxation. Very popular in summer and autumn.



Notable

Yokohama

Half day to full day No Booking Needed

Map

Japan's **second-largest city**, just 30 minutes from Tokyo, offers a more relaxed waterfront atmosphere. Visit *Minato Mirai 21* with its futuristic skyline, Yokohama Chinatown (Japan's largest), Cup Noodles Museum, and historic Sankeien Garden. The Red Brick Warehouse area has shopping and dining with harbor views. Yamashita Park offers pleasant waterfront strolls. Yokohama's ramen museum showcases regional ramen styles. Easy half-day or evening trip from Tokyo.



Notable

Kawagoe

Half day No Booking Needed

Map

Known as '**Little Edo**', this town 30 minutes from Tokyo preserves the atmosphere of the Edo period with well-maintained merchant houses and warehouses. Walk down *Kurazukuri Street* lined with traditional clay-walled buildings. Visit Toki no Kane (Time Bell Tower), candy alley (Kashiya Yokocho), and Kita-in Temple. Rent a kimono to complete the time-travel experience. Much less crowded than Kyoto but offers similar traditional atmosphere. Perfect for half-day trips.

Tips for Day Trips & Excursions

- Purchase **regional rail passes** (JR Tokyo Wide Pass, Hakone Free Pass) for significant savings on day trips
- Start early leave Tokyo by *8-9 AM* to maximize sightseeing time
- Mount Fuji is often obscured by clouds check weather forecasts and webcams before departing
- Nikko and Hakone require **full days**; consider overnight stays to fully appreciate these destinations
- Kamakura gets extremely crowded on *weekends and holidays* weekdays are much better
- Book ryokan (traditional inns) in advance for Hakone overnight stays

Food & Dining

Real, highly-rated Restaurants in Tokyo, sourced from Google Places (rating above 4★).

Sushi Akira★★★★★ 4.9 (178)

1-2 hours

Map

Sushi Akira is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.9★ from 178 reviews. Located at Japan, 〒150-0013 Tokyo, Shibuya, Ebisu, 2-chōme−37−〒 1F.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 11:30 PM

Nagami★★★★★ 4.8 (73)

1-2 hours

Map

Nagami is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.8★ from 73 reviews. Located at 4-chōme-43-6 Asakusa, Taito City, Tokyo 111-0032, Japan.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed

Jingumae Higuchi★★★★★ 4.8 (60)

1-2 hours

Map

Jingumae Higuchi is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.8★ from 60 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 150-0001 Tokyo, Shibuya, Jingūmae, 2-chōme−19−□□ □□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Friday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Saturday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed

TenTempura Uchitsu★★★★★ 4.7 (86)

1-2 hours

Map

TenTempura Uchitsu is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.7★ from 86 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 150-0012 Tokyo, Shibuya, Hiroo, 5-chōme−25−□ □□□ 1□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed

Héritage by Kei Kobayashi□□□□□□□ □□ □□ □□□□□ ★★★★★ 4.6 (348)

1-2 hours

Map

Héritage by Kei Kobayashi□□□□□□□ □□ □□ □□□□□ is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.6★ from 348 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 107-6245 Tokyo, Minato City, Akasaka, 9-chōme−7−□ □□□□□□□□ 45□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 4:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 12:00 – 4:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 4:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 4:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 4:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:30 PM

Ginza Oishi★★★★★ 4.6 (239)

1-2 hours

Map

Ginza Oishi is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.6★ from 239 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 104-0061 Tokyo, Chuo City, Ginza, 2-chōme−10−□□ □□□□□□□□□ 2□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM, 8:30 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM, 8:30 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM, 8:30 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM, 8:30 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM, 8:30 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 2:30 PM, 6:00 – 9:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed

Alter Ego★★★★★ 4.5 (147)

1-2 hours

Map

Alter Ego is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.5★ from 147 reviews. Located at 2-chōme-2-32 Kanda Jinbōchō, Chiyoda City, Tokyo 101-0051, Japan.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed

Sumibi Yakiniku Nakahara★★★★★ 4.5 (379)

1-2 hours

Map

Sumibi Yakiniku Nakahara is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.5★ from 379 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 102-0085 Tokyo, Chiyoda City, Rokubanchō, □ −□ □□□□□□□ □ F.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM

Oku★★★★★ 4.5 (54)

1-2 hours

Map

Oku is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.5★ from 54 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 111-0032 Tokyo, Taito City, Asakusa, 3-chōme−42−□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□ .

Den★★★★☆ 4.4 (330)

1-2 hours

Map

Den is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.4★ from 330 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 150-0001 Tokyo, Shibuya, Jingūmae, 2-chōme−3−□□ □□□□□□□□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Wednesday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Thursday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Friday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Saturday: 6:00 – 8:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed

Aman Tokyo Arva Italian Restaurant★★★★☆ 4.4 (364)

1-2 hours

Map

Aman Tokyo Arva Italian Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.4★ from 364 reviews. Located at The Otemachi Tower, 1-chōme-5-6 Ōtemachi, Chiyoda City, Tokyo 100-0004, Japan.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:30 – 9:00 PM

Nishiazabu Sushi Shin★★★★☆ 4.4 (275)

1-2 hours

Map

Nishiazabu Sushi Shin is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.4★ from 275 reviews. Located at 4-chōme-18-20 Nishiazabu, Minato City, Tokyo 106-0031, Japan.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM, 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM, 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM, 6:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 1:30 PM, 6:00 – 11:00 PM

Esterre by Alain Ducasse★★★★☆ 4.3 (166)

1-2 hours

Map

Esterre by Alain Ducasse is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.3★ from 166 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 100-0005 Tokyo, Chiyoda City, Marunouchi, 1-chōme−1−□ □□□□□□□□ 6□ .

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 6:00 – 10:00 PM

Kaitenzushi Nemuro Hanamaru Ginza★★★★☆ 4.1 (4,239)

1-2 hours

Map

Kaitenzushi Nemuro Hanamaru Ginza is a highly-rated restaurant in Tokyo, rated 4.1★ from 4239 reviews. Located at Japan, □ 104-0061 Tokyo, Chuo City, Ginza, 5-chōme−2−□ □□□□ 10F.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM

Practical Information

Seasonal Guide to Tokyo

Spring (March-May): Peak season featuring the famous *cherry blossom season (sakura)* in late March to early April. Temperatures are mild (10-20°C), perfect for walking and outdoor activities. Parks become crowded with hanami (flower viewing) parties. Book accommodations months in advance for cherry blossom season. **Late March to April is the most expensive and crowded period.**

Summer (June-August): Hot and humid with temperatures reaching 30-35°C. June brings the rainy season (tsuyu) with frequent rainfall. July-August are very hot but filled with festivals including fireworks displays and the Sumida River Fireworks. Typhoon season runs August-September. Indoor attractions like museums and shopping malls are more comfortable. *Less crowded than spring/autumn but challenging weather.*

Autumn (September-November): Excellent time to visit with comfortable temperatures (15-25°C) and spectacular autumn foliage from mid-November. Clear skies and lower humidity make it ideal for sightseeing. **Mid-October to November is highly recommended** for perfect weather and fall colors. Popular season, so book ahead.

Winter (December-February): Cold (0-10°C) but usually dry with clear skies. Excellent visibility for Mount Fuji views. *Fewer tourists mean lower prices and shorter lines.* Tokyo rarely gets snow but nearby areas offer winter sports. New Year (Oshogatsu) is a special time with temple visits (hatsumode) but many shops close December 29-January 3. **Winter illuminations** create magical nighttime scenes throughout the city.

Best Overall: Late March to April (cherry blossoms) or October to November (autumn foliage and perfect weather) - but expect crowds and higher prices. **Budget Travelers:** January-February or June (rainy season) offer lowest prices and fewer tourists.

Getting Around Tokyo

Train & Subway System: Tokyo's extensive rail network is the primary transportation method. The system includes *JR Lines (including Yamanote Line loop), Tokyo Metro (9 lines), and Toei Subway (4 lines)* . Download apps like **Google Maps, Hyperdia, or Japan Transit Planner** for route planning. Trains run 5 AM to midnight. Last trains leave around midnight - miss them and you'll need expensive taxis or wait until 5 AM.

IC Cards (Suica/Pasmo): Rechargeable smart cards that work on all trains, buses, and many stores. Purchase at any station for ¥2,000 (¥1,500 usable + ¥500 deposit). Simply tap on/off at gates. *Essential for convenient travel - no need to buy individual tickets.* Can be used nationwide on most transit systems. Return for refund when leaving.

JR Pass: For tourists visiting multiple cities, the Japan Rail Pass offers unlimited JR train travel including shinkansen (bullet trains), but **NOT valid on Tokyo Metro/Toei subway lines**. Calculate if worthwhile - often makes sense only for multi-city trips (Tokyo-Kyoto-Osaka, etc.). Must be purchased before arriving in Japan. Available in 7, 14, or 21-day versions.

Taxis: Clean, safe, but expensive (¥500-700 starting fare). Useful for late-night travel after trains stop or with luggage. Drivers rarely speak English - have destination written in Japanese. Doors open/close automatically - don't touch them. *Uber is limited; use JapanTaxi app instead.*

Buses: Comprehensive but complex for tourists. Pay when boarding (exact change or IC card). Useful for reaching specific attractions not near stations. **Yamanote Line** (JR) circles central Tokyo, connecting major stations - learn this loop first.

Narita Airport to Tokyo:

- **Narita Express (N'EX):** Fastest train (60-90 min) to major stations, ¥3,070-4,000
- **Keisei Skyliner:** Fast to Ueno (41 min) or Nippori, ¥2,520
- **Airport Bus:** Cheaper (¥1,300) but slower (90-120 min) depending on traffic
- **Taxi:** ¥20,000-30,000 - only for groups or excess luggage

Haneda Airport to Tokyo: Much closer to city center (30-60 min). Tokyo Monorail to Hamamatsucho (¥500) or Keikyu Line to Shinagawa. Many hotels offer shuttle services.

Pro Tips: Rush hour (7:30-9:30 AM, 5-7 PM) trains are *extremely crowded* - women-only cars available mornings. Stand left on escalators (right in Osaka). Eating/drinking on trains is frowned upon (except shinkansen). Keep phones silent.

✈ Airport Transfer

Narita International Airport (NRT) to city center:

- **Narita Express (N'EX):** Direct train to Tokyo Station in about 60 minutes, roughly 3070 yen one way
- **The Skyliner takes about 41 minutes to Nippori or Ueno; the current one-way fare is ¥2,580.**
- **Airport Limousine Bus:** Door to door service to major hotels and Tokyo Station in 75 to 120 minutes depending on traffic, roughly 3600 yen
- **Taxi:** Metered ride to central Tokyo takes 60 to 90 minutes and typically costs 20000 to 25000 yen

Shopping in Tokyo

What to Buy:

- **Electronics & Gadgets:** Cameras, game consoles, unique Japanese electronics at Akihabara, Yodobashi Camera, or Bic Camera. Tax-free for tourists. *Check compatibility and voltage before buying.*
- **Fashion:** Unique Japanese brands in Harajuku, Shibuya, and Omotesando. Vintage finds in Shimokitazawa. Uniqlo flagship stores offer exclusive Japan-only items.
- **Anime/Manga Goods:** Akihabara and Nakano Broadway for figures, collectibles, and rare merchandise. Pokemon Center stores throughout Tokyo.
- **Traditional Crafts:** Asakusa for folding fans, hand-dyed textiles (tenugui), chopsticks, and ceramics. Kappabashi Street for kitchenware including Japanese knives.
- **Beauty Products:** Japanese skincare and cosmetics at drugstores (Matsumoto Kiyoshi). Face masks, sunscreen, and unique beauty tools are popular.
- **Snacks & Food:** Kit-Kat unique flavors, Japanese whisky, matcha products, instant ramen, and regional sweets. Depachiika (department store basements) offer premium food gifts.
- **Stationery:** High-quality pens, notebooks, washi tape at Itoya in Ginza or Tokyu Hands.

Best Shopping Areas:

- **Ginza:** Luxury brands, department stores (Mitsukoshi, Matsuya), flagship stores
- **Shibuya/Harajuku:** Youth fashion, trendy boutiques, streetwear
- **Shinjuku:** Massive department stores, electronics, everything in one area
- **Akihabara:** Electronics, anime goods, video games, maid cafes
- **Nakano Broadway:** Otaku paradise with vintage toys and collectibles
- **Kappabashi:** Restaurant supply street - kitchenware and plastic food models

Tax-Free Shopping: Tourists can shop tax-free (save 10%) at participating stores with purchases over ¥5,000. Bring your **passport** - required for tax-free processing. Look for "Tax-Free" signs. Items must be taken out of Japan within 30 days.

Department Store Culture: *Depato* (department stores) offer premium quality, excellent service, and beautiful gift wrapping. Staff bow and greet customers. Basement floors (depachiika) feature incredible food selections. Most close around 8 PM.

100 Yen Shops: Daiso, Seria, Can Do offer incredible variety for ¥100 (+tax). Perfect for souvenirs, travel accessories, and unique Japanese products. *Don't underestimate these stores - quality is surprisingly good.*

Bargaining: Generally not practiced in Japan. Prices are fixed except at some electronics stores (Akihabara) where polite negotiation may work. **Used goods stores** (Book-Off, Hard-Off) offer excellent deals on secondhand items.

Festivals & Events

Annual Festivals:

- **Sanja Matsuri (Third Weekend of May):** Tokyo's biggest traditional festival at *Asakusa Shrine*. Three days of portable shrine processions, traditional music, and over 1.5 million visitors. Yakuza members sometimes display their tattoos during shrine carrying.
- **Sumida River Fireworks (Last Saturday of July):** One of Tokyo's largest fireworks displays with over 20,000 fireworks. *Extremely crowded* - arrive early for viewing spots along the river. Many people wear yukata (summer kimono).
- **Kanda Matsuri (Mid-May, Odd Years):** One of Tokyo's three great festivals featuring ornate mikoshi (portable shrines) paraded through Tokyo streets.
- **Sanno Matsuri (Mid-June, Even Years):** Another major festival with processions passing through central Tokyo including the Imperial Palace grounds.
- **Tokyo Game Show (September):** Asia's largest video game convention at Makuhari Messe. Showcases upcoming games, cosplay, and gaming culture.

Seasonal Events:

- **Cherry Blossom Illuminations (Late March-Early April):** Night-time illuminations at parks including Ueno, Chidorigafuchi, and Roppongi Midtown.
- **New Year (Oshogatsu - January 1-3):** Hatsumode (first shrine visit) draws millions to major shrines like Meiji Shrine. Shops and restaurants close December 29-January 3. *Experience traditional Japanese New Year customs.*
- **Setsubun (February 3):** Bean-throwing ceremonies at temples to drive away evil spirits. Celebrities participate at major temples like Zojoji.
- **Tokyo Marathon (Early March):** One of World Marathon Majors with 37,000+ runners. The route showcases Tokyo landmarks.
- **Golden Week (Late April-Early May):** Series of national holidays. Everything is crowded and expensive - avoid if possible or book months ahead.
- **Obon (Mid-August):** Buddhist holiday honoring ancestors. Bon Odori dances held in neighborhood parks. Many businesses close as people return to hometowns.
- **Tokyo International Film Festival (October):** Japan's premier film event with international premieres and screenings.
- **Winter Illuminations (November-February):** Elaborate light displays throughout Tokyo including *Shibuya Blue Cave, Roppongi Hills, and Tokyo Midtown*. Most spectacular December-January.

National Holidays: New Year's Day (Jan 1), Coming of Age Day (2nd Mon Jan), National Foundation Day (Feb 11), Emperor's Birthday (Feb 23), Vernal Equinox (Mar 20-21), Showa Day (Apr 29), Constitution Day (May 3), Greenery Day (May 4), Children's Day (May 5), Marine Day (3rd Mon Jul), Mountain Day (Aug 11), Respect for Aged Day (3rd Mon Sep), Autumnal Equinox (Sep 22-23), Sports Day (2nd Mon Oct), Culture Day (Nov 3), Labor Thanksgiving Day (Nov 23).

Museums and attractions may be closed or have altered hours during **New Year holidays**. Plan ahead and confirm opening times.

Sample Itineraries

Day 1: Traditional Tokyo

Morning: Start at *Senso-ji Temple* in Asakusa (arrive by 7 AM to beat crowds). Walk through Nakamise shopping street. **Mid-Morning:** Cross Sumida River to view Tokyo Skytree or take water bus to Hamarikyu Gardens. **Lunch:** Traditional tempura or soba near Asakusa. **Afternoon:** Visit Meiji Shrine and walk through the forest. Explore Harajuku's Takeshita Street and Omotesando. **Evening:** Shibuya Crossing at sunset, dinner in Shibuya, explore nightlife or shopping.

Day 2: Modern Tokyo

Morning: teamLab Borderless (book first entry slot). **Late Morning:** Odaiba exploration - DiverCity Tokyo Plaza with Gundam statue, shopping malls, waterfront. **Lunch:** Odaiba restaurants with bay views. **Afternoon:** Return to central Tokyo. Visit Tokyo Tower or Roppongi Hills with Mori Art Museum. **Evening:** Shinjuku - observatory at Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building (free), Golden Gai bar hopping, or Kabukicho exploration.

Day 3: Culture & Museums

Morning: Tokyo National Museum in Ueno Park (opens 9:30 AM). **Mid-Morning:** Walk through Ueno Park, visit Ueno Zoo if interested. **Lunch:** Ameya-Yokocho market street for street food. **Afternoon:** Yanaka neighborhood walking tour - traditional atmosphere, temples, cat-spotting. **Late Afternoon:** Akihabara for electronics and anime culture. **Evening:** Dinner in Akihabara, optional maid cafe experience.

Day 4: Day Trip

Full Day Option 1: *Hakone and Mount Fuji* - leave Tokyo 8 AM via Odawara, Hakone Loop (ropeway, pirate ship, museums), onsen experience, return by 7-8 PM. **Full Day Option 2:** *Nikko* - leave 8 AM, visit Toshogu Shrine, Kegon Falls, Lake Chuzenji, return by 7 PM. **Half Day Option:** Kamakura - Great Buddha, temple visits, Komachi-dori shopping street, possible Enoshima Island addition.

Day 5: Shopping & Food

Early Morning: Tsukiji Outer Market food tour (7-9 AM) with fresh sushi breakfast. **Mid-Morning:** Ginza shopping and window browsing, Itoya stationery store. **Lunch:** Department store depach iika basement for variety. **Afternoon:** Imperial Palace East Gardens walk. Akihabara or Nakano Broadway for otaku shopping. **Evening:** Roppongi for upscale dining or Shibuya for casual evening. *Consider attending a traditional kabuki performance.*

Customization Tips: Adjust based on interests. Art lovers should add more museums (Nezu Museum, teamLab Planets). Food enthusiasts can book cooking classes or additional food tours. Anime fans should allocate more time in Akihabara and visit Pokemon Center, Jump Shop, etc. *Don't overschedule - leave flexibility for discoveries and rest.*

Best Photography Locations

Iconic Tokyo Shots:

- **Shibuya Crossing:** Best views from Starbucks in Shibuya Tsutaya (2nd floor) or Magnet by Shibuya 109 rooftop. *Shoot during rush hour (5-7 PM) for maximum crowds.* Blue hour (just after sunset) creates magical lighting with neon signs.
- **Tokyo Tower at Night:** Photograph from Zojoji Temple grounds for traditional/modern contrast. Or from Shiba Park for cherry blossom foreground (spring only). *Best 30 minutes after sunset when tower lights turn on but sky retains blue color.*
- **Senso-ji Temple:** Arrive at dawn (6-7 AM) for empty Nakamise Street and soft morning light on the pagoda. Night illumination creates dramatic atmosphere. Position yourself to capture Kaminarimon Gate with crowds for scale.
- **Chidorigafuchi:** Cherry blossom reflection shots in the moat. *Visit during illumination periods (late March-early April, 6-9 PM)* for stunning pink reflections. Rent a rowboat for unique water-level perspective.
- **Nezu Shrine Torii Gates:** The vermillion torii tunnel is best photographed in *late morning (10-11 AM)* when sun filters through. During azalea festival (late April-May), capture colorful flowers with gates. Less crowded than Fushimi Inari.

Skyline & Observation Decks:

- **Tokyo Skytree:** Shoot sunset from Tembo Deck (350m) for 360° golden hour views. *Book tickets for 4:30-5 PM entry* to catch both daylight and night scenes. Mount Fuji visible on clear winter days (morning best).
- **Roppongi Hills:** Mori Tower's 52nd-floor observation deck offers open-air rooftop access. Perfect for *Tokyo Tower foreground shots with city sprawl*. Visit during blue hour for illuminated cityscape.
- **Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building:** FREE observation decks (202m) in Shinjuku. North tower offers Fuji views on clear days; south tower shows Shibuya/Roppongi direction. *Arrive before sunset* for transformation from day to night city.
- **Carrot Tower Observation Deck:** Free 26th-floor deck in Sangenjaya with Fuji views and less touristy vibe. Best on clear winter mornings.

Street Photography Hotspots:

- **Golden Gai, Shinjuku:** Narrow alleyways with tiny bars create atmospheric night shots. *Shoot from public areas, respect privacy.* Neon signs and lanterns glow beautifully after dark (8-10 PM).
- **Omoide Yokocho:** "Memory Lane" or "Piss Alley" - atmospheric yakitori alley with smoke, lanterns, and character. Best 6-8 PM when restaurants fill up. *Be discreet and ask permission if photographing people.*
- **Takeshita Street, Harajuku:** Colorful street fashion, kawaii culture, vibrant storefronts. *Weekends offer best people-watching* but prepare for extreme crowds. Mid-afternoon provides good lighting.
- **Akihabara at Night:** Neon overload with anime billboards, electronics stores, and maid cafe signs. *Shoot from Chuo-dori* when closed to vehicles (Sundays 1-6 PM) or at night for full neon effect.

Traditional & Scenic:

- **Hamarikyu Gardens:** Traditional garden with skyscrapers background creates unique Tokyo contrast. *Tea house on the pond* is iconic. Visit during plum blossoms (Feb-Mar), cherry blossoms (late Mar-early Apr), or autumn colors (Nov).
- **Sumida River:** Photograph from bridges with Tokyo Skytree background. *Azumabashi Bridge* offers classic angle. Water buses create leading lines. Best at blue hour with reflections.
- **Imperial Palace Bridge:** Nijubashi (double bridge) with palace gate is classic shot. *Early morning* for fewer tourists and soft light. Cherry blossom season adds pink frames.
- **Yanaka Ginza Steps:** "Yuyake Dandan" (Sunset Steps) offers elevated view down shopping street. *Late afternoon golden hour* creates warm glow. Cats often appear for bonus shots.

Seasonal Specialties:

- **Cherry Blossom Season (Late March-Early April):** Meguro River for riverside tunnels of pink. Chidorigafuchi for moat reflections. Ueno Park for classic hanami parties. *Arrive at dawn* to avoid massive crowds.
- **Autumn Foliage (Mid-Nov to Early Dec):** Rikugien Garden for night illuminations. Shinjuku Gyoen for varied colors. Meiji Jingu Gaien for golden ginkgo tree avenue. *Peak colors typically mid-late November.*
- **Winter Illuminations (Nov-Feb):** Shibuya Blue Cave (usually Dec-Jan), Roppongi Hills, Tokyo Midtown, Marunouchi. *Blue hour (5-6 PM in winter)* balances ambient and artificial light.

Photography Tips:

- Download **PhotoPills or Sun Surveyor** to plan golden hour timing and sun positions
- Respect privacy - *never photograph people without permission*, especially in narrow streets or shops
- Many temples prohibit **tripods and flash photography** inside buildings
- Rainy days create amazing reflection shots in Shibuya and neon districts - don't skip shooting in rain
- **Winter (Dec-Feb) offers clearest skies** and best Fuji visibility - cold but perfect for cityscapes
- Use *live view/screen rather than viewfinder* in crowded areas to be less intrusive

Electricity & Adapters

Voltage: Japan uses **100 volts AC**, which is unique globally (most countries use 110-120V or 220-240V). Frequency is 50Hz in eastern Japan (Tokyo) and 60Hz in western Japan.

Plug Type: Japan uses **Type A plugs** (two flat parallel pins), the same as USA and Canada. *No ground pin* is standard - three-pin devices need adapters.

Who Needs Adapters:

- **North American travelers:** Your Type A plugs fit directly. Most modern electronics (phones, laptops, cameras) handle 100-120V and will work fine. Check device labels for "Input: 100-240V" - if it says this, you're good.
- **European, UK, Australian travelers:** Need plug adapters for Type A sockets. Your devices rated for 220-240V will work in Japan's 100V sockets but may charge slower or run at reduced power. Universal travel adapters work well.
- **Hair dryers, curling irons, electric razors:** These often *don't handle voltage differences*. If your device is 220-240V only, it won't work properly in Japan. **Consider buying cheap versions in Japan** (available at any electronics store or 100-yen shops) or using hotel-provided devices.

Where to Buy Adapters in Tokyo: Available at Narita/Haneda airports, Bic Camera, Yodobashi Camera, 100-yen shops (Daiso), convenience stores, and hotels (usually at front desk).

Charging Your Devices: Most hotels provide multiple outlets and sometimes USB charging ports. *Bring a power strip* if traveling with multiple devices - Japanese outlets typically have only 2 plug spaces. USB wall chargers work universally.

Pro Tip: Modern phone and laptop chargers are almost always dual-voltage (100-240V) and will work perfectly in Japan with just a plug adapter if needed. The 100V vs 110-120V difference is negligible for these devices. *Always check your device's label before plugging in.*

Tokyo Food Guide

Must-Try Dishes:

- **Sushi & Sashimi:** From conveyor belt sushi (kaitenzushi) to Michelin-starred establishments. Tsukiji Outer Market and Toyosu Market offer ultra-fresh options. *Try omakase (chef's choice) for authentic experience.* Counter seating lets you watch chefs work.
- **Ramen:** Tokyo-style shoyu (soy sauce) ramen is the local specialty. Visit *Ichiran for solo dining booths, Afuri for yuzu-flavored, or Tsuta (Michelin-starred)*. Ramen streets in Tokyo Station and Shinjuku offer variety. Each shop has unique flavor profiles.
- **Tempura:** Lightly battered deep-fried seafood and vegetables. *High-end tempura features seasonal ingredients* served piece by piece. Tendon (tempura rice bowl) is affordable casual version. Tsunahachi chain offers quality at reasonable prices.
- **Tonkatsu:** Breaded deep-fried pork cutlet served with shredded cabbage and rice. *Maisen in Omotesando* is famous. The meat should be juicy inside with crispy exterior. Dip in tonkatsu sauce or eat with mustard and salt.
- **Yakitori:** Grilled chicken skewers with various parts (thigh, skin, heart, liver). *Omoide Yokocho and Yurakucho's train track area* have atmospheric yakitori alleys. Order with salt (shio) or sauce (tare). Pair with highball or beer.
- **Sukiyaki & Shabu-Shabu:** Hotpot dishes with thinly sliced beef and vegetables. Sukiyaki is sweeter, cooked in soy-based broth. *Shabu-shabu involves swishing meat in boiling broth.* Often all-you-can-eat options available.
- **Monjayaki:** Tokyo's version of savory pancake (similar to okonomiyaki but runnier). *Tsukishima district is "Monja Street"* with dozens of restaurants. Cook it yourself at table grills. Fun group dining experience.
- **Wagyu Beef:** Premium Japanese beef with incredible marbling. *Try yakiniku (grilled) or steak preparations.* A5 grade is highest quality. Expensive but worth experiencing once. Many affordable wagyu burger options available too.
- **Unagi:** Grilled freshwater eel glazed with sweet soy-based sauce. *Traditionally eaten on hot summer days* for stamina. Served over rice as unadon. High-end unagi restaurants specialize in this delicacy.

Street Food & Snacks:

- **Taiyaki:** Fish-shaped cake filled with red bean paste, custard, or chocolate. Hot and crispy outside, sweet inside.
- **Takoyaki:** Octopus balls - wheat batter with octopus pieces, topped with sauce, mayo, bonito flakes. *Watch them expertly flip in special pans.*
- **Onigiri:** Rice balls wrapped in seaweed with various fillings (salmon, tuna mayo, pickled plum). Convenience store staple - cheap, filling, authentic.
- **Crepes:** Harajuku's Takeshita Street specialty. Filled with fruits, whipped cream, ice cream, and various toppings. Instagram-worthy treats.
- **Melonpan:** Sweet bread with cookie crust in melon-like pattern. Doesn't taste like melon but crispy and delicious.

Dining Tips:

- **Tipping:** *NOT practiced in Japan* - can actually be considered rude. Service charge is included. Simply pay the bill amount.
- **Reservations:** High-end restaurants and popular spots fill up **weeks in advance**. Use Tabelog (Japanese Yelp), Google Maps, or hotel concierge for bookings. Some accept only phone reservations in Japanese.
- **Plastic Food Models:** Nearly all restaurants display realistic plastic versions of their menu items outside. *Point at what you want* if there's a language barrier.

- **Vending Machines:** Many casual restaurants use ticket vending machines at entrance. *Purchase ticket, give to staff, receive food.* Often Japanese-only but pictures help. Staff usually assist foreigners.
- **Oshibori:** Hot or cold wet towels provided to clean hands before eating. Use and place aside - don't use on face or table.
- **Itadakimasu & Gochisosama:** Say "itadakimasu" before eating (I humbly receive) and "gochisosama deshita" after finishing (thank you for the meal). *Simple phrases show respect.*
- **Slurping:** Loudly slurping noodles is normal and shows appreciation. Don't be shy!
- **Chopstick Etiquette:** Never stick chopsticks vertically in rice (funeral ritual). Don't pass food chopstick-to-chopstick. *Rest chopsticks on provided holder.*

Where to Eat:

- **Depachika:** Department store basements offer *incredible variety of prepared foods*, bento boxes, and sweets. Discount prices after 7-8 PM. Great for quick quality meals.
- **Convenience Stores:** 7-Eleven, FamilyMart, Lawson have surprisingly good food - onigiri, bento, sandwiches, fried chicken. *Open 24/7, extremely convenient.* Microwave available for heating.
- **Izakaya:** Japanese pub with variety of small dishes and drinks. *Great for trying multiple items.* Usually have English menus in tourist areas. Lively atmosphere, often with smoke.
- **Standing Bars:** Tachi-nomi serve cheap drinks and snacks while standing. *Authentic local experience* especially near train stations. Quick, affordable, and social.

Dietary Restrictions: Vegetarian/vegan options are limited - Japanese cuisine heavily uses dashi (fish-based stock). *Buddhism-influenced shojin ryori* (temple cuisine) is fully vegetarian. Gluten-free is challenging - soy sauce contains wheat. Research specialized restaurants in advance or use Happy Cow app.

Food Budget: Cheap meal: ¥500-1,000. Mid-range: ¥1,500-3,000. High-end: ¥5,000-20,000+. *Lunch sets (teishoku) offer better value* than dinner at the same restaurants. Convenience stores and standing sushi bars keep costs down.

Tourist Passes

Tokyo Subway Ticket (24/48/72-hour)

Unlimited rides on **Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway lines** (not JR lines). Available for 24, 48 or 72 hours (check the current prices). *Excellent value for tourists* covering most major attractions. Purchase at airports, major stations, or tourist information centers. Must be consecutive hours from first use. Does not include JR Yamanote Line or airport trains.

www.tokyometro.jp

JR Tokyo Wide Pass

3 consecutive days of unlimited JR train travel in the Tokyo area and beyond (check the current price). Covers *Nikko, Izu, Karuizawa, Gala Yuzawa ski resort, and Mt. Fuji area*. Includes limited express and rapid trains, reserved seating. Perfect for multiple day trips. Can break even with just one trip to Nikko. Not valid for Tokaido Shinkansen to Kyoto/Osaka. Foreign passport required.

www.jreast.co.jp

Hakone Free Pass

Covers round-trip from Tokyo to Hakone plus **unlimited use of Hakone transportation** including cable cars, ropeways, sightseeing boats, and buses (2-day or 3-day versions from Shinjuku; check the current price). *Includes discounts to most museums and attractions.* Essential for Hakone exploration. Buy at Odakyu stations. Allows unlimited ins and outs from Hakone area. Can easily save ¥3,000+ on transportation costs alone.

www.odakyu.jp

N'EX Tokyo Round Trip Ticket

Round-trip on Narita Express between Narita Airport and Tokyo (check the current price) at a saving versus regular tickets. *Valid for 14 days from first use.* Return journey can be to/from different Tokyo stations. Advance purchase online gets additional discount. Foreign passport required. Convenient reserved seating. Fastest train option from Narita Airport with luggage space.

www.jreast.co.jp

Nikko Pass (All Area)

Round trip from Tokyo to Nikko plus unlimited bus travel within Nikko area (2-day or 4-day versions; check the current price). Covers Lake Chuzenji, Yumoto Onsen, and remote areas. *Essential if visiting beyond Toshogu Shrine area.* Includes discounts at some attractions. Purchase at Tobu Asakusa Station or online. Works on Tobu Railway lines (not JR).

www.tobu.co.jp