Too cute to handle

In Tokyo, ‘cute’ doesn’t just refer to the kitschy kawaii styles that Harajuku is famous for. Sure, ‘cute’ is an expression we use on an animal-shaped doughnut, a 3D latte art of a cat, or a bento filled with bunny-shaped sushi.

There’s also a refined, more elegant side to ‘cute’, one that carries great artistic value, and you’ll find it in things like ikebana, amezaiku sugarwork and of course, wagashi – the delicate tea time sweets that are too pretty to eat.

In fact, you’ll discover ‘cute’ in its many manifestations throughout Tokyo, from billboards and product packaging to food presentation and even public infrastructure designs such as the manhole covers, which have garnered a following of their own. So get cute with Tokyo – you know you want to.

Seasonal sweets
Your ultimate guide to wagashi, the Japanese tea time treats that look like works of art

PAGE 48

Supper clubs
Tokyo’s best 24-hour restaurants

PAGE 62

 Stranger things
The city’s most unusual museums

PAGE 52

Paper-pushers
The best stationery shops in Tokyo

PAGE 48

FEATURES AND REGULARS
06 Tokyo Update 52 Open Tokyo 15 Courtesy Calls 16 To Do 20 Cute Tokyo 40 Eating & Drinking 48 Shopping & Style 52 Things to Do 56 Art & Culture 60 Music 62 Nightlife 66 Film 67 LGBT 68 Travel & Hotels 70 Getting Around 74 You know you’re in Tokyo when...

"Innovation and toughness now wrapped in carbon."
This nighttime shot of Tokyo Skytree was taken through the cherry blossoms...Here are a few tips from a seasoned photographer...

Looking to liven up your Instagram feed with something more thrilling than a blurry photo? 'Strong' (き risultati) and further on to either 'Dinner' (晩ご飯) or 'Tonight' (今晩)

Remembering an entire vocab list may be a chore, but a word a day should be doable, right? This wallpaper for Mac does exactly that: it shows you one kanji per day as a backdrop. You can skip any that you already know or remember. It's not rocket science, but it's a great way to learn when you have a lot of time to spare.

Remember that competition for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics mascots was fierce, with hundreds of designs submitted. The winners are...the futuristic Set A and the more traditional-looking Set B. The Olympic mascot can move anywhere in a flash and 'has a strong sense of justice', while the Paralympic mascot possesses 'immense mental strength'.

“Sono mama” (そのままでいいですよ) is a common phrase used in Japanese. It means ‘as you are’ and can be translated to ‘you’re fine the way it is’. It’s a way to express acceptance or agreement without giving up; you can’t be lazy’. Guess what, Hachiro’s ground approach is ‘Work hard and never stop’.

The winning design is by Ryo Taniguchi, a graphic designer from Japan. These Olympic Powerpuff Girls lookalikes are characters that have superpowers. The Olympic mascot can move anywhere in a flash and has a strong sense of justice, while the Paralympic one possesses immense mental strength – so much so that it can move things merely by thinking. We wish them all the best in their new roles.
Tokyo Update

**Why does Tokyo... have no bins?**

Tokyo isn’t one main reason why our fair city has so few places to dump your trash – rather, it’s a culmination of factors. Our stringent recycling system (combustibles, non-combustibles, cans, PET bottles, plastics... means that we wouldn’t just need a bin here or there; we would need bins for all different types of waste, and pray that people actually use them properly.

Other than that, as in other big cities, a number of bins in public places were removed after the 1995 inatami earthquake in the Tokyo Metro to lessen their possible use in terrorist attacks. So for now, drop your trash in Tokyo like you do here.

**COMING SOON TO TOKYO**

**VIRTUAL VACATIONS**

**WHY NOT TRY...**

**Don’t forget to...**

**ONE DAY IN...**

**Nakano**

**Morning**

Nakano’s reputation was cemented by one building: Nakano Broadway. A multi-storey meat and cheese shop, it welcomes over 100,000 shoppers a day. The most famous of which is Mandarake, a small shop on the 3rd floor where you can find all kinds of knick-knacks, from anime figures to manga. But that’s not all: there’s also a huge selection of Japanese design goods. It’s a multi-flavoured soft serve.

**Catfish + Earthquakes**

A virtual travel company offering 360- degree VR experiences from Tokyo.

**Woden Skyscraper**

This unique building was designed to look like a skyscraper, but it’s not. It’s made of wood, making it a unique example of sustainable building in Japan.

**Teamlab Museum**

A collaboration with renowned architecture firm Kengo Kuma & Associates, the museum features interactive installations that span the entire space and incorporate elements of the natural world.

**Afternoon**

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**Dinner**

With most major stations on the western Chuo line, yakiniku joints and izakaya are the name of the game in Nakano. Most of them are clustered in the old area north of the station. Many have become more English-friendly in recent years, but even if they’re not, the local clientele is always up for a chat and happy to help you out.

A good place to start is at any branch of Shinsen, a small chain of yakiniku restaurants which started right here in Nakano. Each location specialises in one type of skewer (beef, pork, chicken, deep-fried kushiage, fish), but prices are uniformly low and the service is friendly in recent years, but even if they’re not, the local clientele is always up for a chat and happy to help you out.

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We hear animation culture brought you to Japan. How’s life as an anime artist in Tokyo?

Tokyo is really exciting for an artist who’s interested in making all kinds of art, such as animation, comics and illustrations. Most of the animation studios are located here, so it’s easy to work, collaborate and even visit some of them. It’s convenient to arrange meetings with publishers, too. I’ve had the pleasure of visiting Studio Ghibli twice and now I’m also working with another studio. Furthermore, places such as Akihabara and big bookstores are like windows into all the current trends in popular art, with inspirations abound.

It’s interesting that you mainly paint the facades of old Japanese stores. How did you fall in love with this vanishing aspect of the city?

This is just one of my projects, although it’s getting the most attention. I’m also directing a short animation and creating current trends in popular art, with inspirations abound.

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When did you first feel like a Tokyoite?

I guess when I finally could walk Sanban-cho without using a map, I got there in the end. The well-established tourist attractions are fun, but exploring the city on your own can be really rewarding. Almost all of my best adventures in Tokyo (and Japan as well) were at random interesting looking places, interacting with the people there, and just exploring a little deeper than usual.

Three new things from NHK World-Japan this spring

Spring has sprung! And NHK World-Japan is celebrating the new season by enriching its programming, with the promise of entertaining you even more!

1. A WHOLE NEW VIBE

NHK World has been reborn as NHK World-Japan, and we’re taking more than just a name change here. This new beginning will be all about expressing our passion for broadcasting ‘from Japan to the world’.

2. SUBTITLES NOW AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

All NHK World-Japan programmes are broadcast in English, and some of those available on demand via the NHK World-Japan website and app now also come with subtitles are dubbed in Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Spanish, Thai or Vietnamese.

3. NEW PROGRAMMES

There’s only two years left till 2020 – the year of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Quite a few shows looking forward to the big event, as well as several others which connect Japan with the world, are being launched. Stay tuned!

Visit nhk.jp/nhkworld to find out how you can get NHK WORLD-JAPAN 24/7 in your country, on your TV, computer or mobile device.
TATTOOS ARE STILL TABOO when it comes to sento (communal bathhouse) culture in Japan. While they are seen as an expression of individuality in other parts of the world, Japanese society at large still equates this form of body art with the yakuza. Unless your tattoo is small enough to be concealed, chances are you’ll be refused entry – except at these ink-friendly bathhouses.

JAKOTSUYU
This public bath in Asakusa has been around since the Edo period and is hugely popular among locals. It is known for its signature black water bath, named ‘kuro-yu’ in Japanese, a naturally occurring mineral spring water that’s rich in humic acid. The dark water can help regulate your body temperature, to the extent that you’ll still feel warm even after you’ve stepped out of the bath.

à 1-11-11 Asakusa, Taito (Asakusa Station). 03 3841 8645. tinyurl.com/jakotsuyu. 1pm-11.30pm, closed Tue.

MIKOKUYU
Located near Honjo-Azumabashi Station in Asakusa, Mikokuyu underwent an extensive renovation in 2015. The semi open-air baths were increased in size; the property also installed tubs made from Japanese cypress while making its facilities accessible to disabled people. Best of all, Mikokuyu offers family-style baths, where spacious bathrooms can be rented whole and enjoyed by those needing special care together with their families. Natural black water baths (or kuro-yu) are also available – and you can adjust the temperature to your liking.

à 3-30-8 Ishihara, Sumida (Kinshicho Station). 03 3623 1695. tinyurl.com/TOTmikokuyu. 3.30pm-2am, closed Mon.

POKAPOKA LAND, TAKABAN-NO-YU
Ten minutes’ walk from Gakugei-daigaku Station, this sento offers a variety of bathrooms on its first and second floors, and the male and female baths are switched on a daily basis. On the first floor there is a high-temperature sauna scented with Japanese cypress, while you’ll find a ‘salt sauna’ on the second floor, where the lower temperature melts the salt that’s spread over your skin. The facility also has an outdoor medicinal bath that incorporates herbs from around the world.

à 2-2-1 Takanobu, Meguro (Gakugei-Daigaku Station). 03 3713 1005. takaban-yu.com. 3pm-12midnight, weekend & hols 2pm-12.30am (last entry 12midnight), closed Wed.

TOGOSHI GINZA ONSEN
Togoshi Ginza Onsen is a traditional bathhouse in a modern setting, and it’s very well equipped too: you’ll find a natural onsen and sauna, plus an open-air bath made from Japanese cypress. The interiors are adorned with two different drawings of Mt Fuji, creating contrasting atmospheres on the two sides of the bathhouse. One is a traditional painting of the sacred mountain by veteran Japanese painter Nakamura Morio; the other is a more modern interpretation by graffiti artist duo Gravityfree, depicting Mt Fuji and the Seven Gods of Good Fortune.

à 2-1-6 Togoshi, Shinagawa (Togoshi Station). 03 3782 7400. tinyurl.com/TOTtogoshi. Mon-Thu, Sat 3pm-1am, Sun 8am-12noon, 3pm-1am, closed Fri.

OPEN TOKYO

YUDONBURI SAKAEYU
Yudonburi Sakaeyu in Minowa is known for its large and fully-equipped warm bath facility, which was revamped and renovated just last year. You’ll be glad to know that they provide lockers and parking for cars and bikes. Best of all, there are three types of bath here – medicinal, jet and electric – plus a sauna, too.

à 1-4-5 Nihonzutsumi, Taito (Minowa, Minami-Senju stations). 03 3875 2885. sakaeyu.com. 2pm-12midnight, Sun & hols 12noon-12midnight, closed Wed.

Got ink? These welcoming bathhouses won’t mind.

By Kunihiro Miki
Run a good race

Thousands will descend on Tohoku this year to run, ride and experience local hospitality, while contributing to the regeneration of the earthquake-stricken region. By Nick Narigon

WHEN TAKASHI TAKEKAWA was in New York days after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, he was moved by the outpouring of sympathy he received from colleagues and cabin crew. Inspired to take action, the experienced runner launched the Tohoku Food Festival & Marathon in the tsunami-stricken region of Miyagi Prefecture. “The marathon is just a tool to gather people from outside of Tohoku and through their wallets and love for this place, help the kids themselves make it,” says Takekawa. ‘Not to just enjoy the race, but also to enjoy the food and sake.’

But the Tohoku Food Festival & Marathon is just one of many events taking place in the area as part of a broader ten-year recovery and revitalisation plan to which the Japanese government has pledged ¥6.5 trillion. From marathons to food festivals & marathon in the Tohoku-Miyagi Revive Marathon October 13-14. After the March 11 tsunami ravaged Sendai, the city’s park was a flooded wasteland littered with debris and displaced cars. The seawalls and roads have now been rebuilt and the aim of the Tohoku Miyagi Revive Marathon (pictured top) is to bring endurance athletes and multi-day bicycle tours, volunteer certificates of achievement from the kids themselves make it a very emotional and tangible experience,” says Rob Williams, founder of Knights in White Lycra, which has raised ¥15.8 million for Tohoku charities between 2012 and 2015. In addition to this year’s annual race, the organization is hosting a 24-hour run around Tokyo’s Imperial Palace on April 6-7, a charity triathlon tournament on April 24 at Tamura Center, and a 54km ultra-marathon in December that takes runners from Tokyo to a children’s home in Saitama.

TOHOKU UPDATE

I am inspired

TOHOKU UPDATE

I am inspired

TOHOKU UPDATE

I am inspired

TOHOKU UPDATE

I am inspired
Things to do
Koinobori at Tokyo Tower

Now an annual sight at Tokyo Tower, the colourful Children’s Day carp streamers will be set up in front of the main entrance area from early April. In addition to 333 koinobori, which signify the height of our beloved Eiffel Tower replica, the decorations include 6 sanma-nobori – this one both a reminder of September’s Tokyo Tower Sanna Matsuri and an ongoing recovery efforts in Tohoku’s Sanriku region, a major producer of Pacific saury (sama).

MUSIC

HERMETO PASCOAL E GRUPO

Much-loved Brazilian multi-instrumentalist Hermeto Pascoal is coming to Japan again for two full-on sets in one day. Pascoal’s music is a mazy flight of fancy and always inventive combination of Brazilian sounds and jazz, and sees the octogenarian as pretty much anything as an instrument. He can compose an original melody at the drop of a hat – no wonder people call him ‘music itself’.

<Apr 13, 11-11:45 Wednesday, Imperial Hotel: Imperial City- Sullivan Room. ¥8,500. Advance ¥7,750. Tickets only. FREE entry.>

THINGS TO DO

Fuji Shibazakura Festival

Great views of the majestic Mount Fuji and seemingly endless fields of shibazakura (‘pink moss’) – no wonder that this annual spring festival out at Lake Motosu in Yamanashi attracts hordes of Tokeitouren over Golden Week. In addition to strolling around the immense flower growth, you can buy your own shibazakura pot to take home or sample a wide range of local delicacies.


MUSIC

FT. HERMETO PASCOAL E GRUPO

FRUE UNIVERSAL MUSIC JAPAN TOUR

Musically versatile, Hermeto Pascoal’s band FT. Hermeto Pascoal E Grupo tour will be coming to Japan this year to be another grand, bulb-filling affair.

<May 12: WMM, Ria Bldg 2F, 23-1-32 Roppongi, Shibuya. ¥2,500. Tickets only. ¥1,600.>

THINGS TO DO

Kameido Tenjin Wisteria

Famed within Tokyo for its wisteria (planted in Japanese), this shrine in Kameido has a good recovery story after the Great East Japan Earthquake. From late April, everything is lit up in the night, and you’ll be able to catch the wisteria reflections in the pond. On top of that, over 100 stalls will set up during the festival.

<Apr 15-May 6: 3-6-1 Kameido, Koto. ¥600.>

MUSIC

Charlotte Gainsbourg

The mysterious LA-based electronic unit, Run by Canadian singer’s Mike Milosh, fooled a lot of people back when hit song ‘Open’ was released. Many took Milosh’s lush falsetto to be female, but the mellow bedroom soul on acclaimed 2013 debut album ‘Womans’ was in fact all male. Despite a few band member changes, Rhye’s signature suave style persevered under Milosh’s direction and, judging by the gorgeous new album ‘Blood’, it seems you’ll be in for a treat this Zappi day.


THINGS TO DO

Kuramati Matsuri

The ancient Onbashira Shrine out in Fuchu is said to have been founded in the year 111, and the annual Kurayami Matsuri is its most notable event. Translating as darkness festival, the celebration goes on for a week, with flour parades, performances and plenty of family-friendly fun taking place each day. Highlights include eight mikoshi shrines being carried through the grounds to the beat of huge taiko drums, and a spectacular yabusome (horseback archery) demonstration.

<Apr 30-May 2: 3-1-21 Higashino, Fuchu. ¥1,600.Advance ¥1,000.>
Yamanote line during rush hour.

Of crowds you might expect on the

of craft beer on offer and the kinds

of tasting, with over 120 varieties

Tokyo’s hop-heads: an afternoon

It’s the highlight of the year for

THINGS TO DO

JUNE

TOTsanja18. FREE.

for the chance – to

mikoshi (portable shrines) are

the Sunday, when three enormous

performances throughout the

founded Asakusa’s Sensoji

celebrates the three men who

SANJA MATSURI

THINGS TO DO

KIDS

TOKYO TOT SHOW

As did, you might even dream of

for two decades

band still manage to keep the

Damon Albarn and his animated

children in the ‘Kids Life Zone’.

smartphone apps, while there’s

friendly event introduces the latest

annual toy exhibition. This family-

which is hosting Japan’s largest

come true at Tokyo Big Sight,

If so, your childhood dream can

HERE, where you could try all

As a kid, did you ever dream of

¥4,800, door ¥5,200.

next three-and-a-half hours. It’s a

brews you can stomach for the

April 2017 to critical acclaim, and

they headlined Fuji Rock in the

same year. Luckily for us, they’ve

declined to return to Japan for a

world tour. Expect big, digital visuals,

Albarn flitting around the stage

like a man half his age, and a high

probability of special guests.


Diya: Narita Airport/Tokyo Gate Bridge. Tickets: ¥10,000.

THINGS TO DO

SERNICHI MAIDO HOUZUKI

At Anago Shrine’s annual festival, stepping through a ring of red

gate—a movement is said to bring 1,000 days of luck. Besides

that, Chinese lantern plants (Begonia) grow naturally around

the children’s diseases and female

gynaecological issues. It’s three

Birds with one stone here: purify

the plants before eating them for

birds with one stone here: purify

the shrine at this time; consuming

a figure-eight movement is said to

grow naturally around

hozuki

THINGS TO DO

EARTH GARDEN SUMMER 2018

Tokyo’s ecologists, hippies and

tree-huggers will descend on

Yoyogi Park for the quarterly Earth

Garden, which this time focuses on

the future. ‘There’ll be the usual

plethora of stalls, food booths and

workshops, complemented by a

night-time tea market and a host

of live acts. Keeping with the

eco-conscious vibe, the reusable

cups at the stalls have a ¥50

eco-conscious vibe, the reusable

cups at the stalls have a ¥50

for everyone here, whether you’re already a fan of

most exciting steakhouses? There’s something

for everyone here, whether you’re already a fan of

The Oak Door or a new visitor to the city.

For more information, or to reserve a table,

toTokyo.grand.hyatt.co.jp.

Promotional feature

Enjoy a refreshing dining experience at Tokyo’s favourite steakhouse in Grand Hyatt Tokyo

I n celebration of Grand Hyatt Tokyo’s 15th anniversary, the hotel’s signature restaurant and steakhouse The Oak Door has relaunched this March with an enhanced dining concept, which promises exciting new dishes and a warm, inviting atmosphere. The revamped restaurant exudes a sense of nostalgia, and you can look forward to tasting creative craft cocktails and over 300 varieties of New World wines along with premium steaks.

Located in the heart of Roppongi, you can’t beat The Oak Door’s location, surrounded by everything from world-class shopping to the latest art exhibitions and vantage points offering some of the best views of the Tokyo skyline. The steakhouse’s refreshed space is the perfect spot to enjoy year-round dining; you can lounge outside on the sunny terrace in the warmer months, and cosy up inside when winter comes. Your dining experience here has also been given a theatrical upgrade—now you can peak into the open kitchen and watch the chefs at work. Comfortable and intimate booth seating, which has been extended to the bar area, plus gorgeous white oak wood paneling add to the relaxed yet romantic ambiance.

On the food front, The Oak Door is equipped with the latest dual grills and a brand new steak broiler oven that reaches over 900 degrees Celsius. A wide selection of steak options can be cooked to your liking, be it a rich and smoky Nebraska strip loin or a tender and juicyFi

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From traditional dolls to fancy animal doughnuts, 3D latte art to capsule toys, here’s your shopping list for all things cute and adorable in Tokyo. Souvenirs, Kaila Imada, Shiori Kotaki, Mari Hiratsuka.

Capsule toys

FIRST IMPORTED FROM AMERICA in 1965, capsule toys – or gachapon – really caught the Japanese imagination in the 1970s and rapidly spread across the country. The machines were initially set up in front of sweet shops, with toys intended primarily for kids. But in recent years, capsule toys have grown up, with everything from cheeky treats for adults to miniature artworks inside.

Capsule toys have various names in Japanese, depending on the region and manufacturer. One of the most famous names, gacha-gacha, comes from these machines. When a capsule machine makes its lever, you’re getting until you’ve cracked open the ‘egg’. Here are the city’s top places to spin for a surprise.

AKIHABARA GACHAPON KAN

This popular place for gachapon has been operating in Akihabara for more than ten years. The store has approximately 500 capsule toy machines, mostly stocked with unique toys for grown-ups. The offerings are constantly refreshed with 50 new collections taking place of older stock every month. The store’s popular machines dispense items from the ‘Squishy Sushi’ series ($200 each) that are soft and squishable. The store owner speaks English, so feel free to ask questions if you’re ever in Akihabara.

NARITA AND HANEDA AIRPORTS

Capsule toy machines with the ‘Toy Capsule Figure Series’ ($400) are a series of lovely headwear for cats, called ‘Kawaii Kawaii Neko Usagi-chan’ (rabbit hat for cats, ¥1000). There are about 60 vending machines for various capsule toys at the entrance, plus each floor has a capsule toy corner as well. Among the store’s popular capsules is a series of lovely headwear for cats, called ‘Kawaii Kawaii Neko Usagi-chan’ (rabbit hat for cats, ¥1000).

Capsule toy machines are available at the Narita Airport ‘Souvenir Capsule Figure Series’ (¥400). This nostalgic capsule toy series are available at the main Tokyo branch of Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten as well as at the Tokyo Midtown outlet. The offerings are constantly refreshed with unique toys for grown-ups. The offerings are constantly refreshed with 50 new collections taking place of older stock every month. The store’s popular machines dispense items from the ‘Squishy Sushi’ series ($200 each) that are soft and squishable. The store owner speaks English, so feel free to ask questions if you’re ever in Akihabara.

YAMASHIROYA

A local institution, this five-storey speciality toy store is close to the Ame-Yoko Shopping Street in Ueno. There are about 60 vending machines for various capsule toys at the entrance, plus each floor has a capsule toy corner as well. Among the store’s popular capsules is a series of lovely headwear for cats, called ‘Kawaii Kawaii Neko Usagi-chan’ (rabbit hat for cats, ¥1000). There are about 60 vending machines for various capsule toys at the entrance, plus each floor has a capsule toy corner as well. Among the store’s popular capsules is a series of lovely headwear for cats, called ‘Kawaii Kawaii Neko Usagi-chan’ (rabbit hat for cats, ¥1000). There are about 60 vending machines for various capsule toys at the entrance, plus each floor has a capsule toy corner as well. Among the store’s popular capsules is a series of lovely headwear for cats, called ‘Kawaii Kawaii Neko Usagi-chan’ (rabbit hat for cats, ¥1000).

KAIYODO HOBBY LOBBY

Head for the games and hobbies section and go downstairs. You’ll find the ‘Plaster Figure Magnet Museum’ series here, which features small magnets in the form of plaster replicas of Venus de Milo, Moses and the likes. Other varieties from Tokyo Okamoto’s capsule toy series are available at the main Tokyo branch of Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten as well as at the Tokyo Midtown outlet. The offerings are constantly refreshed with unique toys for grown-ups. The offerings are constantly refreshed with 50 new collections taking place of older stock every month. The store’s popular machines dispense items from the ‘Squishy Sushi’ series ($200 each) that are soft and squishable. The store owner speaks English, so feel free to ask questions if you’re ever in Akihabara.

GASHAPON KAN

This popular place for gachapon has been operating in Akihabara for more than ten years. The store has approximately 500 capsule toy machines, mostly stocked with unique toys for grown-ups. The offerings are constantly refreshed with 50 new collections taking place of older stock every month. The store’s popular machines dispense items from the ‘Squishy Sushi’ series ($200 each) that are soft and squishable. The store owner speaks English, so feel free to ask questions if you’re ever in Akihabara.

NAKAGAWA MASASHICHI SHOTEN

A shop dealing in Japanese handicrafts, Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten produces an original capsule toy series called the ‘Japan Nationwide Miniature Folk Toy Collection’ ($400). This nostalgic collection features miniature versions of traditional Japanese folk toys, and you can get them at the main Tokyo branch of Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten as well as at the Tokyo Midtown outlet. The offerings are constantly refreshed with unique toys for grown-ups. The offerings are constantly refreshed with 50 new collections taking place of older stock every month. The store’s popular machines dispense items from the ‘Squishy Sushi’ series ($200 each) that are soft and squishable. The store owner speaks English, so feel free to ask questions if you’re ever in Akihabara.

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Folk toys

KYODO GANNU ARE THE TRADITIONAL FOLK TOYS of Japan. These simple dolls and figurines made from clay, wood and paper were what parents used to give to children at playtime, but are now more coveted by collectors than children.

While the general form remains the same, the shape and appearance of each type of doll differs depending on where, when and by it was created. Each doll embodies a different wish, such as for the healthy growth of the child or for the safety and prosperity of the family.

While the cuteness of the kyodo gannyo has garnered them a great amount of attention in recent years, these dolls are faced with decline as there’s a shortage of craftspeople with the skills to keep this artform alive. So when you see a toy that catches your eye, there is the possibility that you may never find another like it – snap it up fast. Here’s where to start your collection.

Available from…

INU-HARIKO
Humming little dogs first made in the Edo Period as charms for childbirth and child rearing. It is made by affixing many layers of paper or a frame made of clay or woven bamboo. Once the glue is dry, the frame is removed, leaving a lightweight character ready to lift any mood.

Available from… Suitengu Shrine. This shrine at Suitengu-Suemae Station was built in 1871 and is said to grant prayers asking for conception and safe childbirth. The grounds are studied with dog statues and visitors can receive an inu-hariko called ‘Fuku inu’ (good fortune dog) to take home.

ABAKERO
Akabeko are papier-mâché cows and they pay homage to the legendary red cow which came to the rescue when the constructions of Edo-Ju-year in Yanaka in Kuchinotsu prefecture, were at a difficult stage. Lightly touching the head of the bull causes it to nod.

KINGYO CHOCHIN
Simple lanterns that resemble goldfish, Kingyo Chochin are said to have been inspired by the Nebuta Festival in Aomori prefecture and first made for children approximately 150 years ago. They were believed to symbolize summer in the city of Enoshima and prosperity, where the practice originated. Thousands of fantastic fairy lanterns decorate the town every August.

OCTOPUS ON CAT (NÉRO NIGANDU)
You may have noticed that cats are everywhere in Japan. That’s because they are widely seen as a symbol of good luck and happiness, and you really want to boost your fortunes, you need an octopus riding atop your moggy. The Sagara doll, which originated in the Yamagata prefecture in the late 20th century, offers just that.

KOKESHI
Kokeshi are dolls made in the Tohoku region in northeast Japan. There are about 10 styles, each with its own specific facial expression, hairstyle and body pattern. It is believed that kokeshi was first made by artisans who, in addition to their main craft of wood homerare, also made toys for the family.

Available from… Asakusa Experience. At the Atelier Gallery behind Asakusa Kannon Temple, you can paint your own daruma for ¥2,000. This experience is offered from 11am to 5pm from Thursday through Sunday. No reservation is needed, and creating your own original daruma usually takes about 30 minutes.


OCTOPUS ON CAT (NÉRO NIGANDU)
Available from… Suitengu Shrine. 2-2-17 Zoshigaya, Toshima (Zoshigaya Station). 03 3844 0577.

HOKICHI-KOMA SPINNING TOP
At first glance this unique toy from Yanagawa prefecture appears to be a simple cute tanuki doll, but in fact is sort of a transformable toy. The bamboo hat, body and stand can be disassembled and used as individual spinning tops.

Regional folk toys of Japan

These shops stock a variety of traditional Japanese toys and dolls

ATELIERGANGU
21-1 Miyakeyacho, Shibuya (Shibuya, Shibuya, Shibuya- Chuo-ken, station). 03 5446 9466. ateliergangu.com. 11am-7pm, closed Sun & hols.

BEMARS JAPAN
3-32-6 Shirokane, Shirokane (Shinagawa Station). 03 5368 7300. bemars.com/TOKYOshinagawa. 11am-8pm daily.

ENDING
10-1 Hakamatsu cho, Shinkansen (Hakamatsu-kaido Station). 03 2202 9778. ending.com/TOKYOshibuya. 11am-7pm, closed Mon, the 3rd Sat & the 3rd Sun (except May, Aug, Nov, Dec).

GINZATAKUMI
8-4-2 Ginza, Chuo (Shibuya, Shinjuku Station). 03 3571 2017. taking.com/TOKYOginzatokum. 11am-7pm, closed Sun & hols.

ISTEN MINGEI
3-14-1 Shirokane (Shirokane, Shirokane- Shimbashi Station). 03 3552 1111. 10.30am-8pm daily.

NAKAGAWA MASASHICHI SHOTEN KOPPON-ICHI
eclectic Tokyo, 1-8-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda (Shibuya Station). 03 3211 8888. nakagawakappo.co.jp. 11am-8pm, Sun & hols 11am-8pm.

SUKEROU
2-3-1 Akasaka, Minato (Akasaka Station). 03 3844 0577. 10.30am-5pm daily.

UIDARETAYAMAGUCHI-KAN
3-4 Nihombashi, Chuo (Nihonbashi Station). 03 3221 8888. idemase-t.jp/oidemase. 10.30am-5pm daily.

SUKEKENU
2-2-12 Shiodome, Minato (Shiodome Station). 03 6607 7115. takasawa.jp. 11am-7pm, Sun & hols 11am-8pm.

TABIRENO ZAKKEATEN
2-22-12 Shiodome, Minato (Shiodome Station). 03 3444 0577. 10.30am-8pm daily.

TOY STOREYS

Discover these shops and pick up the toys that are cherished by children of all ages.
**ANIMAL ICE CREAM CONES**
This Harajuku ice cream stand is disguised as a pink ice cream vending machine, but you actually order from the staff hidden inside. You can choose your preferred ice cream animal – the elephants, koalas, pandas, bears are all good, but we say go the whole hog with the triple decker piggy option in three different flavours. Just be sure to snap a photo before it melts.

- [Dolce & Sienna](https://www.dolce-sienna.com/#en), 5-1-11 Kitadaita, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo (Shinjuku North, Shinjuku South, Shinjuku South West, Shinjuku South East stations), 03 3366 1561, dolce-sienna.com, $35.30-$41.70. 10am-9pm, closed Mon.
- [Dominique Ansel Bakery](https://www.dominiqueansen.com/japan), Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo (Ginza Station), 03 3564 1001. 10am-8pm, $360.

**ANIMAL DOUGHNUTS**
Taking the sweetest thing both figuratively and literally, Floresta’s kawaii doughnuts come in a variety of colours and characters. These ‘guilt-free’ treats are handmade from organic, dominantly produced ingredients. Be warned, you’ll need to get there early to bag a box – these fly off the shelves pretty quickly.

- [Floresta](https://nature-doughnuts.jp), various locations. nature-doughnuts.jp. 11am-7pm. From $210-$360.
- [Shironobu](https://www.shauncafe.com), 1-5-1 Kichijoji-Honcho, Musashino (Kichijoji Station), 03 5878 6221. shauncafe.com. 11am-9pm. From $730.

**SHIROMEGU POPLAR**
A newly opened café in the Kichijoji area, this shop is designed to reflect a traditional kabuki performer. It’s fair to say that the people behind Sunday Brunch in Kichijoji really like Shaun The Sheep. You’ll find an entire menu based on this beloved television character here, from a Shaun-themed cream puff to peeling potatoes to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. You’ll also find an entire menu based on this beloved television character, from a Shaun-themed cream puff to peeling potatoes to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. It’s fair to say that the people behind Sunday Brunch in Kichijoji really like Shaun The Sheep. You’ll find an entire menu based on this beloved television character here, from a Shaun-themed cream puff to peeling potatoes to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

- [Sunday Brunch Kichijoji](https://www.sundaybrunch-k.com), Parco Kichijoji 4F, 1-5-1 Kichijoji-Honcho, Musashino (Kichijoji Station). 03 5878 6221. shauncafe.com. 11am-9pm. From $730.

**MR KABUKI MELON PAN**
A specialty found only at Dominique Ansel Bakery Japan’s Ginza Mitsukoshi location, this super cute melon pan is coloured and designed to reflect a traditional kabuki performer, giving these traditionally boring-looking buns a unique look. Along with every other adorable creation from Dominique Ansel’s fun bakery, they taste as good as they look, so you’ll probably buy more than one.

- [Dominique Ansel Bakery](https://www.dominiqueansen.com/japan), Ginza Mitsukoshi B2F, 1-6-1 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Ginza Station, 03 3564 1001. 10am-8pm, $500.
- [Tokyo Banana](https://tokyobanana.jp), New Days, JR Ueno Station. 7-1-1 Ueno, Taito (Ueno Station). tokyobanana.jp. 10am-8pm. From $1,080.

**TOKYO BANANA PANDA**
Everybody’s favourite tasty souvenir, Tokyo Banana is now also available in panda form. Filled with yoghurt-flavoured banana cream, this special edition confection can be found at various locations including the New Days convenience store inside the JR ticket gates at Ueno Station. Best get them when you are passing through the station.

- [New Days](https://www.shibuya-newdays.com), Ginza 4-6-1 Chuo-ku, Tokyo (Ginza Station), 03 3518 6565. 10am-8pm. From $500.

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**Animal Slang**

- **Kimokawa**
  Meaning: Cuteness that is perfectly in paint (jaiku)
  Usage example: ‘Your look today is kimokawa.’

- **Gurokawa**
  Meaning: Cuteness so strong it makes you vomit (geroku)
  Usage example: ‘Shaun here was gurokawa. LOL’

- **Kawara**
  Meaning: Extremely popular kimokawa LINE sticker.
  Usage example: ‘Isn’t that new character kawara?’

- **Mekawa**
  Meaning: (mekawa) cute
  Usage example: ‘Those newcomers are mekkawa! I want some!’
GET CUTE WITH TOKYO

The best things to do in the international capital of cute, from creating adorable character bento or anime nails to the more intricate and artistic amezaiku sugar work and ikebana flower arrangements. By Mayumi Koyama and Kirsty Bouwers

KAWAII, OR CUTENESS, is a prominent aspect of Japanese culture. But kawaii goes beyond a look or mannerism; it is also a form of visual language, used to communicate everything from branding to public signage. And it’s not just about being cutesy and cutesy, it’s also used to refer to things that are attractive and appealing.

Spend enough time in Japan and you’ll find it hard to resist the charm and humour of kawaii culture. To help you find your kawaii heaven, we’ve pulled together the best courses and on-the-spot experiences to get a touch of cute into your life. Bear in mind that all courses require advance booking unless stated otherwise.

CHARACTER BENTO & SUSHI

The easiest way to get kiddy out a complete meal, bento filled with panda-shaped rice and sweet tofu bears? Kitchen’s cooking classes in Asakusa. They offer both bento box and character sushi courses – how about making teddy bear or bunny-shaped sushi, or a bento box with little inarizushi (sweet tofu stuffed with rice) bears?

The instructor, Yoshimi, will guide you through the entire process in English, and you’ll leave with all the recipes in a little booklet, too. Your kid’s lunch will be the envy of all their friends.

Classes ¥7,560/person, Mon-Fri from 10am. asakusa-tokyokitchen.com. Online booking and PayPal payment only. courses can be booked tie any time now.

AMEZAIKU

Atomy traditional Japanese sweet, amezaiku are beautiful little sugarwork statues, usually depicting animals. The art of sculpting them involves heating rock-hard candy, and then shaping it quickly by hand or with scissors before it cools and hardens.

At Ameshin, they’re dedicated to keeping this time-honoured yet laboured tradition alive. If you’re just looking for a pretty piece of art or to admire the master’s work, head to Ameshin’s Tokyo Skytree Solamachi shop.

To get your hands all sweet and sticky, meanwhile, you should go straight to their Asakusa workshop. In just under two hours, you’ll be taught how to make a cute little rabbit. It’s challenging, but fun and a totally unique experience – where else are you going to learn how to create a sweet piece of art?

Classes ¥3,000 (kids ¥2,500). 1F , 1-4-3 Imado, Taito (Asakusa Station). edokiriko.net/school. 03 3408 1209. Three classes per day Mon-Sat, Sun & hols classes upon request. Reservations by phone (0120 17 1839) or email ganso-info@ganso-sample. com. Role classes are taught in Japanese; bring an interpreter if your Japanese is shaky.

FAKE FOOD

You’ve probably seen those plastic food samples at countless restaurants around the city, but did you know you can make them yourself? In the heart of Asakusa’s Kagurabashi ‘Kitchen Town’ district, Ganso Shokuhin Sample-ya has been producing plastic replicas for display in restaurant windows since 1932, but in recent years it’s also wised up to the tourist market.

There’s an upairspace where visitors can try their hand at making mock tempura and teriyaki by dipping the real things in resin. If that sounds too much effort, the shop’s fake food keyrings, magnets and phone straps make for great (albeit far from cheap) souvenirs.

¥4,320/person. 2-10-9 Taihei, Sumida (Kinshicho Station). edokiriko.net/school. 03 3408 1209. Three classes per day Mon-Sat, Sun & holidays upon request. Reservations by phone (0120 17 1839) or email ganso-info@ganso-sample.com. Role classes are taught in Japanese; bring an interpreter if your Japanese is shaky.

IKEBANA

 Ikebana flower arrangement represents the refined side of cute and it steeped in tradition. However, it is also often seen as a virtually unpenetrable Japanese art. Happily, the Sogetsu school of Ikebana, founded in 1927 in central Tokyo, has a slightly more liberal and open approach to other schools.

Gone are the extremely rigid rules, with the emphasis being on your own creativity and Ikebana as an art form. You can either follow a full-on course or simply take a trial session at the Aoyama headquarters.

¥4,100/person including materials. 7-2-1 Akasaka, Minato (Aoyama-Itchome Station). 03 3408 1208. sogetsu.or.jp/e. English-language classes held every Mon except hols, 10am-12noon. Reservations through their online form or email kyoshitsu@sogetsu.or.jp.
Nail Art
A popular hangout for otaku (a geek obsessed with particular aspect of popular culture), Akihabara’s CocaCola’s stands as a kind of community space for fellow nail art fanatics. The walls are covered with customers’ anime character drawings and anime music plays in the background. Through the years, this nail salon has amassed fans thanks to its perfect nail painting, usually of anime characters or idols. They accept requests and also offer 3D nail art. The price? It’s ¥1,100 for every 10 minutes of work. This might not be the cheapest in town, but Miyuki is so good at explaining how each step you need to paint on your fingernail to properly fill everything around that finicky ball of bean paste that we were very pleasantly surprised with the outcome. Parents, you’ll be glad to know she also hosts classes for kids.

Wagashi
The sweetest and prettiest of sweets, wagashi (literally ‘Japanese sweets’) are generally made from two main ingredients: rice cakes and azuki bean paste. You’ll find them ready-made at fancy department stores and supermarkets alike, and they make for great gifts for your loved ones. They may also look like absolutely unpalatable slices of cake, but that’s because Meguro-based Simply Oishi comes in. In two and a half hours, instructor Mayuko will guide you through the process of making these different types of wagashi from scratch.

Style Makeovers
A hair salon in Harajuku popular amongst celebrities, Candy Syrup is known for its selection of unusual hair colours and styles. Take a seat in the saccharine-white interior and watch your hair being transformed with outrageously bright, saturated colours using the famed Manic Panic hair cream. Looking up all the way for a Lotta (a fashion subculture influenced by Victorian and Edwardian clothing transformations) at Maison de Julietta, you can rent a full Lotta outfit, complete with hair and make-up, as well as a professional photo shoot in an Alice in Wonderland-themed studio. The best part is, you’ll get to walk the streets of Harajuku in your Lotta getup for a specific time frame.

Kimono Walkabouts
Want to explore a classic Tokyo landmark and don the part at the same time? Before heading to Sensoji Temple, stop by Tokyo Kimono Rental Tansuiya and get dressed up in a kimono. It’s a chance to experience how the new and traditional are influenced from the traditional to the modern, and a day’s rental starts from just ¥3,000. They can even store your belongings, so you can stroll around this historic part of town without any baggage in tow.

For an equally atmospheric experience, head down south to Yokohama. This city was one of the epicentres of Japan’s modernisation efforts during the Meiji period but it still preserves much of the charm of the preceding era. You can rent a kimono (¥5,500) or the more casual hakama (¥3,000) at Yokohama Hakutora. Kinomo-kan is the place to roll around the historic town, rent a kimono, pick up a rich character in front of the venue for the perfect photo op.

See More
TIMEOUT.COM/ TOKYO

Purikura Photo Booths
Derived from ‘pandemonium’ (literally ‘Print Club’), the photo booth brand that started this trend, purikura are a phenomenon in their own right: photo booths in which you can make yourself look infinitely cuter, creating an almost Japanese pop idol-esque version of yourself. The purikura fad may have faded a bit with the advent of filters on smartphone apps, but who wouldn’t want an actual, hard-copy photo of themself looking very kawaii? You’ll find these booths at most large arcades, where a set of photos goes for ¥300 to ¥500. But if you want to experience the full range, head to Shibuya’s Purikura no Mecca. This famous spot has an extraordinary variety of these machines on offer.

Kimono rental
Kimono-kan
2-1-6 Kitazawa, Shibuya (Chuo Station). Open 9am-8pm. Rent any surpisingly place, including this one, may accept two or even groups so make sure to indicate the possible directions the other young femaleAdvance.

CUTE TOKYO

CUTE TOKYO

CUTE TOKYO
**HIDDEN HARAJUKU**

It's easy to dismiss Harajuku has just cutesy, brash and kitschy. But break away from the madding crowd into quieter corners and you'll discover a host of shops and businesses that are cool, stylish and decidedly more grown-up.

*By Kaila Imada*

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**FUNKTIQUE**

Although it's located in Harajuku's popular vintage and consignment area, Funktique is not a shop you'd accidentally walk into as it's tucked away from the crowds on the third floor of an inconspicuous building. Opened by a husband and wife duo from Fukushima – who relocated to this part of town after the 2011 earthquake – the shop is indeed funky, offering a mix of accessories, toys and clothing.

However, the focus here is on fashion from the '90s to the early 2000s, with the odd older piece thrown into the mix. You'll find several original items like printed tees and hoodies bedecked with the word 'undervest' in gothic script and fun mugs featuring a cheeky play on the Nike logo.

For some fashion trends, this shop might seem familiar as the owner's daughter Coco is a famous Instagram style star who has accumulated almost half a million followers. If you're hoping to catch a glimpse of this adorable fashionista, make sure you stop by on the weekends, when Coco can often be found playing dressing-up with her parents.

**MUG POP**

Located down the backstreets of Takeshita-dori, this shop houses over 400 different mugs and cups made by craftsmen and artisans from around Japan. On each shelf you'll find a short description of where the mug is from and the artisan who made it – so you know you're getting a work of art instead of a generic mug. At a corner, you'll also find a small café where you can purchase both fresh and dry flowers.

**THINK OF THINGS**

This lifestyle shop-meets-café offers the perfect escape from the crazy streets of Harajuku. Located just north of Harajuku Station, Think of Things aims to promote the elusive work-life balance by offering a well-curated selection of items that are useful both at home and in your office. Browse through stationery, furniture and even shelving and storage solutions. You should also get a coffee here as they uses beans from local bean purveyors Obscura Coffee Roasters.

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**MUSUBI**

This beautiful shop specialises in traditional Japanese furoshiki wrapping cloths, which are used to wrap everything from bento lunch boxes to wine bottles and gifts. Hailing from Kyoto, this is the shop's only Tokyo location and offers a wide range of prints so tastefully designed that it's hard to choose just one.

Musubi also holds regular classes to demonstrate how to properly use and tie this ecological form of packaging. If tied properly, furoshiki can even be folded into a cool handbag to carry all your things. Make sure to stalk their website for designer collaborations and special limited edition prints.

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**A+S**

Visit A+S, otherwise known as Architecture and Sneakers, for a dose of Tokyo's ever-evolving streetwear and sneaker culture. As the shop name suggests, what you'll find here is a well-edited selection of sneakers inside an immaculately designed space run by the folks behind Japanese streetwear label Sophs (whose store is located right below). Along with some of today's most popular footwear models, mostly from Nike, you'll also find sportswear basics like T-shirts and caps. They even have mini versions of selected shoe styles for children. The items here straddle a range of budgets, from Nike to luxury brands like Balenciaga and Maison Margiela.

**THE LITTLE SHOP OF FLOWERS ATELIER**

You would hardly think anything, let alone a flower shop, exists at this peculiar location. Hidden behind a building next to a restaurant, there's a stone path that leads to a sunny enclave adorned with overhanging trees and colourful florals. The Florist has called this obscure Harajuku spot home for the last seven years and continues to turn out gorgeous bouquets and made-to-order arrangements.

The indoor space is where the arrangements are made while the adjoining outdoor space centres around an area that displays other items for sale, including candle holders, nabe pots, small items of stationery and floral books. This secluded shop also has a sister store on Cat Street, where you can purchase both fresh and dry flowers.

**KAILA IMADA**

April - June, 2018

**APRIL - JUNE, 2018**

*Time Out Tokyo* April - June, 2018
Aquariums

**ENOSHIMA AQUARIUM**

With its convenient location not far from Enoshima island, the aquarium adds a perfect dash of adventure to your day trip. It has the most extraordinary variety of sea creatures, and is especially known for its penguins.

While strolling around, make sure to stock up on some snacks which come in cute packaging and interesting shapes – the turtle-shape melon bread and the jellyfish fantasy soda are highly recommended. Workshops and touch pools are the biggest highlight for kids. The official app of the aquarium offers an audio guide, the schedule for all the feeding times, and a map and coupons, so make sure to download before coming in.

- 9:30-18:15 (Katanosagi, Fujisawa, Kamagaya, Enoshima Shinkansen Station): 0466 29 9960. enosui.com. Daily 10am-5pm (Dec-Feb), 10am-6pm (Mar-Nov). Adults ¥2,100, high school students ¥1,500 (student ID necessary), primary and junior high school students ¥1,000, children aged four or under free, free for younger children.

**KANAKURI AQUARIUM**

This aquarium is located on top of the Sunshine City complex, this partially open-air oasis opened its doors in March 2018. It has the most extraordinary variety of sea creatures, and is especially known for its penguins.

- Sun to Fri: 9am-5pm; Sat, Sun: 9am-5pm (Dec-Feb), 9am-5:30pm (Mar-Nov). Adults ¥2,200, high school students ¥1,800 (student ID necessary), primary and junior high school students ¥1,000, children aged four or under free, free for younger children.

Zoos

**TAMA ZOOLOGICAL PARK**

This 52-hectare park is much loved for its beautiful open setting, with enclosures connected up by shuttle buses. Amidst the three ecological areas (African, Australian and Asian Zones), the zoo has an insectarium, housing a variety of 550 species – brave and tricky among some of the scariest creatures!

After checking out the creepy-crawlies, head over to the nearby teahouse and gaze at swarms of colourful beauties. Finally, don't miss out on seeing the graceful snow leopards, which live right at the back of the vicinity to get your hands on some one-of-a-kind panda-shaped goodie or pastries from some of the shops and street vendors.

- 9:30-16:30 (Tama Dobutsu Koen Station): 042 591 1611. www.tokyo-zoo.net/zoo/ino/. 9.30am-5pm (entry until 4pm), closed Wed (Thu if Wed is a holiday). ¥600, junior high students ¥200, free for primary school students aged 12 or under. FREE entry May 4, 15, 26.

**EDOGAWA-CITY SHIZEN ZOO**

This cosy little zoo is located in Edogawa’s ‘snow-enclosure’, which houses its vast collection of species, such as fennecs, Tsushima leopard cats, squirrels, capybaras, cranes and raccoon dogs. Meanwhile, pet lovers can encounter a horde of squeaking guinea pigs ready to be stroked by visitors of all ages (daily from 10am-11.30am and 1.30pm-4pm). You’ll be glad to know that the zoo runs a conservation programme of Tsushima leopards. Complete your visit by taking a look at the charming Hanako Café and picking up some adorable souvenirs, such as guinea pig plush toys and the zoo’s special tote bags.

- 9:30-16:30 (Edogawa-Shizen Koen Station): 0422 46 1100. tokyo-zoo.net/zoo/ino/. 9.30am-5pm (entry until 4pm), closed Mon. ¥400, junior high students ¥200, free for primary school students aged 12 or under. FREE entry May 4, 15, 26.

**TOKYO SEA LIFE PARK**

Tokyo Sea Life Park’s glass dome (where the entrance is) doesn’t give much away, but wait until you see the escalator and a glimpse of the infinite blue of oceanic environments from around the world, and you’ll be shockingly overwhelmed! The aquarium’s most popular attraction is a 2,200 ton doughnut-shaped tank which is home to an enormous shoal of elfinfish – watching them swim meditatively around will leave you speechless.

Meanwhile, seabird lovers can check out large auks, puffins and one of Japan’s biggest pigeon exhibitors. And if you’re brave enough, try touching the starfish, sea urchins and other stony creatures at the small hands-on area. Before leaving, you should stop and marvel at the dazzling Penguin Feeding Hall, which is a perfect way to cap off your day trip in style!

- 6-2-3 Rinkaicho, Edogawa (Kasai Rinkai Koen Station): 03 3869 5152. tokyo-zoo.net/zoo/ino/. 9.30am-5pm (entry until 4pm), closed Mon. ¥1,200, high school students ¥900, children aged three or under free, free for younger children.

**UENO ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS**

Located in the middle of the city, the gardens and zoo are immense. The huge amount to see here is enough to give most visitors a tiring experience. The grounds is split into two parts comfortably accessible by monorail. Alongside the three ecological areas (African, Australian and Asian Zones), the zoo has an insectarium, housing a variety of 550 species – brave and tricky among some of the scariest creatures!

After checking out the creepy-crawlies, head over to the nearby teahouse and gaze at swarms of colourful beauties. Finally, don’t miss out on seeing the graceful snow leopards, which live right at the back of the vicinity to get your hands on some one-of-a-kind panda-shaped goodie or pastries from some of the shops and street vendors.

- 9:30-16:30 (Ueno Park, Tama (Ueno Station), 03 3828 5171. tokyo-zoo.net/zoo/ino/. 9-83 Ueno Park, Taito (Ueno Station). 03 3828 5171. tokyo-zoo.net/zoo/ino/. 9.30am-5pm (entry until 4pm), closed Mon (Tue if Mon is a holiday). ¥600, junior high students ¥200, free for primary school students aged 12 or under. FREE entry May 4, 17, 30.

**EDOGAWA-ZOO**

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This little zoo is located in Shibuya’s ‘snow-enclosure’, which houses its vast collection of species, such as fennecs, Tsushima leopard cats, squirrels, capybaras, cranes and raccoon dogs. Meanwhile, pet lovers can encounter a horde of squeaking guinea pigs ready to be stroked by visitors of all ages (daily from 10am-11.30am and 1.30pm-4pm). You’ll be glad to know that the zoo runs a conservation programme of Tsushima leopards. Complete your visit by taking a look at the charming Hanako Café and picking up some adorable souvenirs, such as guinea pig plush toys and the zoo’s special tote bags.

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HUTCH ASAKUSA
To round off your animal café adventure, stop by Hutch Asakusa, a bunny theme park housing 21 adorable furry fellows. There are three entry plans available: we recommend the ‘hug plan’ which allows you to cuddle with your favourite bunny as long as you want and get a souvenir photo taken. The patient and knowledgeable staff will guide you through the experience.

à 1-7-1 Hanakawado, Taito (Asakusa Station). 03 5827 8229. hutch.vc. 12noon-7pm (last entry 6.30pm). From ¥2,160, ¥1,080 for children.

IKEFUKUROU CAFÉ
Ikebukuro’s Ikefukurou Café is the place to meet fluffy owls. The name itself is a pun on Ikebukuro and fukurou (owl in Japanese). A large number of different types of owls is waiting for you to pet, touch and take photos with. The little cuties under the guidance of the staff. The furry friends totter around in environments modelled on bathrooms, classrooms and Japanese-style tatami rooms – it’s like a collection of doll houses for hedgehogs!

à Sakimono Building 6F , 1-17-1 Minami-Ikebukuro, Toshima (Ikebukuro Station). 03 5904 8344. ikefukuroucafe.com. Mon-Fri 1pm-8pm, Sat, Sun & hols 12noon-7pm, last entry one hour before closing. ¥1,500, ¥1,600 Sat, Sun & hols. E-mail reservation necessary.

CHIKUCHIKUCAFE
Relaxing with little hedgehogs is high on many a traveller’s Tokyo must-do list, and this new Shibuya spot adds to the selection of cafés offering that very opportunity. At ChikuChikuCafe you can feed, touch and take photos with the little cuties under the guidance of the staff. The furry friends totter around in environments modelled on bathrooms, classrooms and Japanese-style tatami rooms – it’s like a collection of doll houses for hedgehogs!

à Daikyo Shibuya Bldg 2F , 1-13-5 Shibuya, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 6450 6673. hedgehoghome.cafe. Daily 12noon-8pm (last entry 7.30pm). ¥1,300/30min, ¥2,500/60min.

TEMARI NO OSHIRO CAT CAFÉ
This charming brand-new cat café introduces you to a whole new level of cuteness. Located within the themed shopping and food ‘village’ Kichijoji Petit Mura, the façade looks like the castle of a magical cat kingdom straight from a book of fairy tales. A selection of 20 cats are on hand to be cuddled, and offer highly Instagrammable photo opportunities, especially at feeding time. When it comes to snacks, the smart money’s on the tasty parfaits garnished with cute cat-shaped cookies.

à Kichijoji Petit Mura, 2-2-2 Kichijoji, Kita-ku, Tokyo (Kichijoji Station). 0422 27 0211. temarinooshiro.com. Daily 10am-9pm. ¥1,200, ¥1,600 Sat, Sun & hols. ¥700 from 7pm (all prices excluding tax). Only admits children aged 10 and above.

MAX BRENNER CHOCOLATE PIZZA BAR

FRATELLI PARADISO
ITALIAN DINING • BAR • NATURAL WINE
FROM AUSTRALIA

MODERN THAI RESTAURANT

CUTE TOKYO
Animal cafés

Time Out Tokyo. April - June, 2018 34
To discover some of the most unique sights in Tokyo, all you have to do is look down. Aya Ito embraces her inner ‘drainspotter’ and goes searching for some of the city’s prettiest manhole covers. Photography Keisuke Tanigawa and Kisa Toyoshima

The Japanese have a knack for elevating even the most mundane things into a work of art. Case in point: the unique, intricately designed manhole covers scattered all over Tokyo and the rest of the country. While most countries make do with generic geometrics when designing lids for their underground drainage systems, Japan has turned the otherwise inconspicuous manhole cover into a form of public art fully deserving of your attention.

Initially conceived by construction ministry employee Yasutake Kameda to generate awareness and grow acceptance of costly upgrades to the central sewerage system in the 1980s, this long-running manhole art project has grown to become an iconic if underappreciated part of Japan’s urban aesthetic. Today, more than 90 percent of municipalities in Japan have their own distinctive manhole designs, usually rooted in local history and culture, and there are over 10,000 different patterns and images across the country.

A number of online communities of manhoru (Japanese for ‘manhole’) fans has grown alongside the project. As well as hunting and documenting manhole covers around the country, manholers, or ‘drainspotters’, often go to the extent of creating takuhon (rubbings) of the designs, either on paper or T-shirts. But you don’t have to embrace sewage-related clothing to gain an appreciation of these elaborate and unique handcrafted artworks. Next time you’re out and about in Tokyo, remember to keep one eye on the pavement; here are some of the best designs to help you lift the lid on one of the city’s most unlikely underground – not quite literally – art scenes…

WHALES IN AKISHIMA
How did a whale come to grace the manhole covers of a city located 50k from the ocean? The answer can be traced to 1958, when perfectly formed whale fossils dating back 1.6 million years were found in Akishima, and this cover design was created in honour that landmark discovery. From the train station, walk towards the city centre to find the most colourful manhole covers.

HELLO KITTY IN TAMAJ
Tama, a city in the west of Greater Tokyo, is home to the Sanrio Puroland theme park, where people from around the world – and by no means exclusively preteen girls – line up for a meet ‘n’ greet with the world’s most iconic mouthless cat-girl, before joining her and her feline and non-feline friends for a colourful parade. So putting Hello Kitty on Tama’s manhole covers to turn them into a bonus attraction for visitors makes perfect sense. The city’s official website has a map detailing their locations.

MAN IN HACHIOJI
Contrary to common belief, the man on this manhole cover is not a kabuki performer but a puppet of Hachioji Ningyo (a 140-year-old puppetry company) known for its dynamic movements and detailed costumes, which was designated an intangible cultural asset of Tokyo in the 1980s. Since then, Hachioji Ningyo has served not only as a traditional symbol but a cultural draw used to lure people to this attractive city in the western part of Greater Tokyo.

MAN AND DOG IN SHIBUYA
It’s easy to walk over this manhole cover on Shibuya’s bustling Dogenzaka and think nothing of it. At first glance it looks like lots of people running, but it’s actually a puzzle with hidden meanings. The clue lies in the wordplay: Dogenzaka has become ‘Dog-en-saka’, a nod to the faithful dog Hachiko (a dog so loyal he continued waiting for its owner nine years after his death), whose statue is nearby. Look closer and you’ll notice the dogs in between the running men. Clever, eh?

MONCHITCI IN SHIN-KOIWA
Shin-Koiwa is home to the Sekiguchi Corporation, creator of Monchitte, an adorable freckled toy monkey with a gingham dress. Although the lovable primate has faded from public life since its 1980s heyday, the town is still promoting itself as the home of the cuddly doll and you’ll find Monchitte manhole covers across the city – there’s a park named after him and even a bus all decked out in his image.

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It’s an all-in-one transport card
Suica is the prepaid IC card of JR East, but that doesn’t mean you can only use it on the rail company’s trains. In fact, you can use it on all public transport in Tokyo, and that means the buses, trains (except shinkansen) and even taxis. Skip the queue because you no longer need to buy a ticket, and head straight to your destination.

It’s widely accepted in Tokyo
A Suica in hand means easy access to all of Tokyo. A lot of shops, cafés, restaurants and convenience stores in Tokyo accept Suica cards (just look out for the Suica logo). So no more rummaging through your bag for coins and small change; just tap your Suica card to pay. What’s more, you can even make purchases at vending machines with Suica. It’s quick and easy!

It’s super easy and convenient to use
You don’t need cash when you have the Suica card. When your card credit runs low, just reload at a ticket vending machine at the train station, and you’re good to go. You can also top up at convenience stores such as 7-Eleven in Japan, Family Mart, Lawson and more. With a Suica card in hand, you can now explore Tokyo with ease.

To learn more about Suica card, go to www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/suica
Tea time treats

Wagashi – dainty, traditional Japanese sweets made to accompany tea – is the ultimate in food artistry.

By the Time Out Tokyo team

Art direction by Mayumi Hashimoto Assisted by Kaila Imada and Mayumi Koyama  Photography Entaniya Studio
Eating & Drinking

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TEXTILE—sweets, known as wagashi, are in a league of their own. While western desserts are often equated with excess and indulgence, the dainty wagashi instead calls for quiet appreciation over a calming tea session. As their colour, shape and flavour vary according to the time of year, these sweets are all about capturing the essence of the season in a miniature, edible form.

In its earliest, simplest form as rice cakes, wagashi was used as a ceremonial offering. Today, wagashi remains a key component at many special occasions. The inscrutability of wagashi lies in the fact that it’s made from just a few simple ingredients. Gluttinous rice flour is turned into sticky, chewy dough known as mochi; boiled beans are mashed with sugar into a paste; and then there’s jelly or agar-agar, along with seasonal fruits and flowers. But taste is just one aspect of wagashi; texture, colour and shape are every bit as important. The level of artistry lavished upon wagashi is incomparable, as the ingredients are moulded into little pieces of edible art, almost too pretty to eat.

Wagashi can be broadly classified into three categories: namagashi (fresh confections), hanamagashi (baked or dried confections) and higashi (dry confections). Within these categories are many variations since these sweets tend to change with the seasons. In spring you’ll find many pink-coloured wagashi celebrating the cherry blossom season, whereas late winter is a time for strawberries, with wagashi made to resemble snow, ice or plum blossoms. Summer sees many clear gelées that give off a cool feeling while autumn’s wagashi reflect the changing colours of the leaves as well as the flavours of persimmon and chestnut.

Note: The availability of the wagashi featured in these photos is dependent on the season.

DAIFUKU
Daifuku is generally a mochi ball filled with sweetened red bean paste, made from either red or white beans, although this is sometimes replaced by seasonal fruit. A popular winter specialty is the ichigo daifuku—a mochi ball topped with a strawberry.

YOKAN
A dry form of wagashi, yokan are small hard candies made from glutinous rice flour and sugar, which are then shaped with a wooden mould. Highly intricate, these dainty sweets have a cookie-like texture that melts in your mouth. They pair well with a bitter tea.

MONAKA
Known for its contrasting textures, monaka sees two rice wafers sandwiching sweet anko red bean paste or other seasonal fillings like fruit or chestnut paste. The wafers are usually shaped according to the season, from cherry blossoms to lucky cats.

DORAYAKI
If you’re a fan of pastries, dorayaki is the wagashi for you. It consists of bean paste sandwiched between two small pancakes, or a single pancake folded in half. The name comes from its round shape, which resembles a dora, a traditional Japanese gong.

MANJI
Another cake-like confection, manji is a form of sweet rice cake, and has a similar chewy texture to mochi, but with a bit more bite. These confections can be made either savoury or sweet.

OBAKU/ BOTAMOCHI
Think of this as an inverted wagashi, as it’s known for having red beans on the outside rather than the inside. Known as botamochi in spring and obaku in autumn, it can even have a mixture of sticky rice and beans as its exterior.

DAIFUKU
A fruit daifuku is a sweet rice ball filled with sweetened red bean paste, made from either red or white beans, although this is sometimes replaced by seasonal fruit. A popular winter specialty is the ichigo daifuku— a mochi ball topped with a strawberry.

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WHERE TO BUY WAGASHI

TORAYA TOKYO MIDTOWN
Toraya is synonymous with wagashi; the establishment bears a rich heritage dating back to the early-sixteenth century when it was founded in Kyoto. This Toraya branch comprises a shop selling fresh confectionery, a café, and a gallery featuring a rotating exhibition on Japanese culture.

NEWMAN EKINAKA
Inside the ticket gates of JR Shinjuku’s New South Exit, numerous food shops are strategically placed for you to pick up some last minute gifts before boarding the train. Among them, Yui offers delicate and artistic wagashi, including a yokan bearing the image of Mt Fuji (when cut into slices). You should also look out for Ninigi’s fresh fruit daifuku.

KUGENUMA SHIMIZU
This sweet shop is helmed by Japanese chef Katsumon Shimizu, who also runs a famed French restaurant in Kamagawa. This Ginza Six outpost offers creative wagashi and other confectionery that fuse Japanese and Western influences.

HIGASHIYA GINZA
This megastore is the main store of one of Tokyo’s most renowned wagashi shops, located in the centre of Ginza, across from the Wako building. It offers a variety of traditional sweets including dorayaki, oba and rice crackers. Get your strawberry daifuku here when it’s in season.

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**Cheap Michelin-star meals**

Michelin-starred restaurants aren’t all expensive. Here’s where and how you can enjoy a top-rated meal for about ¥1,000 – or less. By Lim Chee Wah

**ZUISETSU**

One Michelin star

This cosy restaurant in Setagaya serves Cantonese cuisine with a refined Japanese flair – think course-by-course dishes that emphasise clean, distinct flavours. Zuisetsu is known for its seafood preparations, and a dinner here can cost anywhere between ¥7,000 and ¥10,000. So go for lunch instead, where a noodle dish will only set you back ¥1,200 – better yet, opt for a set lunch, which starts from a very affordable ¥1,620. On our visit, our ‘mini course lunch’ consisted of an appetiser, Zuisetsu’s house-made steamed sticky tofu, wonton and glass noodles in spicy oil dressing, a choice between two main courses, a half-sized noodle dish, and a dessert. All this for a mere ¥2,160.

The dandanmen was particularly memorable; it featured strips of cured pork, which added depth and sweetness to the fragrant noodles. There’s a deft hand here in showcasing Cantonese flavours, and it leaves us wanting to try the more elaborate dinner menu.

à  Dairokuhyuga Bldg 2F, 1-20-13, Umegaoka, Setagaya (Umegaoka Station). 03 3428 1415. Mon-Wed 11.30am-2pm (last order 1.45pm), 6pm-9pm (last order 8pm), Fri 6pm-9pm (last order 8pm), Sat, Sun & holidays, 12noon-2pm (last order 1.45pm), 6pm-9pm (last order 8pm).

**NAKIRYU**

One Michelin star

The second ramen restaurant in Tokyo to get a Michelin star after Tsuta, Nakiryu is known for its house special dandanmen, a testament to its quality. A noodle dish originating from Szechuan in China, dandanmen is characterised by its spicy soup and distinctive use of sesame seed.

Lesser restaurants tend to produce a heavier soup that can get a tad cloying – but not Nakiryu. Their red pepper-based version is as light as shoyu ramen, a very refined bowl but still gutsy. There’s a good punch of chilli heat coupled with the rich nuttiness of sesame seed, while the noodles are firm to the bite. You can even opt for extra spicy for an additional ¥50.

On the menu, you’ll also find shoyu and shio ramen, along with rice bowls. Topping and side order options include the thin and thick pieces of grilled pork, shrimp wonton and more. Don’t mind the queue; since everyone is limited to just a bowl of noodles, you won’t have to wait long.

à  SKY Mihamiotsuka 1F, 2-34-4 Minamiotsuka, Toshima (Otsuka Station). 03 6304 1811. Mon 11.30am-3pm, Wed-Sun 11.30am-3pm, 6pm-9pm.

**SHINJUKU KAPPO NAKAJIMA**

One Michelin star

For a Michelin-starred restaurant, Nakajima serves possibly the cheapest lunch in town. While their kaiseki courses are priced upwards of ¥15,000 during dinner, you can enjoy the set lunches from a mere ¥800. These are substantial meals too, complete with rice, miso soup, pickles and tea.

Sardines are the star at lunch, and there are four main course options: you can have them deep-fried; simmered in shoyu stock; as sashimi marinated in sesame and ginger; and our favourite, the yanagawa nabe set. The latter is classic comfort food – a casserole dish of deep-fried sardines in a bubbling shoyu broth, topped with egg and onions. Do note that the lunch queue starts even before the restaurant opens at 11.30am, and that the restaurant advises against bringing children aged under six.

à  Hihara Bldg B1F, 3-32-5 Shinjuku, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Station). 03 3356 4534. shinjyuku-nakajima.com. Mon-Sat 11.30am-2pm (last order 1.45pm), 5.30pm-8pm (last order 8pm).

**KAGAWA IPPUKU Bib Gourmand**

Originating from Kagawa, the prefecture synonymous with udon in Japan, Ippuku has a great reputation – and we’re glad to say it doesn’t disappoint. Ippuku serves Sanuki udon, whose noodles are known for their characteristic square shape, and are served smooth, slippery and chewy, all the hallmarks of good udon.

To appreciate the noodle’s texture, we suggest you go for the simpler preparations: the classic kake udon (noodles in clear dashi broth), bukkake udon (dashi dipping sauce poured over noodles), or the kamatama udon that comes with a raw egg. Make sure to go big on the side orders as the selections here are extensive. Optional toppings include seaweed, Japanese plum, onsen egg and mayonnaise, while side orders range from beef, daikon and konnyaku udon to squid tentacle tempura and three types of fish cake.

à  Tokyo Royal Plaza 1F, 1-18-11 Uchikanda, Chiyoda (Kanda Station). 03 5577 3644. udon-ippuku-kanda.com. 11am-8pm, closed Sun and first Mon of the month.

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**SAMGEORI BUTCHER’S TOKYO**

GRAND OPENING MARCH 16TH

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**Eating & Drinking**

**ANDA GYOZA Bib Gourmand**

In a lot of ways, Anda Gyoza comes across more like a Taiwanese restaurant than a Japanese one. For one thing, its gyoza are rounder than the usual crescent-shaped dumplings found throughout Tokyo – they look more like plump törtelloni. Then there’s the liberal use of herbs, deployed to great effect as flavouring. As such, the food feels wholesome but still tasty.

What’s even more surprising are the gyoza fillings, featuring seasonings and condiments that are more south-east Asian than Japanese. There’s a chicken dumpling flavoured with coriander, dried shrimp and coconut, which reminded us of Thai tom yum. Other fillings include pork with carrot and curry powder, and chicken with ginger, fish sauce and dried basil.

We recommend ordering the suigyoza set meal, which will get you eight boiled gyoza (two pieces each of four different fillings), an excellent cooked pork rice studded with cubed carrot, cucumber and pickled daikon, and a bowl of seaweed soup. The best part is that you can order this throughout the day.

**MENYA ISHIN Bib Gourmand**

Located a short walk from Meguro Station, Menya Ishin is very proud of the provenance of its ingredients, and rightfully so. The restaurant uses Mochihuta pork, brand chicken from Nagoya and Akita, and helps from Raiku in Hokkaido. Menya Ishin’s noodles are made in house at its other outlet in Yokohama, and served in bowls created in Arita, a Japanese mountain town renowned for its porcelain ware.

You’ll be glad to know that Menya Ishin offers light and refreshing sets for ¥972. The small ramen bowls are ¥2,700, the medium ¥3,050 and the large ¥3,550. While dinner sets are priced above ¥2,000, the cheapest set lunch from ¥980.

**TONKATSU MASAMUNE Bib Gourmand**

At Masamune, the simple tonkatsu is taken to the next level with premium ingredients. The restaurant serves Koshi Hikari rice from Sado Island in Niigata, and uses K庖ana rice bran oil for frying, which is rich in vitamin E and antioxidants. The house pickles are infused with chilli for extra zing. Even the bread crumbs are produced from bread made just for the purpose.

As for the meat, expect no less than Watan-Mochihuta brand pork. You are encouraged to forge the usual tonkatsu sauce and mustard and instead enjoy your pork fillet with onion, rock salt and a squeeze of lemon – simple condiments that will best bring out the meat’s natural flavours.

**KITANAGAOKU**

Located in the prime office district, so you’ll need to be prepared to queue.

**AOYAMA FLOWER MARKET TEA HOUSE**

Hidden at the back of the Aoyama Flower Market is an adorable if faintly twee café set inside a glasshouse. Creepers dangle from the railings and flowering plants dot the tables. It’s a lush, blossoming space that’s perfect for Instagram snaps. The menu revolves around tea; choose from the usual black variety or the house special of herbal and floral infusions. If you’re feeling peckish, try the pretty French tart which comes served with edible flowers.

**KI CAFÉ**

This Setagaya café is just so minimalist – a stark, white space punctuated by black table legs which extend above the tabletops into tree-like branches. Fitting, considering the name of the café, which means ‘tree’ in Japanese. The menu offers regular coffee and tea drinks, along with a small selection of cakes and pastries.

**FACTORY & LABO KANNO COFFEE**

Aside to coffee, this industrial space has all the styling of a factory but without the grime. Instead, the street-facing glass facade lets in ample natural light while wood finishes turn the lofty interior into a modern coffeehouse. Essentially a roastery (the roasting machine gets pride of place in the center), Factory & Labo Kanno Coffee also houses a coffee research lab, an academy offering coffee workshops, and a coffee retail corner.

**TIME OUT LOVES**

**Design cafés**

These coffee and tea houses serve up some of Tokyo’s coolest interior designs.

By *Lin Chee Wai*
Shopping & Style

Ginza Itoya

This is a stationery wonderland. Spread across 12 floors, Ginza Itoya sells everything from regular stationery and Japanese calligraphy goods to fancy fountain pens, designer paper, art tools and more. The first eight floors in the main building are reserved for shopping and are divided by function (think ‘home’, ‘desk’, etc), while the higher floors host a business lounge and an urban vegetable farm with salad leaves grown in hydroponic bins (the greens are then used in the dishes served in the café on the 12th floor). You can also get your mail sorted on the second floor: purchase your cards and letters, write and decorate them at a designated space, and then send them off at the in-store postal area.

→ 2-7-15 Ginza, Chuo (Ginza Station). 03 3561 8311. ito-ya.co.jp. Sun & hols 10am-7pm.

Kakimori

You might find yourself falling in love with the art of writing all over again after a visit to this specialist stationery shop. Kakimori’s range of pens, inks and letter sets are selected according to how comfortable they are to use, and you are welcome to try out the fountain pens in-store before making a purchase. Best of all are the made-to-order notebooks which are prepared in about ten minutes – a wide selection of covers, paper and bindings are available to help you customise something special.

→ 1-6-2 Misuji, Taito (Kuramae Station). 050 1744 8546. kakimori.com. 12noon-7pm, Sat, Sun & hols 11am-7pm, closed Mon.

Kyukyodo

Japanese paper and incense specialist Kyukyodo opened its first shop in Kyoto back in 1663 and supplied products to the Imperial Palace during the Edo period. Till today, is still run by the Kumagai family that founded it. The Ginza main store is known for its distinctive arch brick entrance and sells incense alongside a selection of seasonal gift cards and lots of small, moderately priced items such as gift boxes, notebooks and bookmarks made from colourful washi. The interior and setup may be decidedly old-fashioned, but don’t be deterred by that: you’re very likely to walk out with a high quality, Japanese souvenir.

→ 5-7-4 Ginza, Chuo (Ginza Station). 03 3571 4429. kyukyodo.co.jp. 10am-7pm, Sun & hols 11am-7pm.

Giovanni Kichijoji

An import stationer in Kichijoji, Giovanni feels like a museum of treasures to those excited by trinkets like ‘aristocratic’ seals with wax, replicas of medieval astronomy paraphernalia or novelty goods from the Medicis’ collection. The shop also hosts an extensive collection of traditional European stationery — think feather pens, parchment paper and extremely official-looking seals — some of which are only available here in Tokyo. You can also order a custom seal stamp here at the store.

→ 4-13-2 Kichijoji, Kita (Kichijoji Station). 0422 20 0171. giovanni.jp. 11am-8pm, closed Wed.

Papier Labo.

The ultimate destination for paper sniffers, Papier Labo is filled with all sorts of stationery from letterpress to card sets and other paper-related items. Papier Labo also provides services such as custom business cards, rubber stamps and other print-worthy goodness. Many of these items make great gifts, such as the cool card stands, modern memo clips, playing cards, sleek pen cases and more. After a shopping spree at this fun stationery shop, you’ll have the most stylish office around.

→ 106, 1-1-1 Jingumae, Shibuya (Harajuku, Meiji-Jingumae stations). 03 5411 1696. papierlabo.com. 11am-7pm, closed Mon.
**TIME OUT LOVES**

**Accessory designers worth getting to know**

Accessories don’t merely brighten up your outfit and boost your confidence, they are also a statement of your individuality. To help you stand out from the crowd, we’ve picked some of Tokyo's best up-and-coming designers, who produce handmade accessories for women, men and even pets. By Shiori Kotaki

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**emiumigumi**

An eminently well-versed and brightening up Tokyo’s accessory scene since 2013, emiumigumi creates delightful pieces inspired by good luck charms. Known for their subtle details and dreamy designs, her accessories are handmade using materials such as beads, spangles and springs – some of which are of vintage origin. In addition to these cheery accessories, emiumigumi also designs equally charming accessories scene since 2013, emiumigumi creates delightful pieces inspired by good luck charms. Known for their subtle details and dreamy designs, her accessories are handmade using materials such as beads, spangles and springs – some of which are of vintage origin. In addition to these cheery accessories, emiumigumi also designs equally charming:

**Tsuredure-Nekoya**

Established in 2012, this sweet little accessories store makes sophisticated and vibrant accessories that play on both hard and soft qualities. While the brand offers numerous items including earrings, necklaces and bracelets, we’re particularly drawn to the ‘Feeling’ series of large earrings which features glass balls encased inside organza bags. It’s a refined, versatile design that’s both cute and elegant at the same time.

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/tsuredurenekoya)

**Lagoutelette**

Wooden accessory artist Lagoutelette creates quirky tie pins with animal characters such as moose, bear and wolf. Made from wood chosen for their specific grain and colour, these tie pins are polished and then treated with agoma seed oil and beeswax to give them a smooth texture and shine. Don’t be put off by the playful designs; they aren’t flashy, so they can be used to add subtle accents to your suit and tie.

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/lagoutelette)

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**mizuirotosiro**

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[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mizuirotosiro)

**Get it at:**
- NAGI Kyoto, Harajuku, Jingumae 4-2-2, Shibuya (Harajuku, Omotesando and Shibuya stations). 03 3346 1010. yodobashi.com. 9.30am-10pm. ¥3,434.
- KAITOKU, 3-10-10 Hibiya, Chiyoda (Hibiya Station). 03 6438 9638. happysocks.com/jp. 11am-9pm. ¥1,300.
- GREEN HOUSE, 1-11-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Western Station). 03 3341 2704. greenhouse.shops.jp. 10am-8pm. ¥1,500.
- Felissimo double sleeping bag

These lovely cat-themed socks are exclusively available in Japan. They’re the creation of Swedish brand Happy Socks, best known for their colourful and quirky designs, as well as their exclusive pieces with artists and designers such as Keith Haring and DJ Steve Aoki. This charming limited edition pair is available for both men and women to make your toes snug and warm.

[Happy Socks](https://www.happysocks.com/ja)

**Nagi Kyoto Tea x Coffee**

It’s that age-old hot beverage dilemma - coffee or tea? Well, thanks to this unique mixture from Nagi Kyoto, you can now drink them at the same time. This surprisingly tasty cross-brew sees high-quality tea leaves from Uji mixed with home-roasted coffee beans from Nishin in Kyot. Think hotcha green tea with hints of medium-roast coffee, or sencha tea mixed with fruity, light-roasted coffee.

[nagistychofus.com](https://nagistychofus.com)

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**Maneki-neko Happy Socks**

A little lie in those drier months, this mini portable humidifier comes in fun Sauris print like Cinnamoroll, Twin Stars, Hello Kitty and grumpy egg sensation, Gudetama. It’s easy peasy to use: all you have to do is fill it with water, plug it into a USB hub, and voila, you’ll have a nice stream of misty air.

[nagistyle.thebase.in](https://nagistyle.thebase.in)

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This charming limited edition pair is available for both men and women to make your toes snug and warm.

[Happysocks.com](https://www.happysocks.com)

**Add to cart**

Tokyo is a treasure trove for shoppers looking for unique Japanese Items that can’t be found anywhere else. By Kaita Imada

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[nagistychofus.com](https://nagistychofus.com)

**Green House USB Humidifier**

A little lie in those drier months, this mini portable humidifier comes in fun Sauris print like Cinnamoroll, Twin Stars, Hello Kitty and grumpy egg sensation, Gudetama. It’s easy peasy to use: all you have to do is fill it with water, plug it into a USB hub, and voila, you’ll have a nice stream of misty air.

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[nagistychofus.com](https://nagistychofus.com)
Believe it or not!

From parasites to love dolls and tattoos, these are some of Tokyo’s quirkiest and most bizarre museums. Warning: not for the faint-hearted! By the Time Out Tokyo team

CURRENCY MUSEUM

Run by the Bank of Japan, the Currency Museum traces the long history of money in the country, from the use of imported Chinese coins in the late Heian period (12th century) to the creation of the yen and the central bank in the second half of the 19th century. See beautiful Edo-era, calligraphy-inscribed gold bullion, occupation-era notes from Indonesia and the Philippines, Siberian leather notes from Indonesia and the Edo-era, calligraphy-inscribed bank in the second half of the creation of the yen and the central period (12th century) to the Chinese coins in the late Heian country, from the use of imported

BUNSHIN TATTOO MUSEUM

Curated by Horyuji Ill, a renowned master of traditional Japanese tattooing, this private collection is packed with materials related to the culture: customs, history and present-day state of skin art. The word ‘bunshin’, which appears in some of the earliest official records of Japanese history, is the ancient word for tattoo. Prehistoric figures discovered in the country testify to the fact that primitive pattern tattoos existed before the Common Era.

While the Edo period gave birth to a vivid tattoo culture described as ‘living ukiyo-e’, several factors led to skin art being viewed in a negative light (hence the assumed form of punishment, the assumed connection between tattoo and organised crime, and the influence of Confucian morality). Standing against such prejudice, the Bunshin collection shines a light on millions of tattoo history, as well as in the global tattoo movement of today.

INTERNEMATHEQUE

Jointly operated by Japan Post and the museum of the University of Tokyo, this multifaceted museum inside the KITTE complex right next to Tokyo Station remains a hidden secret despite its superb location. The Internematheque is one of the city’s few museums and libraries that deal with the academic achievements of Japan’s most celebrated educational institution, along with an extensive and occasionally creepy – collection of zoological specimens. Think: complete skeletons and taxidermy models. There’s some explanatory text in English, most of it quite informative.

MEGURO PARASITOLOGICAL MUSEUM

This museum was opened in 1953 by Satoru Kamegai, a doctor who was overwhelmed by parasites afflicted by parasites caused by the poor sanitary conditions which were widespread in post-war Japan. This unusual venture displays some 300 samples of 45,000 parasites he collected.

The second floor has a display of an 8.8m tapeworm taken from the body of a 40-year-old man, with a ribbon next to it to emphasise just how long 8.8m really is. Better yet, the shop sells parasites preserved in plastic keystones – we’re not kidding. Entrance is free, but donations are encouraged.

TOKYO METRO MUSEUM

The interactive Tokyo Metro Museum is located directly under the Toei line’s railway tracks. Here you can learn about the history of Tokyo’s railway system and latest rail technology. As well as the exhibits of actual trains, including a wagon from the Ginzan’s line, 1,000 series and the Marunouchine’s Historic 300 series, the train simulators provide an immersive experience by transforming you into a train conductor and sending you along Tokyo’s railways. Don’t forget to drop in to the museum shop, which boasts an array of subway-themed souvenirs.

MEGuro Parasitological Museum

Bunshin Tattoo Museum
Things to Do

1. KOKUGIKAN STREET
The best area to experience authentic sumo culture is Ryogoku, located east of Sumida River. You can still see relics of its glorious past while strolling in this vicinity, which flourished as an entertainment centre during the Edo period. Don’t forget to stroll down Kokugikan Street, where a variety of posing rikishi (sumo wrestler) statues can be found along the sidewalk. It’s the perfect start to a sumo adventure and, if you’re lucky, some giant men in traditional garments might just walk alongside you.

2. KOKUGIKAN SUMO HALL AND MUSEUM
The Kokugikan sumo hall is the spiritual and physical heart of Japan’s national sport. The advance ticket sale starts one month before each tournament, but if you can’t get hold of a ticket, line up in the morning on the day (ticketing office opens at 8am) and try to bag some unreserved, back-row balcony seats at a reasonable price. During the tournament, the adjoining museum and the souvenir shop inside Kokugikan are only accessible to ticket holders, but in the off-season you can freely enter both facilities. The shop sells a range of limited goods only available here. The museum, which introduces you to the world of sumo through memorabilia and woodblock prints, is free, but to get the most of it, non-Japanese speakers are advised to purchase an English guidebook for ¥100 at the entrance. Special exhibitions are held six times a year. End your visit with a funny photo shoot with the panel cutouts of famous sumo stars located at the entrance.

3. ASAKUSA MANEKIYA
In search of the ultimate sumo-themed souvenir? Asakusa Manekiya, located at the end of Kaminarimon Street, welcomes you with a huge sumo wrestler figure placed above the entrance. This shop sells a wide range of sumo-themed goods, from mugs and sake cups to chopsticks, stationary and postcards, calendars, fans and charms – it’s the number one shopping spot for wrestling fans.

4. SUMO MORNING PRACTICE AT ARASHIO-BEYA
If you weren’t able to get your hands on some tickets at the Kokugikan, don’t worry. Head over to the Arashio-beya sumo stable in Nihonbashi and watch the giants in action during their asageiko (morning practice) for free. Through large streetside windows, you can observe the battling, grappling wrestlers daily from around 7.30am to 10am. Afterwards they come out to greet their fans and you have the chance to take a picture with your favourite wrestler.

Sumo-spotting in Tokyo

May means sumo season in Tokyo, so here are the top places to not just watch a match but also eat like a sumo wrestler. By the Time Out Tokyo team. Map illustrations by Mayumi Hashimoto and Miso Okada

TIME OUT LOVES

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2018-06-04 Time Out Tokyo 54/55

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THE MANEKI-NEKO (招き猫)
literally ‘beckoning cat’, also known as lucky cat is a famous
world over. In English, the cat is mistakenly identified as the
‘Chinese lucky cat’, but make no mistake, the maneki neko
is truly Japanese symbol, with origins right here in Tokyo
(although some still insist its from Kyoto) in the Edo period.

THE ORIGIN STORY
The lucky feline’s origins are
shrouded in mystery. Quite a few
tales exist, with the most common
involving a samurai who took
refuge on an island during his
flight from the law. One night, a
bolt of lighting struck the
big tree across from a temple. The
resident cat beckoned him with its
tail, which the samurai followed
into Tokyo Bay at the time, the
speed made the samurai
chase after it, and right
then, a bolt of lighting struck the
cat; surprised by the movement,
the samurai thought the cat had
been realm of the gods, and
pledged allegiance to the temple, making it
a truly Japanese symbol, no mistake, the maneki-neko
is known as lucky cat (which was
literally ‘beckoning cat’, also
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THE LUCKY FELINE
Everything you need to know about one of Japan’s
most famous cats – the arm-a-waving, fortune-
bringing maneki-neko. By Kirsty Bouwers

Left paw raised is to attract customers.
Both paws raised can mean ‘double
luck’ and extra protection from bad luck,
although the picture can also be seen as
doing a ‘baraaasaa’ celeberatory cheer.

A raised right paw is to attract money
and good fortune.

Lucky cat grants different wishes depending
on which of its paws is raised.

A raised paw is to attract money
and good fortune.

‘Depending on their function, they may have a
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A raised paw is to attract money
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HELLO WORLD – FOR THE POST-HUMAN AGE

It’s worth making the trek up to the Mori Art Museum in Roppongi to check out the new exhibition, which celebrates the future of our information-based society. Eight pairs of international and domestic artists take an unafraid look at modern-day society, exploring issues such as the penetration of the internet and new technological advancements (or artificial intelligence).

Highlights include works from the likes of German filmmaker and visual artist Hirto, known for critically-acclaimed pieces which incorporate a wealth of media theory and image history, and the artist unit extremo, the brainchild of Yae Aika and Kenzuke Isochio.

- Art Tower Mito Contemporary Art Gallery, until May 28. 3-1 Kitanomaru-koen, Chiyoda. 10am-5pm (10am-8pm Fri, Sat & Apr 28-May 6; 10am-6pm (last entry 5.30pm), closed Mon (except Apr 30) and May 1. www.arttowermito.or.jp. 9.30am-6pm (last entry 5.30pm), closed Thu (except May 3) & May 7. www.arttowermito.or.jp. 9.30am-6pm (last entry 5.30pm), closed Thu (except May 3) & May 7.

KOINOBORI NOW! INSTALLATION BY REIKO SUDO, ADRIEN GARDERÉ AND SEICHI SATO

Traditionally strung up for Children’s Day on May 5, the carp-shaped streamers known as koinobori are quite the sight to behold. The National Art Center Tokyo is joining in the fun with lots of koinobori, created by eminent Japanese textile designer Reiko Sudo, floating around the exhibition rooms. Originally a collaborative work with French exhibition designer Adrien Gardère, the piece has been expanded with the involvement of noted Rhizomatiks member Seichi Sato for this reincarnation. There will also be a hands-on experience corner, where visitors can make their own streamer.

- The National Art Center Tokyo, Apr 1-15 May 28. 2-1-2-2 Hibiya, Minato. 03 3445 0651. 10am-6pm (10am-8pm Fri, Sat & Apr 28-May 6; 10am-6pm (last entry 5.30pm), closed Thu (except May 1). www.natlartcenter.or.jp.

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH: TAIKAN YOKOYAMA

This retrospective celebrates Taikan Yokoyama, a pioneer of modern Nihonga who was born 150 years ago. Nihonga is the use of traditional Japanese painting techniques combined with Western painting methods. Besides Yokoyama’s masterpieces ‘Night sakura’ and ‘Autumn Leaves’, you’ll also be able to discover new artworks and never-before-seen studies. The centrepiece promises to be the 40-metre long scroll-painting ‘Metempsychosis’, considered one of Japan’s most significant cultural properties.

- National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, Apr 13-May 27. 3-32-1 Hongo, Bunkyo. 03 5777 9000. 10am-6pm (10am-8pm Fri, Sat & Apr 28-May 6; 10am-6pm (last entry 6pm), closed Thu (except May 1). www.moma.go.jp.

LEÓNARD FOUIJTA: PRIVATE ON WORKS

Illustrator Fujita Tisugaharu, better known as Leónard Tsuguhara Foujita, started to produce his first book illustrations in 1919 after moving to Paris. A few years later, he was already involved in 30 different projects. This enormous volume of work reflects his wide popularity in France, and the country’s flourishing publishing industry during the early 20th century. Here you’ll find a large variety of his works, including book illustrations made in France, and works published in Japan.

- Higashinakano Museum of Art, Apr 14-Jun 10. 2-4-12 Minami-, Higashinakano, Tokyo. 03 8513 1688. 10am-6pm (10am-8pm Fri, Sat). www.museum.higashinakano-museum.or.jp.

NEW SHOWS

There’s so much to see in Tokyo this spring. From artistic nudes and Western-style Japanese paintings to local architecture and colourful carp streamers.

- Art from the Tate Collection opens two centuries, and various attitudes towards the nude form – from heroic, romantic and erotic representations, through domestic and quotidian, modernist and abstract, surreal and realist, and on to the dawn of identity politics, and contemporary feminist visions of the female body. The line-up includes works by JMW Turner, Tracey Emin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Sarah Lucas and David Hockney, but it is Auguste Rodin’s 1904 erotic sculpture ‘The Kiss’ that is justifiably being billed as the star of the show.

- National Museum of Art, until Jun 3. 2-4-1 Minamimachi, Nakanoshima, Disco, 03 6406 6100. 10am-6pm (10am-8pm on May 1 & 1st Mon & Thu), closed Thu (except May 3) & May 7.

- The Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Apr 14-Jun 24. 2-1-2-2 Minato-ku, Minato. 03 5777 9005. 11am-7pm (11am-9pm Fri, Sat & Apr 28-May 6). www.tokyoperacity.com.

LEONARD TSUGUHARA: THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

This exhibition is to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Taikan Yokoyama (1868–1958), one of the most famous and popular Japanese artists of the 20th century. It will trace the artist’s life from his earliest days to his final years, through domestic and quotidian, modernist and abstract, surreal and realist, and on to the dawn of identity politics, and contemporary feminist visions of the female body. The line-up includes works by JMW Turner, Tracey Emin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Sarah Lucas and David Hockney, but it is Auguste Rodin’s 1904 erotic sculpture ‘The Kiss’ that is justifiably being billed as the star of the show.

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JAPAN IN ARCHITECTURE: GENETICITIES OF ITS TRANSFORMATION

Structured as a time travel through Japan’s history of architecture, this virtual heaven for Japanese architecture lovers is divided into nine sections explaining architecture with themes such as ‘The possibility of wooden architecture’ or ‘coexistence with nature’, supported by architectural blueprints, models and interactive installations. The highlight is a full-scale reproduction of the ‘Tai-an’, a tea ceremony house connected to Sen no Rikyu, a tea master of the 16th century. If your knowledge is a bit rusty, you can also read up in the book lounge, which is also full of fabulous modern furniture.


NUDE ART FROM THE TATE COLLECTION

More than 120 masterpieces from London’s famed Tate Gallery collection are descending on Tokyo this spring. Nude art from the Tate Collection spans two centuries, and various attitudes towards the nude form – from heroic, romantic and erotic representations, through domestic and quotidian, modernist and abstract, surreal and realist, and on to the dawn of identity politics, and contemporary feminist visions of the female body. The line-up includes works by JMW Turner, Tracey Emin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Sarah Lucas and David Hockney, but it is Auguste Rodin’s 1904 erotic sculpture ‘The Kiss’ that is justifiably being billed as the star of the show.

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**Music**

The warmer months bring with them a host of music festivals here’s where to party from spring to summer. By Kunihiro Miki

**RAINBOW DISCO CLUB**
Set in the tranquil surroundings of Higashi-Izu, the Rainbow Disco Club, where DJs from Japan and overseas perform long sets for three days during the Golden Week, caters especially to house music lovers. This year DJ Nobu headlines, and he’ll be playing a 2B2 (EDM term for ‘back to back’, ie two DJs spinning on stage at the same time) set with New Jersey deep house producer Joey Anderson, while UK’s Four Tet plays another 2B set with Floating Points. The atmosphere is laid back but lively, and the crowd all but guaranteed to be fashionable.

*April 20–22, Higashi-Izu Country Cosmos, 338-0194 Higashi-Izu-bu, Kamisato, Shizuoka. tinyurl.com/TOTzipang18. ¥8,000.*

**EDC JAPAN**
This EDM event was held in Japan for the first time in 2017, and it mobilised a crowd of 84,000 people to Chiba’s Zozo Marine Stadium and its neighbouring Makuhari Seaside Park. This year, the bass-thumping spectacle is set to return in the same venues in mid-May. The lineup includes Martin Garrix, Steve Aoki, Deadmau5, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Above & Beyond, Diplo and Don Diablo.

*May 26–27, 1-1 Naka, Yokohama, Kanagawa. tinyurl.com/TOTedc18. ¥14,000.*

**GREENROOM FESTIVAL**
The multidisciplinary Greenroom Festival was founded with the goal of protecting Japan’s natural beaches while raising awareness of the importance of marine conservation and beach culture. It combines live music performances with art installations, videography screenings and much more. Taking place around Yokohama’s Red Brick Warehouse, this year’s edition features legendary Jamaican reggae artist Jimmy Cliff, The Wailers and R&B artist Ego-Wrappin’, Ua, Wednesday and much more. Taking place around exhibitions, videography screenings and live music performances with art gallery awareness of the importance of marine conservation and beach culture.


**TAICO CLUB**
Established in 2006, this outdoor bash is a pioneer among spring music festivals in Japan, attracting fans to its glorious location within the bountiful nature of Nagano prefecture with a wide variety of music genres. Unfortunately, 2018 will be its last year, but it promises to go out with a bang. The line-ups feature local and international artists including Marcel Dettmann and Nathan Fake, Iglooghost, PKi, Wond, Haiyu Kaiyote, and Lome. Set in the campsite Kodasha no Mori, it’s more convenient to get here by car than public transport, but dancing in the woodlands is worth the effort.

*May 2-3, 3362 Ogiso, Kiso, Nagano. tinyurl.com/TOTtaicoclub. ¥6,000.*

**ZIPANG**
Japan’s most talented DJs gather at this annual open-air festival, now in its fourth year and located right next to the beach at Chiba’s Shirahama Flower Park. Expect a resort-like setting in midsummer, and a two-day party combining art installations with house and techno beats. Gidoro and Renta Hayashi are sure to satisfy the crowds with their unique sounds, while the DJ line-up is headed by Zipang mainstay Nobu. The venue got hit by a typhoon at the end of last year, but recovered and is now ready for revellers.

*May 12–13, 1454 Shirahamacho-Nemoto, Minami-Boso, Chiba. tinyurl.com/TOTedc18. ¥8,000.*

**Back to the Future**
Hajime Oshi finds out how two of Japan’s leading avant-garde musicians are rediscovering traditional culture – and ancient wisdom

**Manipulation of ‘space’ is at the heart of the music**
Between Tokyo and Berlin, Akiko Kiyama is quickly becoming a household name among European techno aficionados, after being discovered by genre superstars Richie Hawtin and Daito Manabe. Daito Manabe, on the other hand, can already count on a worldwide following following the headman of multimedia masters Rhizomatiks Research is renowned for his work on the stage productions of J-poppers Perfume and also played a major role in producing, Japan’s part of the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games. Despite working completely independently from each other, these two envelope-pushing artists have recently found a common – though some might also say unlikely – cause: Both proponents of the hypermodern in their past work, Kiyama and Manabe have turned to exploring the traditional Japanese arts. February 2018 track ‘Jabara’ saw Kiyama ‘reconstruct ancient Japanese music’ by combining the sounds of the shinobue (Japanese bamboo flute), shamisen (a traditional three-stringed banjo) and koto (the national instrument of Japan) with glitchy sampling and an asymmetric beat, while Manabe joined hands with kyogetsu (traditional comic theatre) superstar Masanii Nomura in creating an eclectic video piece for Nomura’s performance ‘Sanbaso’ (pictures above), a centuries-old classic of the genre. Both Kiyama and Manabe find the possibilities afforded by a fusion of the archetypal and the avant-garde fascinating.

**SHED LIGHTS ON THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**
While Japanese social norms forbid ‘deviance’, they unwittingly produce displacement and non-conformity, which are in turn quietly accepted and considered natural. Traditional Japanese music, which is full of rules but nonetheless often contains wayward notes, is the same. While the ideas of the uneasy coexistence of order and chaos and the embrace of the latter as a source of creativity have ancient roots, not many people today are actively aware of them. Through digging deep into traditional culture and turning their findings into something uniquely kooky, Kiyama and Manabe appear to have stumbled upon the essence of what makes Japan such a fascinating place.

**They also believe traditional music mirrors the contemporary world**
Nightlife

Where to find food whatever the hour in Shinjuku, Akasaka, Shibuya and Roppongi. By Mari Hiratsuka

MISSED THE LAST TRAIN HOME and in desperate need of warmth and shelter? Get an intense craving for food after a night on the tiles? Whatever your reason for prowling the city streets at a time when most people are tucked up in bed, you can always turn to these (almost) 24-hour eateries for a bite and some company when most of the city has shuttered. Here’s where to satisfy your late-night hunger pangs.

Sushi Zanmai
Shibuya Higashiguchi branch
Few experiences can make you feel more like a genuine Tokyoite than tucking into a feast of raw fish at three in the morning. This dependable chain gets surprisingly busy with sushi fans in the middle of the night. If you’re after some serious post-nightlife nourishment, Sushi Zanmai (¥3,000), a vast bowl of rice with 13 sushi options, is a surefire bet. The expansion of this mini-chain is a boon for the city’s night owls – its six Tokyo outlets (there’s also one in Osaka) are all open 24 hours. This Roppongi branch, with its striking interior design and convenient location next to the Grand Hyatt, does a smashing trade in the wee hours, which is hardly surprising considering the abundance of nightlife options nearby.

For a rejuvenating post-clubbing feed, try the well to order the Peking duck (¥3,119 per bird), which is roasted while you tuck into the crispy skin, the chef will turn the bones and remaining meat into a soup and a stir-fry. It’s one of filling, comforting and warming your body with the help of these small dried fish for more than half the night.

Shibuya waiter
Shibuya branch
A cloud-infused soup made from slowly simmering beef bones and offals for many hours. It’s deeply flavourful, and accompanied by a spread of 11 types of small Korean side dishes, and a bowl of rice – just the type of filling, comforting and warming your body cries out for after a night out. This Akasaka restaurant, now in its sixth decade, is open 24 hours daily. It’s deeply flavourful, and accompanied by a spread of 11 types of small Korean side dishes, and a bowl of rice – just the type of filling, comforting and warming your body cries out for after a night out.

While this ground-floor annex specialises in this single dish, it’s also worth visiting this restaurant’s main location on the fifth floor of the same building, which offers a diverse menu of Korean dishes. While this ground-floor annex specialises in this single dish, it’s also worth visiting this restaurant’s main location on the fifth floor of the same building, which offers a diverse menu of Korean dishes.

Chinese Cafe 8
Roppongi/branch
The extensive menu covers almost all of Italian classics such as pastas, diced beef steak and roast chicken, while baked potatoes, prosciutto and French fries are available as sides. While we’d never judge anyone for their dietary habits, we’re slightly surprised to learn that at half four in the morning on any day of the week, a bunch of people will be queuing for Yakiniku Gen-Chan all day and all night – there are more than 70 items to choose from including top-notch meat and bibimbap.

While we’re at peace with pre-dawn meat feasts, we’re less convinced by Gen-Chen’s gendered pricing policy – women pay ¥3,480 while men pay ¥3,980. The hachun menu is smaller and cheaper, of course, with the Kabi set meal and Shichirakka set meal priced at a mere ¥950 and ¥850 respectively.

Yakiniku Gen-Chan
Shibuya branch
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Boogie nights

Get ready to party – these hotels and hostels regularly host DJ sets. By Yukako Izumi

IN RECENT YEARS, several new hotels have incorporated music into their offerings, inviting DJs to spin the decks and opening their doors to the public. Avoid the crowds at the more conventional clubs and head to one of these hip new dance spaces instead.

**Moxy Tokyo Kinshicho**

There’s a casual party vibe at Moxy Tokyo Kinshicho’s smart, funky bar-lounge, where the atmosphere is unpretentious and inviting, and the staff are friendly and cheerful. Aside from the dance floor, there’s a dining area with table seatings surrounding the bar counter. The music policy here is wide-ranging and the venue is open 24 hours, so you can continue to drink and hang around even after the DJ set has ended.

📍 3-24-9 Kita-Kasumigaoka, Shinjuku (Kinshicho Station). 03 5624 8801. Facebook: @moxytokyo. Dine every Fri & Sat from 7pm to 11.45pm. Cover charge ¥2,160 (¥1,080 for hotel guests).

**Hotel Koé Tokyo**

Koé’s effortlessly stylish hotel packs an apparel shop, a restaurant and a hotel into its steel glass shell – and it sure knows how to have fun. When the weekend rolls around, the reception desk in the industrial-chic lobby transforms into a DJ booth, and the space sometimes also hosts events by guest DJs and artists. With Masaya Kuroki of fashion brand Maison Kitsuné in charge of the venue’s music policy, you’re in safe hands. There is a one-drink minimum for standing in the event space, as for the dining area, you should order at least a meal and a drink.

📍 2-7-1 Udagawacho, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). tinyurl.com/TOTshinagawaprince. DJ sets every Tue to Sat, except every Fri & Sat from 8pm to 11pm; FREE admission. Check website for schedule.

**TOWiseowls.**

Located on the 39th floor of Shinagawa Prince Hotel, Dining & Bar Table 9 Tokyo is a restaurant with a view. It’s also enormous, large enough to be divided into nine areas, including restaurants, lounges and bars. Ask for a seat at Nine Bar if you want to be close to the DJ booth. As a welcome change from many Tokyo bars, the DJ here spins lounge music at a volume that doesn’t drown out your conversation, which makes it perfect for a glamorous date night, accompanied by the spectacular city skyline.

📍 4-10-30 Harumi Mirai, Shinagawa (Shinagawa Station). 03 5541 1114. Open late Mon to Thu & Sun to Sat, 5pm to 11.45pm. Cover charge ¥2,500 (¥1,200 for hotel guests).

**Howl music venue and bar, which is open almost every day; check website for details.**

📍 8pm to 11pm; FREE admission. Check website for schedule. The likes of TOTkoeshibuya. Music events on weekends; check website for details. DJ’d here in the past.

**Citan**

Few people know that there’s a vast underground space hidden in hipster hangout Citan, a cool, contemporary hotel in Higashi-Nihonbashi. The basement lounge offers a wide range of eating and drinking options, and boasts a superb sound system. You’ll find DJs spinning discs over the weekends, expect an eclectic mix, with genres varying from disco to house, jazz to soul. The likes of TOTkoeshibuya. DJ Nori and Takehito Kubota have DJ’d here in the past.

📍 3-24-10 Nakanoshima, Chuo (Tennoz Isle Station). 03 6641 7505. Website: citan.com. Dine every Fri & Sat from 7pm to 11pm; FREE admission. Check website for schedule.

**Wise Owl Hostels Tokyo**

There’s a dusk-till-dawn party vibe at Wise Owl Hostels Tokyo’s smart, funky bar-lounge, where the atmosphere is unpretentious and inviting, and the staff are friendly and cheerful. Aside from the dance floor, there’s a dining area with table seatings surrounding the bar counter. The music policy here is wide-ranging and the venue is open 24 hours, so you can continue to drink and hang around even after the DJ set has ended.

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**Shinjuku’s Robot Restaurant, you’re missing out on a crazy, otherworldly Japanese extravaganza.**

While strolling through the narrow lanes of Shinjuku’s Kabukicho district, all lined out in neon signs day and night, you’ll be bound to come across the lavish Robot Restaurant with its shiny facade and larger-than-life robot guardians at the door. With three sold-out shows daily plus additional shows in spring, this Shinjuku institution will soon be celebrating its sixth anniversary.

It’s best to arrive early as you’ll get the calm before the storm; soon you’ll be treated to an intense, jaw-dropping 90-minute metal showcase. The first act features floats with taiko drummers pounding out the rhythm for dancers decked out as ninja, demons and kabuki characters to twirl to under the neon lights. But wait for the highlights, the fight between jungle folk and evil alien robots who plan to take over the world. Battle won, a carnival-like performance, teeming with colourful floats, animals, robots and dancing kabuki characters to twirl to under the neon lights. Drummers pounding out the rhythm for the robot guardians to join in.

📍 3-4-2 Kotobashi, Sumida (Kinshicho Station). 03 5624 8801.

**Promotional feature**

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**HOW TO BOOK:** Robot Restaurant is open for three shows daily, starting at 5.55pm, 7.50pm and 9.45pm* with an additional show at 4.30pm daily until May 31, and on weekends and holidays thereafter, and the format is changed every few months to keep things fresh. You can reserve your space a couple of days ahead by calling the number below between 9am and 5pm. The entrance fee is ¥8,000, excluding food and drinks. Note that the schedule might change due to maintenance. Shinjuku Robot Bldg, 2-7-1 Kabukicho, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Station). 03 3200 5500. www.shinjuku-robot.com. 4pm-2pm daily.

* Additional show at 4.30pm until May 31.
Fujimura explores the struggles of a woman working as a professional mourner hired to cry at funerals. A story about family and death. The girl is declared brain dead although her heart continues to beat with unusual strength, so her family trials and tribulations, of the best manga depicting gay male same-sex relationships, is their eating habits. It's more of a narrative can be comical, often interspersed with the hetero protagonist’s rather insensitive comments and attitude, which can make for uncomfortable reading. But overall, the father’s marriage to his younger boyfriend and Keiko Takemiya’s ‘Kaze to Ki no Uta’ (‘The Poem of Wind and Trees’), but the genre only really took off after the TV docudrama ‘Takayuki Yamada’s Cannes Film Festival’, which highlighted social issues such as prejudice and the AIDS epidemic. Even though it is set in New York, it became the main vehicle for gay community in Japan to imagine what their life could be like if things were more liberal back home.

The sub-genre of manga depicting gay male characters tackles a wide range of issues, from domestic life to gender identity and family relations. By Kouake Shimizu, gay life is portrayed as normal and homophobia is depicted as very common. This ongoing series by BL author Asumiko Nakamura depicts a middle-aged gay couple, mostly through a manga app, this work is set in the Japanese countryside. Currently published as a series through a BL-centric magazine, yet it still follows a straight couple going through a divorce after it emerges that the husband is gay, as told from the perspective of the family’s university student-aged son. The narrative is comical, often interspersed with the hetero protagonist’s rather insensitive comments and attitude, which can make for uncomfortable reading. But overall, the father’s marriage to his younger boyfriend and the love life of the mother (challenging Japanese society’s tendency) to judge mothers who don’t have one) are depicted in a refreshing, candid manner.

The genre has introduced a much more diverse set of characters than those found in conventional manga. Food manga than BL, of course, it features elements unique to gay life such as the complicated relationships with their parents, but these themes tend to be addressed in the background. The protagonist’s sexuality is depicted as very common.

SHIMANAMI TASOGARE 'Fuki Katsunori' Currently published as a series through a manga app, this work is set in the Japanese countryside. The author, known for ninja manga which were later animated, declared himself as being of third gender, this is their first work to deal with homosexuality properly. It fits at the heart of following a mid-pubescent hero who is helped by a range of strange characters, an awkward path to properly. It hits at the heart, following an adult context here which anyone who has struggled with their eating habits. It’s more of a good read. For her lavish style, but here the aesthetic sense. She’s known as ultimate female fantasy, Asumiko Nakamura's work receives many admirers for its artistry and aesthetic sense. She’s known for her lavish style, but here the characters are drawn in a vibrant and fresh new way. It could be said that this is the new premise of BL, where homosexuality is portrayed as normal and homophobia is depicted as nonexistent.

KING NAIHABETA? (WHAT DID YOU EAT YESTERDAY?) Fumi Yoshinaga This ongoing series by BL author Fumi Yoshinaga depicts a middle-aged gay couple, mostly through their eating habits. It’s more

Tsunayoshi, Bara no you ni, Kazoku wa tsurai yo III (English Title: The House Where the Mermaid Sleeps) release Date: November 2018

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Tired of the cookie-cutter hotel rooms? These one-of-a-kind accommodations in Tokyo will give you reason to stay in.

By Mayumi Koyama

BOOK AND BED TOKYO ASAKUSA

Forgotten bed and breakfast, Japan has invented a new style of accommodation – the ‘accommodation bookshop’, and they cheekily claim that the quality of the books on offer means they cannot guarantee a good night’s sleep, as you may be up all night reading.

Aside from having access to shelves and shelves of books all free to borrow for the duration of your stay, Book and Bed has invented a new style of accommodation options – patrons can pick between three of your stay, Book and Bed free to borrow for the duration.

SHIBUYA ASAKUSA

Sleeper hits

HOSHINOYA TOKYO

Just when it was starting to feel like Tokyo's ryokan (traditional inns) were on the verge of extinction, along came a major new player bringing the classic bed and breakfast (and some also bed) experience bang up to date. Hoshinoya Tokyo is one of the capital's very few luxury ryokan – and it's located in central Otemachi, just a short walk from Tokyo Station and the Imperial Palace. The 19-storey (including two underground floors) building houses tatami-floored suites, as well as a spa and dining space. Don't miss the rooftop stadium, whose steam room is a classic bed and breakfast (and some also bed) experience.

TRAIN HOSTEL HOKUTOSEI

Embrace your inner trainspotter at this one-of-a-kind hostel, accessible directly from JR Asakusa Station. Named after the defunct Hokutosei sleeper train, which operated between Tokyo and Fukuoka for 27 years before being retired in 2015, it boasts an interior that faithfully recreates the train’s cabins – think bunk beds, aluminium ladders and dark curtains – made with original materials from the Hokutosei carriages.

HOSHI N A HOTEL TOKYO GINZA

From the ubiquitous act of buying ramen through a vending machine to having a mechanical pet, the Japanese have long loved their machines. You can now even stay in the world's first hotel chain staffed by robots – a claim recognised by Guinness World Records.

HENN NA HOTEL

Can’t get enough of Hello Kitty – Japan’s most iconic cat girl? Then you’ll want to book a stay at Henn Na Hotel Tokyo specifically for its Hello Kitty-themed rooms. There are eight rooms dedicated to the cute cartoon cat – four Kitty Town rooms (brightly coloured and girly) and four Princess Kitty rooms (more mature interior design, targeted at grown-ups) – and they all feature Hello Kitty furniture and decor.

Plus, the rooms are well-stocked with special Hello Kitty merchandise, including skin-care sets, pens and original dolls, which you can take home. Want more? You can even kickstart your day with a special order of the Hello Kitty breakfast set, where certain dishes either come in the shape of the cat or imprinted with the cat icon.

KEIO PLAZA HOTEL TOKYO

A new, updated version featuring a sleek, modern design inspired by Finnish sauna culture. The hotel’s steam room is a standout among the city’s many sento (bathhouses). Here, you pour mint-scented water onto hot sauna rocks to create more humidity, which will encourage sweating, before cooling down in one of the showers rooms, each of which is set to a different water temperature.

Plaza Hotel Tokyo specifically for its Hello Kitty-themed rooms.

TRAVEL & HOTELS

April - June, 2018

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

NARITA AIRPORT

The main international airport, Narita is 70km away from central Tokyo. The easiest way to the city is either the Narita Express (35min, minimum Tokyo Station, generally every half hour, ¥920) or the Keisei Skyliner (40 min, minimum Shinjuku Station, sometimes a shuttle, ¥2,470).

The cheaper option, of which take around 90 minutes, are the Access Narita bus to Tokyo Station or Shinjuku Station every 10 minutes at peak times, ¥1,000, pay on board (or reserve online), the Tokyo Shuttle bus to Tokyo station, every 20 minutes, ¥1,000, buy ticket at a counter or reserve online, or the Keisei Narita Sky Access and Keisei Main train lines (to Ueno or Unkai).

HANEDA AIRPORT

The airport most Tokyoites love for its sheer convenience. Haneda is actually the bigger and busiest airport but has a lot of domestic traffic. Getting around is assisted by Tokyo Monorail (to Hamamatsucho station, 25 minutes, ¥490) and trains (to Shinjuku, 30 minutes, ¥490).

The Keikyu bus goes to many central destinations and takes about 50 minutes to Shinbashi (¥1,080). Tax is also the same economical from Haneda, with Keikyu central Tokyo going around ¥7,000 (pre-book a taxi if you).

GETTING ONLINE

Public wi-fi is used to be sparse, but nowadays it’s easy to find. Reception can be a bit patchy though, so your best bet for staying online at all times is to buy a data SIM card. Get yours at the airport (either in a vending machine or at a wi-fi counter) or at larger Bic Camera and Yodobashi Camera stores.

MONEY

Cash is still king in Tokyo, although more and more places have started accepting cards in recent years. Don’t expect your local ramen joint to be one of them, though. For foreign cards, the 7 Elevens and JP Post office ATMs are the most reliable. Some FamilyMarts now have JP Post ATMs installed – look out for a green machine.

TAX-FREE SHOPPING

For non-Japanese tourists staying in Japan for less than six months, it’s possible to avoid the 8 percent consumption tax while shopping – just look out for the ‘Japan Tax-Free Shop’ stickers. Here are the requirements: the minimum purchase of ¥5,000 per shopper per day, plus tax-free consumption should not be greater than ¥20,000 depending on final destination. You should avoid taking a taxi, which will cost you over ¥23,000 and takes up to two hours.

SAFETY

Tokyo, and Japan in general, is pretty darn safe. But in the off chance that you find yourself the victim of a crime – or have simply lost something – head to the nearest “koban” (police box), usually found at the corner of bigger intersections. They’ll be able to help you out. The emergency services number is 119.

In case of a severe earthquake or other natural disaster, check the Japan Meteorological Agency’s website for advice and updates in English (jma.go.jp). To know what to do in such a situation or how to prepare, check out the National Emergency Disaster Prevention Portal (mlit.go.jp/river/bousai/olympic).
Cheap things to do in Tokyo
Kabuki shows, sumo matches, free galleries and more – how to enjoy Tokyo without breaking the bank. tinyurl.com/TOTcheapthingstodo

The best places for green tea in Tokyo
Green tea comes in many forms, including matcha and hojicha, and you can try them all at these top cafés and teahouses. tinyurl.com/TOTgreeneteaplaces

Tokyo’s best toy stores
From plush toys to games and collectibles, these stores will bring out the kid in all of us. tinyurl.com/TOTtoystores

Best tonkatsu in Tokyo
Premium pork cutlets, breaded and deep-fried, and served with a side of rice, pickles and miso soup. Yum! tinyurl.com/TOTtonkatsu

TIME OUT READERS will know about our popular series of free maps: pocket-sized guides to the multifarious delights this city has to offer. They’re hard to miss these days – as well as our ever-popular ‘10 things to do in Shibuya’ edition and the comprehensive ‘88 things to do in Tokyo’, we’ve come out with maps for nearly all the top areas including Roppongi, Shinjuku, Nihonbashi, Marunouchi, Koenji and Ginza.

All of these publications, along with issues of our magazine, are available to pick up at Shibuya Station's tourist information centre, conveniently located in the underground passage on the second basement floor of Shibuya Station. The English-speaking guides will help you stock up, provide sightseeing tips, and assist you in navigating the bowels of the cavernous station itself.

Lost in Harajuku?
Head straight for Moshi Moshi Box

As the shopping district that symbolises Japanese pop culture, Harajuku is a must-visit for any tourist. But anyone who’s jumped into the shopping fray will tell you can be a little intimidating. Which is why you’ll be pleased to hear about Moshi Moshi Box. The tourist information centre that’s right in the heart of the area.

To find it, take five minutes from the station and look out for the central skyscraper – a big, colourful world clock designed by Harajuku kawaii impresario Sebastian Masuda. The centre provides sightseeing information for the Shibuya area, including Harajuku. It also provides essential information and services such as counter assistance, a foreign currency exchange machine, and free Wi-Fi.

But that’s not all: aiming to serve as an entertainment centre in itself, it’s a place where overseas visitors can experience J-pop culture through activities such as trying on kimono. There’s also a souvenir shop where you can pick up Mt. Fuji artwork and quirky items such as sushi socks and accessories with popular Harajuku motifs.

+81-3-5851-2225. 3-23-5 Jingumae, Shibuya (Harajuku and Meiji-Jingumae stations); 03-6447 2225. moshimoshi-nippon.jp. Daily 10am-6pm.

Shibuya Station Tourist Information Centre
Get our maps and mag in Shibuya

To find it, walk five minutes from the station and look out for the centre’s symbol – a big, colourful world clock designed by Harajuku kawaii impresario Sebastian Masuda. The centre provides sightseeing information for the Shibuya area, including Harajuku. It also provides essential information and services such as counter assistance, a foreign currency exchange machine, and free Wi-Fi.

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You know you’re in Tokyo when...

TOKYO MAY BE a megapolise, but our 13 million-strong population (with an additional 29 million in Greater Tokyo) means space is, well, limited. Enter a whole load of things which would probably be twice the size abroad but have been squeezed into the tiniest of spaces here in the capital, for various reasons.

Our houses tend to be miniscule. Unlike other big cities, sharing isn’t very common, and many Tokyoites live in shoebox apartments with ingenious space solutions. Wash basins in the bathroom can sometimes be moved over the toilet to make space for a shower; bedrooms double as sitting rooms by stowing away futons or having fold-up beds… The list goes on, and the space keeps on shrinking.

With such tiny houses, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that our cars may seem, well, small, especially compared to many Western models (we’re looking at you, North America). Yet with the narrow, crisscrossing alleys that still dot the city and a distinct lack of parking (many people only buy a car after they’re sure they’ve secured a parking space), our diminutive vehicles are actually pretty convenient.

Capsule hotels really stretch the use of space to its limits, with a single bed cubicle being the budget-conscious choice of many salarymen who stay at work (or at an izakaya) and miss their last train home. The first one opened in Osaka back in 1979, and the trend spread across the country. Many places only cater to men, although female-only and more upscale versions have gained popularity in recent years too.

It’s not just infrastructure though – even our food, drink and foliage can be found in miniscule form. Pop by a supermarket or liquor store and you’ll find mini beer cans. Clocking in at a mere 135ml, the beers were originally designed both for those who like their beer cold (there’s nothing worse than the tepid last mouthfuls of a slowly drunk beer), and those who just can’t quite finish a larger can. Good things come in small packages.

The same goes for our food: we like it bite-sized. Everything from grilled meat to fried chicken tend to be served in a way that is chopstick-friendly, but the perfect morsel of food has to be sushi. One bite and you’re done. For even tinier food, YouTube channel Miniature Space offers up videos of miniscule tempura, cakes and even gyōza, created by what seems an extraordinarily large hand by comparison.

Of course, Japan is known the world over for cultivating some seriously tiny trees. Bonsai is an art which has been practised for a good millennium, with its roots in China. The trees are grown in boxes or pots, and are slowly, carefully shaped over time.

But that isn’t the only tiny natural thing we have in Japan. Based on an ancient calendar, a year in Japan is actually divided into 24 seasons and 72 micro seasons, the latter of which only last a few days each – one bout of flu or serious hangover and you’ll miss them. Mid-May, for example, isn’t just a period in late spring; no, it’s takumokusho, or ‘when bamboo shoots sprout’. The ’72 seasons’ smartphone app tracks these tiniest of seasonal changes, and if you eat a fancy kaiseki dinner (traditional, formal multi-course dinner), you might find references to them too. There’s never been a better reason to pay attention to the world around you, big or small.

By Kirsty Bouwers

Illustrations: Kent Iida
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