Eating Tokyo
Food in this megapolis is in a constant pursuit of excellence. Every small detail matters: the tempura coating should be golden, crispy but still light as air; the fish in your sushi has to fit in your mouth in a single bite; the udon noodles are to be firm yet slippery enough for slurping; and that twig of leaves on your kaiseki course should perfectly encapsulate the essence of the season. The best chefs have worked tirelessly their whole lives through constant repetition to perfect every mouthful you take – and this issue is a celebration of their dedication. Inside you’ll find everything from tiny ramen joints and hidden alleyway bars to exquisite Japanese fine dining, all waiting to serve you the best meal of your life. So practise your chopstick skills, bring a big appetite and just take in all the city has laid out on the table. Be warned though: the food in Tokyo can be life-changing and you’ll never look at your local chain restaurant the same way again. Tabemashou (let’s eat).

**YOUR TOKYO EAT-LIST BEGINS ON PAGE 20**
CUT THE PLASTIC

IN JAPAN our obsession with all things modern has its downside - plastic. Double-wrapped items, separate bags for different items in the convenience store, and of course, lots of straws... all considered part of excellent customer service, but rather harmful for the environment. For those looking to lessen their plastic waste footprint - not a small feat in Japan - some organisations are offering solutions. Kamakura-based NPO Plastic-Free Japan (plasticfreejapan.org) is all about raising awareness through education from the consumer level to big government. They also host events, mainly in the Kanto area. Check their Japanese-language website for updates on their latest activities.

For a more immediate impact, the new No Plastic Japan (#noplasticjapan.com) campaign is on a mission to reduce plastic straw usage by offering alternatives. They’ve started selling stainless steel straws from ¥400 a pop, while even their packaging is plastic-free - and looks pretty cool. If you were looking to reduce waste, this could be the last straw.

LOCAL LEGENDS

#20: Elvios Sato

‘Rockability is my lifestyle,’ says Elvios Sato, a man who is deeply captivated by 1950s music and culture. As the owner of a rockabilly shop that has been in Harajuku for over 25 years, he has worked to promote this rock’n’roll subculture in Tokyo and has been involved in bands and worked as a music producer.

At his middle school entrance ceremony, Elvios met some older students who wore ‘choran’ (long versions of Japanese school uniform jackets) and had pompadour hairstyles. He was fascinated by the dragon and tiger embroidery in their jackets, and was also impressed by their appearance. He started listening to rock music, particularly the popular Japanese bands Cool and Carol, whose lead singer Eikichi Yazawa was an influential figure amongst the delinquent youth of that era. He was also influenced by the young adult film ‘Growing Up’ (released in English as ‘Lemon Popsicle’), which was set in the 1950s, leading him to fall further in love with the culture of that decade.

The 1980s was the heyday of young people dancing in the rock’n’roll style, referred to in Japan as ‘roller-zoku’. Every Sunday, roller-zoku would gather in pedestrian avenues of Yoyogi Park, while all kinds of rockabilly shops began sprouting up in Harajuku. Elvios visited the legendary shops at the centre of the boom, such as Cream Soda (now Pink Dragon), which led him to fall in love with Harajuku itself.

In 1994, Elvios opened Harajuku Jack’s, a boutique offering rockabilly fashion, accessories and lifestyle products. Influenced by the owner of Cream Soda, Masayuki Yamanaka, and taking to heart his encouragement to ‘do your own thing’, Elvios imbued his shop with a playful spirit. ‘The shop is hard to find, so the customers who come here from all over Japan and the world have a real love for the culture. It’s because we have a really high quality collection of clothes here.’

According to Elvios, the shop is an attraction in itself. ‘We don’t sell. Sometimes I have a gem somewhere in the racks. If you really look for it, you might find something that is surprisingly low-priced – or it could be way too expensive.

In addition to being a shop owner, Elvios is also active in several bands and he organises rockabilly events. As for his future plans, he aims to invigorate the rockabilly scene in Tokyo and connect with the younger generations. ‘In time, I also want my daughters to take over my shop,’ he adds.

IN JAPAN

YOU’RE IN

Restaurant or bar, and you want another round. You could just shout out the name of your drink, but if you’re still having the same again, you can also just shout ‘okawari’ (oh-kah-wah-ri). Literally means ‘replace’, but in practice means the same as ‘another one of the same’ (a la carte). Sometimes it’s hard to mean polite, add ‘kudasai’, or ask ‘okawari dekimasu ka’ (‘is it possible to have another one?’). Don’t forget to ask for the day’s ‘osusume’ (recommendation), and you’ll start to sound like a true izakaya veteran.

WORD TO KNOW:

Okawari

SHOOT TO THRILL

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Tokyo Update

Tokyo, and Japan at large, saw record-breaking temperatures this summer, with one memorable day even topping 41 degrees in neighbouring Saitama. The heatwave led to much muttering over how the spectators – let alone the athletes – will possibly survive the 2020 Games.

Multiple issues have been raised, from spraying water on the ground to cool it, to moving outdoor events to the early morning, but one of the most controversial so far has been the possibility of daylight savings. Some have suggested that by moving the clock forward by an hour or two, the heat may become a bit more bearable for the morning events, even if it won’t pack the idea of a sting hours of heat risks (because it could disturb sleeping patterns) or that they’ll have to work later hours in the end. We’re keeping an eye on this one...

COUNTDOWN TO TOKYO 2020

October-December, 2018

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ONE DAY IN...

**Shin-Okubo**  

**Morning**  
Start your day with some kimchi rolls at Myeong'Neill (open 24/7), or have a simple morning set of croissants, a coffee, and fruit at Shokudo or Tea House. For a sweet tooth, head over to Shin-Okubo to visit the popular bakery, Shin-Okubo. It is a place where sin and temptation are served up with a smile.

**Afternoon**  
Snacking and shopping are always on the menu in Shin-Okubo. Try the spicy kimchi croissant with kimchi and chili jam at The Dispenser (also available in a vegan version). For something a bit more unusual, try the kimchi croissant at Wraps and Rolls.

**Dinner**  
Teochew/Macanese are perennial favorites for Korean BBQ, with both having multiple dining locations in the area. While Seoul Garden offers a wider range of the classic BBQ formula by using salted duck rather than pork, AFC (Korean Fried Chicken) and beer or rice are to be had at Hou J 2 Chicken – they are also famous for their cheese-dipped grilled chicken with cheese.

**Era name set to change in 2019**

You may have heard that the current emperor of Japan, Emperor Akihito, is set to abdicate next year (2019) and that his successor will reign as Nara (吾妻) on April 30. (Side note: we might get a 10-day Golden Week holiday as Emperor Akihito is set to abdicate on April 30.)

**KIRBY CAFE**

Get ready for cuteness overload at Tokyo’s Kirby Cafe! Everybody’s favourite pink, expanding ball of joy first appeared in a Nintendo video game in the early 90s. Now you can follow him on a culinary journey to Dream Land.

The café’s extensive menu features a beautifully presented dish called ‘Kirby’s grilled cheese’. Better yet, most of the meals and drinks come with a gift – think plates, figurines, coasters, and mugs featuring Kirby. If that’s not enough, you can also make for exclusive merchandise at the onsite store.

**POKÉMON CAFÉ**

Halloween is huge in Tokyo, and many cafés in the city have jumped on the bandwagon to offer themed menus. The immensely popular Pokémon Café in Nihonbashi is no exception. The new menu consists of three spooky new creations. There’s a Gassy marshmallow (mimic meat punch) burger ($10.70), a spiciness-cure Pikachu plate ($14.20), and a Tangela-inspired Mont Blanc dessert ($14.90). As for the new drinks, you have a choice between the Pikachu marron latte ($9.80) and a colourful Golbar float topped with ice cream ($9.80).

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**Pizza**

The most famous (and gruesome) backstory to the teru bozu involves a monk who promised a warlord that he could stop the rain by praying, when that didn’t happen, he was decapitated and his head was hung outside, covered in cloth, to make the sun appear.

Yet, according to other sources, the practice originally came from China, where it was not a monk but a little girl, a brothel, known as Sosie or Sochin-nyan, who had to be outside to ensure her village wouldn’t have torrential downpours. The ending isn’t much happier, though. She was eventually sacrificed, with villagers creating paper cutouts of her in honour. That story eventually evolved into the version we see today.

**Time Out Tokyo October-December, 2018**

**DON’T FORGET TO...**

Go for a pop karaoke at Tomato. Round up some friends and sing your heart out to the latest BTS hits, or check out the massive Karaoke Night menu at Cafe de Bingsu.

**KEISUKE TANIGAWA**

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**ONLY IN TOKYO**

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What brought you to Japan? Initially I was inspired to move to the city by my exposure to Japanese culture at an early age through TV and through having friends who grew up there. Later it developed into a love for the fashion and youth culture scene of Tokyo, which made me want to experience it for myself.

So when I discovered a study abroad programme that allowed me to study for a year and then win six scholarships to be in Tokyo, it felt like the universe was always trying to bring me here all along. After I spent my junior year in Japan, I went back to my school in the States to finish my degree and then came back to Tokyo earlier this year to learn Japanese and work as a full time creative.

My goal is to develop stories that expose unscripted and real life viewpoints of people around the world. I feel like Japan is a space where there are a lot of untold stories that need to be uncovered and I want to help tell them.

You directed films such as ‘Black in Tokyo’, which examined the black experience of living in Tokyo. What was the inspiration behind it?

Growing up I didn’t see any unique and inspiring stories or films on black travellers in Asia, so I wanted to fill that gap and create something that could connect to people of all walks of life and show them the value of getting outside of their comfort zone. The goal was to directly allow people to experience Tokyo as if they had grown up there for a long time. Your style is very different from most parts of Tokyo. It also helps that it is more quiet and less busy than most of the city.

When did you first feel like a Tokyo? Since I have always been in love with Japanese culture and fashion, I was already pretty influenced by what was happening amongst young people in the city. Within the first two weeks of moving to Japan, I was like ‘This is where I belong.’ Since then I feel so comfortable because although I am an outsider, in other ways I’m also an insider.

What is your favourite Japanese food? For example: did you know that the former American professional basketball player Kobe Bryant was named after the premium Kobe beef? And that this has indirectly promoted this renowned Japanese beef to the world?

There’s a proliferation of gyozas in Tokyo but for the best dumplings, head to the unofficial gyza capital of Utsunomiya in Tochigi Prefecture. Located less than an hour away from Tokyo Station, the city’s gyza consumption is ranked number one in the country. NHK World offers a wide range of programmes in multiple languages. Do you have a favourite programme? ‘Tokyo Eye 2020’, because it’s exposing to me about the culture of Tokyo that I’m not familiar with. The neighbourhoods they feature on the show represent so much of what Tokyo is – the tradition, food, shopping and fascination with vintage apparel is really amazing. I don’t watch TV a lot so if I’m watching something I want to be constantly learning something new.

Finally, any insider tips for international visitors to enjoy the city? Every area has a hidden gem, so be open-minded and do your research. Although Tokyo has so much to see, it’s easy to get stuck just exploring the usual tourist attractions in Shibuya, Harajuku and Ginza. Instead, find the less popular and less congested places like Dazaifu where you can find cute little shops and cafes, and also the amazing art galleries in Roppongi. If you’re already in Harajuku, make your way to Omotesando and check out Commune, which is a little popup space that has great outdoor bars and restaurants. The possibilities are endless, so explore them!
**Time Out Tokyo**

**Welcome to Japan: we use chopsticks.** Whether you’re a lifelong chopstick wielder or an absolute novice, we’re here to help you not offend your hosts. By Kirsty Bouwers

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**DO: STICK TO YOUR OWN FOOD**

Sharing is caring, but not when it comes to chopsticks. To use them in a communal bowl, especially with people you don’t know particularly well, is seen as a (unhygienic) faux pas.

How to get your food from a sharing platter? Thunk! Alternatively, an extra pair will be provided or can always be asked for. That also goes for receiving food from someone else: don’t try to accept the food with your hands. It’s a funeral ritual, where remaining bones are picked out of the urn and passed from person to person with chopsticks. Just offer them your bowl/platter to eat the food off.

**DON’T: COURT THE DEAD**

If you’re a complete beginner holding it, as this is similar to experimenting, try to accept the food with your chopsticks. Sharing is caring, but not when it comes to chopsticks. To use them in a communal bowl, especially with people you don’t know particularly well, is seen as a (unhygienic) faux pas.

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**DON’T: LICK YOURE CHOPSTICKS**

In case you were wondering, you’re not actually supposed to lick your chopsticks. Similar to passing food from chopstick to chopstick, these actions are both associated with funeral rites and death, and indulging in them is said to bring some seriously bad luck.

Don’t lick your chopsticks if there’s fish, as it’s considered impolite. The best way to eat sushi is with your hands. If it is a chopstick type of dish, make sure to not rub them together, as it can look as if you’re actually using your hands. It’s a good idea to keep your chopsticks clean and the question of where to put the food on.

**DON’T: STAB YOUR FOOD**

Do not stab your food to pick it up. Your food is generally in bite-sized morsels anyway – if you’re trying, rather than looking like a Neanderthal spearing their way to eat sushi, it is with your hands.

One easy way to upset your weeping co-diners and perhaps the restaurant is using cheap quality. Be kind, rub less.

Another easy way to upset your hosts that is so simple to avoid, do not stab your food to pick it up. Your food is generally in bite-sized morsels anyway – if you’re trying, rather than looking like a Neanderthal spearing their way to eat sushi, it is with your hands.

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Tokyo and I’m an Edokko, too. As an incoming generation, I agree with you. My family is from Horiguchi: a small city in western Japan, renowned for its craftsmanship and traditional arts. Something that is seen as the best of the best, the pinnacle of excellence. I’ve always felt that they were at the top of everything in the country. And often felt that they were at the top of everything in the country.

My family is from Tokyo, and I was always very proud of our city and we poured our heart and soul and precious time into creating and achieving such things. Tokyo is such a big international city and we can find many of the top products from all over the world here. We can compare the quality of our own products and improve our own skills at the same time. Even so, I feel that Edokkos have their own unique sense of beauty: we value quality and subtleness with beauty. Which brings me to this OCEANUS watch with Edo Kiriko.

What made me really happy when I got this offer from CASIO was that their vision of Edo Kiriko was the same as mine. The designers at CASIO chose a simple cut pattern to feature on the watch, and it actually enhances its overall elegance and makes it stylish. I hope that the customers will appreciate the overall appeal of this watch and notice that the bezel is made with Edo Kiriko glass.

What is Edo Kiriko? Born in the late Edo period, Edo Kiriko is a traditional art that involves cutting, and etching, etched patterns on glass. For a glass art to be labelled as Edo Kiriko, all the cutting must be done by hands with spinning knives, and made in Tokyo. The resulting etched patterns are not only beautiful to look at, they also create captivating reflections of light.

We can be more confident in showing Japanese aesthetics to the world. Even when Japanese art is unique and of high quality, we shouldn’t just rest on our laurels. It’s very important for Japanese artists to let the world see and judge their work. Criticism from outside perspectives is new and different from those expressed within the country – and so they are crucial for our homegrown artists to develop their craft.

I’m really curious to know about their work. Criticism from outside perspectives is new and different from those expressed within the country – and so they are crucial for our homegrown artists to develop their craft.

Edokkos, like things that are new and cool, and we pour our heart and soul and precious time into creating and achieving such things. Tokyo is such a big international city and we can find many of the top products from all over the world here. We can compare the quality of our own products and improve our own skills at the same time. Even so, I feel that Edokkos have their own unique sense of beauty: we value quality and subtleness with beauty. Which brings me to this OCEANUS watch with Edo Kiriko.

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Kawakami: Even though I have often worked overseas and been somewhat westernised, I recently realised I have Edokko [a true Tokyoite, born and raised in Edokko character in my identity, and it seems to play a big role in my work. Back in the Edo era, living in the centre of Japan with the shogun, Edokko were very proud of their culture and identity, with the shogun, Edokko were very proud of their culture and identity, and they were at the top of everything in the country. And often felt that they were at the top of everything in the country.

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THINGS TO DO

Jingu Gaien Gingko Matsuri
This festival begins as autumn turns the surrounding icho (gingko) leaves yellow. Adding to the event’s popularity is the first was in May
and drink vendors will be set up around the Jingu Gaien softball stadium and training grounds.

OCTOBER

THINGS TO DO

YOKOHAMA JAZZ PROMENADE
The largest jazz festival in Japan turns the entire city of Yokohama into a stage, with events ranging from concerts at venues such as the Red Brick Warehouse, Yokohama Kamai Hall and Minato Mirai Hall to street performances and club gigs. Watch and listen as performers young and old play their tunes throughout the weekend, and take in the vibrant atmosphere along the Yokohama waterfront.

THINGS TO DO

NARITASAN SHIJO HARIBI
It’s one of the standouts, a more than 370-year-old event where huge floats are paraded along the city’s kura (old style of Japanese architecture) streets. To make it even more spectacular, they’ll light up at night, and the festivities reach their peak in a cacophony of drums, bells, flutes, clapping, moving floats and dancing, known as Hakka-wase.

FILM

31 to TOKYO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
Tokyo’s top cinematic extravaganza returns for its 33rd edition and shines the spotlight on an eclectic – some might say random – selection of movies, primarily shown at Roppongi Hills and Isetan Theatre Roppongi. It usually offers the opportunity to catch new films that have been doing the rounds on the festival circuit, and also provides a rare chance to see fresh Japanese and foreign-language cinema with English subtitles.

THINGS TO DO

SHIBUYA OKTOBERFEST
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THINGS TO DO

Hanazono Shrine Tori No Ichi
The famed triple Tori no lichi markets at Hanazono Shrine get underway with a warm-up festival on the first night of each set of days, while the main event is the following day. There’ll be 60-odd stalls selling decorative plum and cherry blossom, seasonable kumade radish, said to bring good fortune for business, plus 200 other vendors hawkng food and other festival knick-knacks.

THINGS TO DO

YOKOHAMA SMART ILLUMINATION
Yokohama’s annual Smart
used book auction. Though the majority of the books on display are in Japanese, it’s still easy to find a few in English during the time it’s lit up, and to make sure to head south to Yokosuka and see this spectacle light up the evening.

NOVEMBER

THINGS TO DO

NARITA SAN 1,080th ANNIVERSARY
An annual community-organised event, this edition of the Narita Hanabi fireworks display is extra special, as the nearby Naritasan Shinshoji Temple is celebrating its 1,080th anniversary. For the occasion, they’ll be shooting 12,000 pretty lights into the sky. Even better, the fireworks display is held near Lake Inba-numa, surrounded by rice fields, making it visible from quite a distance. It should certainly be worth the trek to Narita.

THINGS TO DO

TOKYO RENAISSANCE SHOW
The greatest ramen makers from all over Japan gather in Kumaawa Olympic Park again for every noodle lover’s dream event. Sharp up regional specialties, try new soups and combinations created specifically for this occasion, and elbow your way around the area with thousands of other ramen maniacs. The trick is to check the website, choose your favourites, and get ready to rush – the most popular stalls tend to get very crowded.

THINGS TO DO

KANDA FURUSAN FESTIVAL
The Kanda Furusato (used book) Festival has been held annually since 1961, traditionally timed to coincide with the Culture Day national holiday on November 3. In addition to offering a vast array of used books, the festival also compiles a number of other book-related offers and events, including an outdoor book market, the sale of specially selected rare tomes and a charity

THINGS TO DO

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THINGS TO DO

YOKOHAMA SMART ILLUMINATION
Yokohama’s annual Smart
MUSIC
CIGARETTES AFTER SEX
Brooklyn-based dream-pop band Cigarettes After Sex are making their way to Japan. They’ve backed every traditional music promotion trend in the business, with a monochrome album cover and no music video, yet their single ‘Adfreck’ still managed to grab over 45 million plays on YouTube. Sit back, relax, and let yourself be transported by C. Gonzalez and co.

THINGS TO DO
KANDA CURRY GRAND PRIX
There are over 400 curry shops in Kanda, and this event brings together 20 of them to battle for the Grand Prix. Sample the spicy delicacies and vote for your favourite – the winners will be announced on stage at the end of the event. If a visit to the fest doesn’t satisfy your curry cravings, make sure to take part in the ‘Kanda Curry Stamp Rally’, where eating at multiple participating restaurants can earn you juicy rewards.

THINGS TO DO
DESIGN FESTIVAL 48
Whether it’s painting, fashion, handicrafts, techno, exotic food or avant-garde performance art that gets your juices flowing, you should be able to find it at this sprawling biannual art jamboree, held at Tokyo Big Sight every spring and autumn. The second Design Festa of 2018 sees some 15,000 artists from Japan and elsewhere descend on the conference centre. There are two-day kits available, and trust us: you’ll need them if you want to see everything on offer.

THINGS TO DO
AGIAMA SAKE FLEA
Attention, sake lovers: Anyama Sake Flea is back for their biannual nihonshu bonanza. Started four years ago, this tasteveting event that takes place part of the UNFU/ Farmer’s Market has proven very popular with a wide range of imbibers. Over 30 breweries from across the country will be hawking their wares: grab a ‘starter set’ (sake cup and tasting tickets) at the entrance and sip away.

THINGS TO DO
ROBUTSU-ICHI
Robikutsumi’s annual light-up returns again for when the park’s trees turn red and golden in the autumn night. The view reflects beautifully off the water, creating a magical and unforgettable atmosphere: the park stays open until 9pm for the duration of the event, the candy trees are open throughout, and you can catch guided tours of the park at 11am and 2pm daily.

THINGS TO DO
HAGOSA-ICHI
The new year tradition of playing hanetsuki – a badminton-esque game popular among locals during the Edo era – may have all but died out, but that hasn’t stopped the wooden paddles used in the sport (known as hagosas) from selling by the bucketload every year. The three-day fair attracts 300,000 people every year and is still a hotbed of Edo tradition, including the custom that sees shopkeepers and shoppers clad in unison when another paddle is sold.

THINGS TO DO
BUNGU JOSHI HAKU
This three-day festival is all about paper, pens, notebooks and all other writing supplies. There will be plenty of stalls by stationery brands, including those selling original goods for him up the charts. Yet Japan has never been graced with a live performance – until now. Lucky for us, he’s finally headlining at Chiba’s Makuhari Messe as part of his Asian tour. Expect frenzied fans bellowing ‘The Weeknd’s distinctive mix of falsetto and sing-speaking’ this might just be one for the books.

THINGS TO DO
OJI FOX PARADE
This annual event sees local residents dress up in foxes and parade from Shonosuke Inari Shrine to nearby Oji Inari Shrine for the first prayer of the year (hatsumono). Having also served as the inspiration for one of ukyo-e master Hiroshige’s pieces, the Fox Parade always gathers a respectable turnout of both participants and onlookers – and there are tasty snacks and drinks available too. It’s become rather popular with tourists in the past few years, so expect crowds.

THINGS TO DO
THE WEEKEND
Canadian Abel Tofeley landed on the scene in 2014 and has never quite left, with songs such as hit single ‘Starboy’ and his contribumtions to the ‘Black Panther’ soundtrack propelling How To Book: robot Restaurant offers three show daily, starting at 5.55pm, 7.50pm and 9.45pm (with an additional show at 4pm on Friday, weekends and holidays), and the format changed every few months to keep things fresh. You can reserve your spot a couple of days ahead by calling the number below between 11am and 10pm. The entrance fee is ¥9,300, excluding food and drinks. Note: Schedule might change due to maintenance.

Read more on

timoutkyo/things-to-do/robu-restaurant/ 

Read more on
timoutkyo/things-to-do/robu-restaurant/
No matter what Japanese or international dish you’re after, you’ll almost certainly find it in Tokyo. But some dishes are more Tokyo than others – the iconic foods created or perfected here in the capital. These are our ten favourites.

By the Time Out Tokyo team

TENDON

The clue is in the name, a portmanteau of ‘tempura’ and ‘donburi’. Tendon is therefore a bowl of white rice topped with deep-fried seafood and vegetables. Fun fact: tempura was adapted from the frittering technique introduced by the Portuguese in the mid-16th century – and its hallmark light and crispy batter was perfected by the yatai (street carts) in Tokyo during the 1830s.

Today, tempura has evolved into a cuisine in its own right, with some specialist restaurants charging tens of thousands of yen for an elaborate set menu. Yet tendon remains a humble, affordable dish loved by the masses. With fresh seafood – typically whitebait, prawns and squid – fried in sesame oil (usually) until they’re golden and crispy, tendon is a go-to fast-food when you need something filling and satisfying.

Dote No Iseya

The tendon served inside this traditional Japanese wooden house comes in three sizes depending on the amount of toppings: ‘I’, ‘Ro’ and ‘Ha’ (named after a traditional Japanese numbering system). The largest, ‘Ha’ (¥1,500), is an impressive-looking bowl brimming with seven kinds of tempura including shrimp, conger eel and seasonal vegetables.

At 1-9-2 Nihonzutsumi, Taito (Minowa Station); 03 3872 4886. Tinyurl.com/TOTdni. 11am-2.30pm, closed Wed & 4th Tue of every month.

Tempura Takashichi

This fifth-generation tempura shop has been operating for more than 130 years. Go for the traditional kakiage ankake tendon (¥1,200), which sees a chopped seafood and vegetable fritter drenched in a delicious thick gravy. The type of kakiage changes daily depending on what’s fresh; we can’t get enough of the one made with whitebait, seaweed, lotus root, scallops and ginger.

At 36-27 Wakamatsu, Shinjuku (Wakamatsu-Kawada Station); 03 3202 4035. Mon 11.30am-2pm (last orders 1.30pm), Tue-Sat 11.30am-2pm (1.30pm), 5.30pm-9pm, closed Sun & hols.

Tempura Hachimaki

A favourite of mystery novelist Edogawa Ranpo. Tempura Hachimaki is located in the book district of Jinbocho. The space permeates with the aroma of sesame oil and a tendon only costs ¥800. If you’re feeling flush, it’s worth upgrading to the ‘luxe’ conger eel and shrimp tendon: for ¥1,400 you’ll get the aforementioned seafood plus an edamame-flavoured rice cracker and two pieces of vegetable tempura.

At 1-19 Kanda-Jinbocho, Chiyoda (Jinbocho Station); 03 3291 6222. Fb.com/aoki1963. 11am-9pm, Sun 11am-8pm, closed Mon.

Dish No. 20

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**TSUKEMEN**

Tsukemen means ‘dipping noodles’ in Japanese. The noodles and broth of this ramen are served in separate bowls and you simply dip the former into the latter and happily slurp away. It was invented in Tokyo in the early 1960s by Ken Kamo (Yamauchi); other tsukemen restaurants soon sprung up and the variety grew. Today, you can usually choose to have the noodles hot or cold, making it an ideal year-round treat.

**Basso Drifman**

Don’t be put off by the fiery red colour of the dipping broth; much of the flavour in this rapidly growing restaurant’s tsukemen comes from the combination of pork, chicken, and seafood, while the use of chilli is mercifully restrained – enough to give your tongue a kick of heat without making your eyes water. The house-made noodles on the side come with lean slices of perfectly cooked char siu. The rice and seaweed, through Basso Drifman draws a long face, get here early.

**Menya Ittou**

This ramen chain has gained devoted followers for its signature tsukemen, which is served with a seafood and chicken broth. The soup is rich and packed with flavour without being too oily or salty, and is complemented with chicken mentsu, menma, tori (Welsh onion and green onions). The thick noodles, on the other hand, are perfectly al dente and are topped with an umakkan-tamago, two strips of char siu (chicken or pork), plus a slice of marinated egg. For a bowl that feels like you’re slurping a seafood and chicken broth, you can usually choose to hot water to turn your dipping broth into a soup once you’ve finished your noodles. You can usually choose to have the noodles hot or cold, making it an ideal year-round treat.

**ABURA SOBA**

Literally meaning ‘oil noodles’ (don’t worry – they’re less greasy than you might expect), this dish was born around Musashino in western Tokyo. Both noodle joints Chukusho and Hanabisho claim to be the original sources of soupless noodles, toppings, and vinegar – both started selling it over half a century ago. Since the dish contains little oil, you can enjoy it at any time of the day, even at night. While the use of chilli is mercifully restrained – enough to give your tongue a kick of heat without making your eyes water. The house-made noodles on the side come with lean slices of perfectly cooked char siu. The rice and seaweed, through Basso Drifman draws a long face, get here early.

**Beefst**

As you may have guessed from its name, the abura soba at Beefst comes topped with roast beef. For a bowl that feels like you’re slurping up a hearty beef stew, go for the ‘cream’ version. We like their spicy option, too.

**Tokyo Aburagumi Sototen (Tokyo Abura Soba)**

The main point of entry for many an abura soba addiction, Tokyo Aburagumi Sototen (aka Tokyo Abura Soba) has branches across the city, which are open until the wee hours of the morning. Add a dash of yuzu koshu pepper paste into your noodles for a nice kick.

**Miharu Ebisu**

This small but very popular abura soba joint in Ebisu serves its tofu soup with a psycho-basuke bowl. The sauce is made from chicken, while the toppings include lot of vegetables – so it’s a lot lighter than your average soupless noodles. For a bowl that feels like you’re slurping a seafood and chicken broth, you can usually choose to hot water to turn your dipping broth into a soup once you’ve finished your noodles. You can usually choose to have the noodles hot or cold, making it an ideal year-round treat.

**MONJAYAKI**

A type of pan-fried batter or savoury pancake, monjayaki is Tokyo’s version of okonomiyaki, the iconic dish of Hiroshima and Osaka. Monjayaki retains a slightly runny appearance much like the fried cheese when even cooked, but the delicious concoction tastes better than it looks. The origins of monja, as it’s affectionately called in Tokyo, can be traced back to a döner–like concoction known as monja-yaki in the late Edo period. A popularity boom in the 1980s later led to the birth of Monja Street on Nishinakadori in Tsukishima – you’ll find about 75 monjayaki restaurants here today.

Half the fun of monja is cooking it yourself – and there’s how you do it. First of all, try the ingredients – ranging from meat to vegetables to cheese, and even curry noodles – on the griddle. Once they have cooked, form a doughnut-shaped reservoir and pour the batter into the hole in the middle. Wait until the batter starts to boil, then mix it up and press it down with the pan to create some crazy bits around the edges. Scoop it up and enjoy.

**MONJA MUGI**

This small but very popular monjayaki joint in Ebisu serves its tofu soup with a psycho-basuke bowl. The sauce is made from chicken, while the toppings include lot of vegetables – so it’s a lot lighter than your average soupless noodles. For a bowl that feels like you’re slurping a seafood and chicken broth, you can usually choose to hot water to turn your dipping broth into a soup once you’ve finished your noodles. You can usually choose to have the noodles hot or cold, making it an ideal year-round treat.

**Okame Souhonten**

Okame operates four outlets in Tsukishima, with more than 60 monjayaki combinations including the popular pork, squid and cabbage option. If you prefer more intense flavours, give the korenai-inspired ‘Jyan-Monja’ (¥1,200) featuring spicy miso – it goes very well with alcoholic drinks.

**Edo Monja Hyotan**

A convenient stop for Asakusa sightseers, the popular Edo Monja Hyotan is perfect for newbies as the staff are on hand to help you cook your monja. Get the mentai mokkochi cheese monja (¥1,200), which is eaten with a housemade sauce rather than the traditional okonomiyaki sauce.

**Udon**

Handy and comforting, these thick wheat noodles are served in hot soup or with a dipping broth on the side.

**Tonkatsu**

Breaded pork cutlet, deep-fried till they’re golden and crispy on the outside – we say yes more.

**How to reach...**

**Tokyo Aburagumi Sototen (Tokyo Abura Soba)**

1-4-17 Shiodome-Itchome, Minato (Shiodome Station). 03 5486 4069. 11.30am-3pm, 6pm-10pm, Sun 11.30am-10pm.

**Okame Souhonten**

6-3-13 Looksha, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Station). 03 3534 7795. monja-waga.com. 11.30am-3pm (last orders 12.30pm), 6pm-10pm (last orders 9pm), closed Mon.

**Okame Souhonten**

1-9-15 Tsukishima, Chuo (Tsukishima Station). 03 3335 4980. monja-waga.com. 11.30am-3pm (last orders 12.30pm), 6pm-10pm (last orders 9pm), closed Mon.

**Edo Monja Hyotan**

1-9-15 Tsukishima, Chuo (Tsukishima Station). 03 5484 7766. monja-waga.com. 11.30am-10pm (last orders 9.30pm), closed Mon.

**Tonkatsu**

Breaded pork cutlet, deep-fried till they’re golden and crispy on the outside – we say yes more.

**How to reach...**

**Tonkatsu**

3-1-13 Kanda, Chiyoda (Kanda Station). 03 3243 9111. tonkatsu-tokyo.com. 11am-10pm (last orders 9.30pm), closed Mon.

**Edo Monja Hyotan**

4-11-1 Kanda, Chiyoda (Kanda Station). 03 5248 4069. miharu.com. 11.30am-3pm (last orders 12.30pm), 6pm-10pm (last orders 9pm), closed Mon.

**Tonkatsu**

3-1-13 Kanda, Chiyoda (Kanda Station). 03 3243 9111. tonkatsu-tokyo.com. 11am-10pm (last orders 9.30pm), closed Mon.

**Udon**

Made from buckwheat, soba is considered the most popular of all Japanese noodles. dudeau.com/105sobad.

**Monja Mugi**

A local institution, Monja Mugi has been in Tsukishima for over 35 years and remains a favourite haunt among local celebrities, evident from the autographs scrawled across the walls. The classic mentai mochi cheese monja (¥1,450) is a safe bet, but for something unusual, try the miso ramen monja (¥1,240).

**Tonkatsu**

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4-11-1 Kanda, Chiyoda (Kanda Station). 03 5248 4069. miharu.com. 11.30am-10pm (last orders 9.30pm), closed Mon.
**Fukagawa-meshi**

A small fishing town in Eastern Tokyo, Fukagawa flourished in the Edo period (1603-1868), thanks largely to the abundance of high-quality asari (short-neck clams) and oyster found in local waters. Back then, the fishermen made wasakubi-meshi, a broth of clams, green onions and tofu poured over rice. At-claims were cheap and widely available, this humble dish became popular in the homes of Fukagawa—hence Fukagawa-meshi, creating the rice meal of Fukagawa. While purists argue that authentic Fukagawa-meshi refers to rice cooked with clams, the term now generally refers to rice cooked with clams.

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**Tomoegata**

Located at the heart of sumo’s spiritual home (Ryogoku), Tomoegata was built by a master of the Tomoegata sumo stable and is located on the stable premises. Order their signature dish, Kunimiyama Chanko, which is prepared in a lightly salted chicken broth and includes fresh minced mirdin. It also serve chanko with beef, chicken, salmon and scallops—all in portion sizes to satisfy the heartiest eaters.

*7-17-3-1 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku (Kagurazaka Station). 03 3541 1417. tomoe-gata.com. 11.30am-2pm, 5-10pm (last orders 9pm). 3-5 minutes from JR Shinjuku Station. 900 yen for lunch, 4000 yen for dinner. Closed on New Year’s Eve.*

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**Kuroshio**

Owner and former sumo wrestler Koto Kurosawa is still a larger-than-life character, despite having shed plenty of weight since his active years, and he personally welcomes all who come to his Kagurazaka restaurant. The chanko nabe uses white barley miso for the stock, which gives the soup a slightly sweet flavour. The first time you see a sumo protein being added to the dish, you would probably think buri (yellowtail) in winter or ayu (sweetfish) in summer, for example. And when it comes to seasonality, no other restaurant comes close. During the tournament season at the Ryogoku Kokugikan sumo arena, chanko nabe cooked by current wrestlers is available on the basement floor for just ¥250 (tasting portion), which is surprisingly popular among sumo fans. Tomoegata is associated with victory: in a tournament a wrestler should, the more he wins, the better the chanko (miso soup) the chef uses the subtlest of seasoning and instead adds a beautiful aroma to the soup, the chicken and pork meatballs are delicious, and you can even choose to add noodles or rice.

*3-6-3 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku (Kagurazaka Station). 03 3267 1816. tinyurl.com/TOTkotokotomoegata. 11.30am-2pm, 5pm-10.30pm (last orders 9.30pm). 2-17-6 Ryogoku, Sumida (Ryogoku Station). 03 3632 5600. tinyurl.com/TOTkotokotomoegata. 11.30am-2pm, 5pm-10.30pm (last orders 9.30pm). 2-17-6 Ryogoku, Sumida (Ryogoku Station). 03 3632 5600. tinyurl.com/TOTkotokotomoegata. 11.30am-2pm, 5pm-10.30pm (last orders 9.30pm).*

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**Kare pan**

All that is ubiquitous—and devilishly addictive—crunchy deep-fried bun with a mild yet savoury bread was created during a time when it was trendy to put a “thing” next to the register near the entrance. There are two versions: normal (circular bun) and spicy (oval bun). While the former has a mild flavour, the latter has a distinctive kick that would appease any spice-fan.

*3-3-3 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 5426 0330. 11am-2pm (last orders 1.30pm), 4.30-9pm (last orders 8.30pm).*
OMURICE
Fried egg on rice is a humble comfort food in many cuisines around the world. In Tokyo, however, it has been elevated to an art form, with chefs often dedicating years of their lives to perfecting the fluffy, smooth texture that’s the definition of omurice. Restauranteur in Ginza (see below) is said to be the inventor of this yoshoku (western-style Japanese cuisine) staple back in the 1990s.

Restaurants typically offer one of two varieties: fried rice wrapped in an omelette and drenched with ketchup, or fried rice topped with an oval-shaped omlette, which is filled with a custard-like filling that will cover the rice with a warm, luxurious creaminess once it’s sliced open. No prizes for guessing which version we prefer.

Kurofune-tei
This traditionalist’s omurice may look conventional, but it’s packed with shrimp, chicken, onion, mushrooms and drenched with a light but flavorful tomato sauce. (Hibiya Big 41 F-1, 1-5-12 Hibiya, Chiyoda-ku, Chiyoda-ku; 03 3207 1617; website only: www.kurofune-tei.com; 11.30am-2.30pm daily [last order 1.30pm].)

Asazu Shokudo
Often featured in food magazines, Asazu Shokudo’s omurice has a following. There are three sauce options – demi-glace, ketchup and cheese that helps raise this dish above the rest. (2-9-8 Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku; 03 3272 3227; tinyurl.com/y5vfnr6y; 11.30am-2.30pm daily, 5–9pm Sat, Sun & hols; 5–9.30pm [last order 9pm] Sun & hols.)

Asakawa Kawai
Formerly known as Anatoro, this small, homely restaurant is run by a husband-and-wife duo, who delight in serving up innovative, ed combinations alongside a rare domestic-bun dish. Think anago with uni, and anago yakiage (ed tadpole with raw egg yolk). (2-2-10 Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku; 03 3272 2537; www.asakawakawai.co.jp; 11.30am-2.30pm daily; closed Sun, Mon & hols.)

Nihonbashi Tamai
This classic restaurant is housed in a handsome wooden building that dates back to 1953 and is perhaps the city’s most venerable purveyor of anago with all the trimmings. Come here if you want to enjoy the om in its entirety: aside from the classic, grilled anago rice, you’ll also find the bones and livers on the menu, along with eel-themed Hello Kitty figurines. (3-8-3 Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku; 03 3272 2537; tinyurl.com/y75b5d25; 11.30am-2.30pm [last order 2pm], 5-9pm [last order 8.30pm]; Sun & hols 11.30am-2.30pm [last order 2pm], 4–9.30pm [last order 8.30pm].)

Beer Hall Luncheon
Boasting over 100 years of history, this Jimbocho pub and eatery is a real blast from the past. The omurice is so tasty it’s pleasing to the eye, and contains a slice of cheese that helps raise this dish above the rest. (9-16 Sanraku Bldg 1F, 1-4-3 Kanda-iru, Chiyoda; 03 3231 8866; Mon-Fri 11.05am-4pm [lunch], Sat 11.30am-4pm [lunch], closed Sun & hols.)

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ANAGO
Anago saltwater conger eel is the base for some of the more well-known unagi, or freshwater eel. It’s also significantly less rare, with unagi hoovering on the endangered species list for years, making unago a more regular menu item. As the fish is native to Tokyo Bay, anago are considered Tokyo specialities, yet anago is also commonly simmered anago as a sushi topping for its clean, delicate taste.

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Racoon
To be honest, our Japanese colleagues were taken aback when they received our list of our 10 must-try Tokyo foods. They mocked us for not including anago, the fish that is everything to us. So we included anago anyway to show our Japanese colleagues that we knew they were eating.

1. Restaurants are small
Very small. In fact, the smallest may only seat six or more. Noisy. You need to come in big groups (preferably prebooked separately if you do), and don’t linger after you’ve eaten, so the next customers can inus to savour the goodness too.

2. Be prepared to queue
Often as a direct consequence of restaurants being small, the most popular ones tend to have a long queue. It’s best to arrive as soon as the restaurant opens in the morning (or book beforehand if possible). Queues can be long, so it’s advisable to be patient. Queuing for over 30 minutes to an hour is pretty standard.

3. Book in advance
Some restaurants don’t take bookings, with seating on a reservation-only basis. The (or most well-known) ones tend to book out months in advance. And some will only take bookings by a concierge of a reputable hotel or recommendation from a regular customer.

4. Be prepared to travel
You want soba with a side of tempura? Be prepared to travel to a ramen chain. Often as a direct consequence of restaurants being small, the most popular ones tend to have a long queue. It’s best to arrive as soon as the restaurant opens in the morning (or book beforehand if possible). Queues can be long, so it’s advisable to be patient. Queuing for over 30 minutes to an hour is pretty standard.

5. Cash is king
Yes, yes, Japan may be tech in many ways, but we still pay for food in hard currency. Cards often aren’t accepted, and there tend to be two or three ways of paying at restaurants: either a meal ticket for your food from a vending machine at the entrance, or pay afterwards at the till.

6. Restaurants specialise in one type of food
Not all restaurants have many menus, restaurants in Tokyo keep a firm focus on one type of food or even a single dish – and doing one very, very well. If you’re in a family restaurant, fast food chain or izakaya, the chances of having leftovers with your meal, for example, are slim. Beware when choosing a restaurant.

7. Chains aren’t bad
Not all chains in Japan mean fast – or bad food. Some are actually aficionados of small restaurants that found critical acclaim, and others still only specialise in one type of dish. Three-Michelin starred, both for their specific styles of cuisine.

8. Cheap deals at lunch
Lunches at a much cheaper rate (usually just lunch generally running between 11.30am to 1pm), and dinner menus starting from 5pm onwards. And some will only take bookings by a concierge of a reputable hotel or recommendation from a regular customer.

9. Meal times are set
Try getting a meal before 11am or between 5pm and 5pm without setting foot into a fast food chain can be a challenge. Most restaurants have strict meal times, with lunch generally running between 11:30am and 2.30pm, 5pm-6pm (or 5:30pm) and dinner menus starting from 5pm onwards.

10. Cheap deals at lunch
All those amazing restaurants don’t come cheap, so it’s very much worth checking out what you can get for your money and just say (what’s the closest? $2) you’ll spend. Better to use your money and just say (what’s the closest? $2) you’ll spend. Better to use

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Shibuya Stream is a large-scale mixed-use development that opened to great anticipation on September 13, 2018. This new facility has a commercial area housing about 30 restaurants and shops between the 1st and 3rd floors. There are also accommodations on the 4th floor as well as 9th through 13th floors, managed by the Shibuya Stream Excel Hotel Tokyu. In addition to the building itself, two open spaces and a lush green promenade (the result of a public-private partnership) along the Shibuya River have completely transformed the atmosphere around Shibuya Station’s south side. Here are the highlights of this facility, which is set to become the hottest destination in Shibuya this year.

Inari Bridge Square and Konno Bridge Square
Buit on the upper side of the Shibuya River as part of a collaborative public-private effort, the two squares on the south side of Shibuya Station are set to add to the area’s already considerable buzz. Both Inari Bridge Square in front of the Shibuya Stream complex and Konno Bridge Square will host a variety of events, all while serving as comfy spots for a lunch out in the open.

Lemonade by Lemonica
Its Harajuku and Shimokitazawa outposts continue to attract lengthy queues, and for good reason. This Kanazawa-born shop, where an original heat-free method is used to turn fresh lemons into wonderfully zesty treats, proves that ‘artisanal lemonade’ is more than just a PR stunt.

Bokkokukaitentorisakaba
Originally from Osaka, this popular Mexican-style eatery and pub makes its Tokyo debut with this Shibuya location. Famed for its notorious chicken tacos, it’s a casual and affordable spot worth checking out if you’re in the area.

The Great Burger Stand
Even in a city with more great burger shops than anyone can keep track of, this one stands out. The firm buns, rough ground patties, and ultra-fresh greens make for a simple but superb combination, while the fries, chicken drumsticks and other sides are also worth a shot.

Chicken Kitchen
Dip your chicken in homemade miso sauce and cook it to your liking at this grill-it-yourself restaurant, which offers a remarkable variety of bird meat - including supremely juicy brand chicken grown in Uji, a city just south of Kyoto.

Sushi Tokyo Ten,
The Shibuya branch of Nishi-Azabu’s famed Sushi Ten specialises in top-grade but reasonably priced omakase (chef’s selection) sushi. The ¥7,000 dinner deal gets you a beautiful spread of seasonal delicacies, all prepared in traditional ‘Edomae’ (Tokyo-style) fashion.

Accommodation
Shibuya Stream Excel Hotel Tokyu
Located inside the Shibuya Stream building and combining vintage style with modern touches, this hotel consists of 177 guest rooms on floors 9 to 13 and a lounge, restaurant and bar on the fourth floor. Convenient for tourists and business travellers alike, its facilities range from a gym to a shoe-cleaning service.

Promotional feature
Free wi-fi service Shibuya Wi-Fi is also available at Shibuya Stream.
The traditional multi-course kaiseki dinner is considered the epitome of Japanese cuisine, and these dedicated restaurants are the best in Tokyo.

By the Time Out Tokyo team

Kaiseki began in 16th century Kyoto as a humble meal of rice, miso soup and several small dishes as part of the tea ceremony. Today, however, it has evolved to become the haute cuisine of Japan. A kaiseki meal is a feast for the senses, where the presentation, taste, aroma and dining environment all play an equally important role. A meal usually follows this order: the appetiser leads into a simmered dish, then a sashimi course, followed by a grilled item and finally rice and soup. The price tag tends to be high, which is why many people often equate kaiseki with a celebratory meal.

But the times they are a-changin’. More chefs are seeking to update and reinterpret kaiseki to make it more accessible to a wider audience while sticking to its refined techniques and founding principles. Here are six of the best kaiseki restaurants in Tokyo, each blending tradition and innovation for its own take on the cuisine.

LONG BEFORE THE REST of the world caught on to the concepts of seasonality and naturalism, Japan had already built a culinary tradition around them. Known as kaiseki, this traditional multi-course meal (usually dinner) is a gastronomic expression of time and place, where chefs harness the inherent texture and flavour, and present the best ingredients of the season, celebrate their taste, aroma and dining environment all play an equally important role. A meal usually follows this order: the appetiser leads into a simmered dish, then a sashimi course, followed by a grilled item and finally rice and soup. The price tag tends to be high, which is why many people often equate kaiseki with a celebratory meal.

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TERUNARI

Terunari puts a creative spin on kaiseki by incorporating French influences that shine through in every dish. French-trained chef Kanichi Tokumoto runs the kitchen, working under chef Akihiko Murata of Terunari’s Michelin-starred sister restaurant Suzunari. Chef Tokumoto doesn’t stress over hyper-seasonality and instead works with whatever the kitchen is given, not necessarily just with what’s in season.

You can look forward to unique reinterpretations of classic Japanese dishes, such as a crisp monaka (wafer sandwich, usually sweet) filled with chicken liver pâté, and chawanmushi egg custard made more substantial with beef tendon and a hint of wasabi. The more classic kaiseki-style dishes range from sardines simmered with umeboshi and ginger to tuna served with red konjac, and sashimi (mackerel) layered with cucumber and a savoury miso tartar which packs an umami punch. Seasonality is expressed through the details: decorations include seasonal leaves and twigs, while the colours are bright and vibrant, making them not just appetising but photogenic too.

The meal ends with a shime (loosely translated as ‘coming to a close’), where you’re served Terunari’s signature rice dish, a combination of sweet pork marinated in shoyu and mirin, and steamed with a perfectly plum-tomato and fresh basil inside a Japanese claypot. Once cooked, the rice is mixed up at your table and topped with a good dose of cheese, turning it into a Japanese risotto of sorts. For fans of kaiseki, this is a chance to experiment.

Course menu from ¥4,500.

ARAKICHO TATSUYA

Chef Tatsuya Ishiyama has over a decade of experience at Kagurazaka’s two-Michelin-starred Ren, so it makes sense that Arakicho Tatsuya feels like an establishment with a much longer history. But Ishiyama only opened this one-man operation in late 2017. Arakicho Tatsuya is a kaiseki restaurant at heart, with all the trimmings to prove it: austere surroundings. His goal is to connect the customer with the food made from premium ingredients minimally tweaked. The result? A taster: watershield infused jelly, topped with squid sashimi soaked in egg yolk and shiitake. The flavours are gobsmacking.

Yet there’s no stuffy formality here. Ishiyama takes pride in creating connections, both with his customers and his surroundings. His goal is to connect the customer with the vendor, by showcasing the best of Japan through his food. Although the menu is non-negotiable – vegetarians take note – the drinks list leaves room to manoeuvre: there are no official pairings here, only a long list of Japanese sake, shochu, whisky and wine, which Ishiyama will recommend based on your preferences.

Course menu from ¥7,500.

TERUNARI: KEISUKE TANIGAWA

Course menu from ¥4,500.

ARAKICHO TATSUYA: KISA TOYOSHIMA

Course menu from ¥7,500.

EATING TOKYO
There’s a lot to love about An. For starters, it manages to combine the casual vibe of an izakaya with the thoughtfulness of kaiseki cuisine. Don’t get us wrong – it’s never rowdy. Instead, it’s an unassuming little neighbourhood restaurant whose cozy, homely atmosphere belies its modern yet relaxed approach to Japanese food.

It’s hard to pinpoint an overarching concept guiding the food, except that it’s based on fresh, seasonal Japanese ingredients, interpreted through techniques from other cuisines. On one of our visits: a gapachoo that celebrated the local tomato season was paired with smoky grilled aubergine and rice was replaced by the delicate white flesh of pike conger and rolled with ume (plum) jelly; a traditional summer staple, a perfect half-boiled egg, still on the counter, our meal started with a deep-fried ‘maki’ was also an inspired creation, in which the bamboo shoot wrapped in roast pork, as well as the homemade miso cream cheese.

An’s menu is extensive, but the most popular dishes can be enjoyed on a six-course kaiseki-like menu (sashimi included), which gets refreshed monthly. What’s really surprising is that the menu is priced at only ¥3,400, which makes the restaurant even more endearing.

For honest good food that’s unpretentious and thoroughly enjoyable, this is quite possibly one of the best deals in town. The best part is, AO closes only at 2am, meaning you can eat well when most restaurants have shutted for the night.

Run by a charming husband-and-wife duo for the past eight years, Kudan Otsuka is classic kaiseki at its best. The quiet space is situated across the street from Yasukuni Shrine, whose grandeur surrounds an entire kaiseki course. Our meal started with a deceivingly simple soup (or owan, which literally means bowl in Japanese). The clear broth was seasoned with black vinegar and was topped with a tender chunk of winter melon, silky smooth somen noodles, okura, shiitake (mushroom), soy sauce and homegrown pickles. It was followed by a four-apperizer platter served on a beautiful fan-shaped plate: a sumonono salad was given a twist by replacing the conventional cucumber with fips inside a vinegar jelly; a traditional summer kaiseki coupling of daikon and ume jelly, the silkiest egg we’ve ever tasted. Served alongside a miso soup and homemade pickles, it provides a good taste of Kudan Otsuka before you splash out on one of its course menus.

NANZENJI HYOTEI

Synonymous with traditional Kyoto-style cuisine, Hyotei has an astonishing 450-year long history in the ancient capital. The current owner and head chef of Yoshitaka Nakazawa, who is the 15th generation in line, and the urge behind this new branch at Tokyo Midtown Hibiya. This being downtown Hibiya, you may not expect the same tranquility you’ll get at the original Hyotei, near the namesake Nanzenji Temple in eastern Kyoto. Yet they’ve done a great job at replicating the traditional calm of the restaurant, you’ll be led down a winding corridor which shuts out the bustle of the surrounding buildings and shoppers. Once inside, there’s tatami on the counter, light bamboo and minimal furnishings. The one concession to modernity is the choice of tables rather than tatami seating, although there is a tea room.

Immaculately presented kaiseki cuisine takes centre stage. As with everything at Hyotei, tradition prevails, with their centuries-old staple, a perfect half-boiled egg, still on the menu. That doesn’t mean things are stale here – there’s a sense of continuity. The chef is very much true here: history is alive and well.

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Tenoshima is out to reimagine austere high-end kaiseki cuisine as something more casual while continuing to push the boundaries of creativity. The interior certainly looks the part: inspired by the cosiness of a traditional Japanese kitchen-dining room, the restaurant has the relaxed vibe of a bistro but the stylings of a modern restaurant. The nine-course tasting menu, set at a reasonable ¥9,000, changes roughly every fortnight. It is a showcase for chef and owner Hayashi Ryohei to champion the local, indigenous and seasonal produce of Japan, which he sources directly from farmers and fishermen around the country.

The dishes feature the flair and finesse of kaiseki but are not bound by its rules. Acrylic meal starts with multiple seafood dishes before moving on to heavier meats such as beef, and then concludes with a selection of sushi and a bowl of nymemen (somen, or thin wheat noodles, in hot broth) – a departure from conventional kaiseki, which finishes with rice and miso soup.

Fish is where Hayashi truly shines. He’s constantly exploring new ways to treat old favourites, such as using dired baby sardines in his nymemen broth to add depth and sweetness. Additionally, his preference for lesser known fish has become a highlight of the menu. Expect wow-inducing dishes in a traditional yet original way. Our meal started with a deceivingly simple soup (or owan, which literally means bowl in Japanese). The clear broth was seasoned with black vinegar and was topped with a tender chunk of winter melon, silky smooth somen noodles, okura, shiitake (mushroom), soy sauce and homegrown pickles. It was followed by a four-apperizer platter served on a beautiful fan-shaped plate: a sumonono salad was given a twist by replacing the conventional cucumber with fips inside a vinegar jelly; a traditional summer kaiseki coupling of daikon and ume jelly, the silkiest egg we’ve ever tasted. Served alongside a miso soup and homemade pickles, it provides a good taste of Kudan Otsuka before you splash out on one of its course menus.
TOKYO’S CULINARY CACHE owes much to the city’s many heritage restaurants. These granddaddies of the city’s food scene have largely remained unchanged over the years. They often specialise in one dish, which their chefs have dedicated their life to perfecting through repetition. That dish, more often than not, earns them a place in Tokyo’s culinary hall of fame.

On the flipside, a new generation of restaurants are bucking that tradition. In a culture which tends to favour conformity over individuality, these brave chefs are walking a tightrope in their admirable efforts to update the hallowed halls of Japanese cuisine without being disrespectful.

Can ramen be served with an alternative to the conventional shoyu (soy sauce), shio (salt) or tonkotsu (pork) broths? Can an expertise in sushi be applied to another food type? Can you approach Japanese ingredients with modern European culinary techniques, which are very much on trend right now?

The great thing about Tokyo is that it’s long been a place where the traditional and the cutting-edge can happily coexist – and the city is better for it. Here are some of our favourite old guards and trailblazers.

KOHARUKEN

Koharuken was opened in 1912 by a husband-and-wife team who used to work for Japan’s former prime minister Aritomo Yamagata; Mr Kojima was the private chef while his wife was the housekeeper. To this day, the cozy restaurant is family-run and is well-known for its take on katsudon (rice bowl with deep-fried pork cutlet, egg and vegetables; ¥1,300). This signature dish was taken off the menu for a long time after the war, but the restaurant’s third-generation owners brought it back 22 years ago.

What makes this katsudon so unique is that it’s still made with the original recipe. It was created by the restaurant’s first-generation owners when yoshoku (Japanese-style western food) was fashionable in Tokyo, which explains why the dish is slathered with demi-glace, a rich sauce that’s a staple in classic French cuisine. It was an inspired touch as the sauce not only keeps the pork suitably moist but also adds a glossy sheen that makes the rice bowl look even more appetising.

1-7-9 Nihonbashi-Ningyocho, Chuo (Ningyocho Station). 03 3661 8830. tinyurl.com/TOTkoharuken. Mon-Fri 11am-1.45pm, 5pm-8pm, closed Sun, hols & most Sat.

SUKIYAKI IMAAASA

This famous sukiyaki (Japanese-style hot pot) restaurant has been in business since 1880. It has been frequented by many great writers and featured in books by novelists such as Kafu Nagai and Bunroku Shishi. Back in the day, sukiyaki was conventionally made with miso, but the restaurant has been cooking their version with a soy-based sauce known as warishita since day one, and it has become their signature dish.

Dinner at sukiyaki imaaasa is an elaborate affair if you opt for the matsu set meal (¥14,256), which comes with beautifully marbled wagyu beef. The fifth-generation owner, a qualified sommelier, will be on hand to recommend a wine-pairing for your hotpot. Alternatively, the lunch set (¥2,700) comes with an appetiser, rice and dessert.

1-1-21 Higashi Shinbashi, Minato (Shinbashi Station). 03 3572 3286. sukiyaki.imaaasa.com/en/. 11.30am-2pm, 5.30pm-9.30pm (last orders 9pm), closed Sat, Sun & hols.

Traditional Japanese seating at Sukiyaki Imaasa (left); the modern, gallery-like space of Mensho (right)

TIME OUT TOKYO October-December, 2018

TASTING THE OLD AND NEW OF TOKYO’S VIBRANT FOOD SCENE. BY MARI HIRATSUKA AND LIM CHEE WAH

The old guards

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NIHONBASHI OTAKO HONTEN
Established in 1923, NIHONBASHI OTAKO HONTEN specialises in Kanto-style oden, where vegetables and ingredients made with fish paste are simmered in a light and clear dashi stock flavoured with kombu and bonito flakes. Despite the restaurant’s relocation to its current NIHONBASHI OTAKO HONTEN spot from the original shop in Ginza 16 years ago, the broth recipe has remained unchanged for over 60 years. For your eden, pick and mix from a variety of ingredients including beef tendon, tomatoes and daikon. And don’t forget to order the famous toshime, a simple but flavourful dish of tofu drenched in soup stock and served on daikon. For just ¥670, you’ll be very well fed with a generous set meal featuring toshime, boiled daikon with soft boiled egg, miso soup with clams, and salad.

YAMARIKI HONKAN
Upon entering this 92-year-old establishment, you’re immediately smacked with the intense yet inviting smell of beef stew, simmered for who knows how many hours. This familiar ‘Yamariki aroma’ makes its presence felt on each of the three levels (and stairwells) of this old-school izakaya, where the speciality, is, of course, nikomi. Cooked in a huge cauldron-like cast iron pot, nikomi gets its unique flavour from beef tendons simmered in a miso-based broth from 9am until last orders at 10pm. The intensity of the soup and tenderness of the beef increase over time – so you’re sure to note a significant difference between a bowl ordered at 5pm and one called for at 9pm. Nikomi is usually served with rice, but Yamariki opts for creamy slices of garlic-rubbed French baguette to better mop up the rich juices. Besides the hearty signature dish, you can order typical izakaya fare like yakiton (pork mince) with tantan (soy sauce) or salt, sashimi, tofu and pickled vegetables. Large bottles of chilli-infused liquid are scattered all over the joint, a vodka mix that can be added to the nikomi – or pretty much any dish – to give it a special kick.

KABI
On the surface, Kabi comes across as a modern European restaurant, which is hardly surprising considering the chef and co-owner, Shohei Yasuda, worked at several French restaurants plus the two Michelin-starred Kadeau in Copenhagen. However, Japanese ingredients are front and centre, but interpreted through the new Nordic approach that defines Japanese cuisine: pickling and fermentation (hence the restaurant’s name ‘kabi’, Japanese for mold).

This is why the food here is so distinct: all the dishes are underscored by a thread of earthy, funky, umami flavours, which are beautifully balanced to avoid being overpowering while lingering ever so lightly at the back of your palate. It means these thoroughly modern dishes are grounded with a sense of place – a reminder that this is still Tokyo.

The tasting menu (¥9,000) changes every one to two month. And of the 13 or 14 dishes, ten will be new. However, Yasuda’s two signature dishes will always be on the menu.

One is a roll of crunchy daikon sheets pickled with sake lees and served with a cut of fermented tomato water, asari clam stock and fig leaf oil. The other is an inspired sake on sushi pickled mackerel on rice wrapped in spinach and wasabi leaves and dusted with kale powder. It looks like a Snickers bar, but is the perfect encapsulation of Kabi’s food: surprising, unique and a joy to eat.

DELFI FU CIOUS
Chief executive of Delicioious, Shino Kudo has more than a decade’s experience in some of the city’s top sushi temples. So when what looks like a chef with his attention to burgers? You get some of the best fish burgers around, executed with premium seafood and perfected using insider techniques from the sushi world.

For example, Kudo presses the fresh fish fillets between kelp sheets to extract the moisture while imparting umami into the flesh. This age-old method helps create firmer fillets that hold up better when deep-fried. For lighter fare, go for the saikyo yakitori, which sees the fish baked with miso and grilled over charcoal. There are ‘hot dogs’ on the menu as well but just not what you’d expect. Kudo replaces the sausage with either a comper tempura or a block of fluffy tamagoyaki (Japanese-style omelette). And if you’re going for the crab and potato cream croquette burger, always add on the rich, dark and delicious kani miso (crab meatball) – a condiment seldom served outside sushi restaurants. Needles to say, we’ve rarely been more excited to eat burgers in Tokyo.

The trailblazers

YUKI NAKAMURA KISA TOYOSHIMA

Established in 1909, the original KISA TOYOSHIMA was a simple but flavourful dish of racehorse curry. The food has remained unchanged for over 100 years, and the curry is usually served with rice, but KISA TOYOSHIMA also serves soup and a special kick...
EATING TOKYO

MENSHO

The brainchild of chef Tomoharu Shono—who already has eight ramen restaurants in Tokyo and one in San Francisco—Mensho proclaims that it’s serving “a bowl for tomorrow”. It certainly is unlike any other ramen restaurant in the city.

For one, it looks like a gallery: bright, contemporary and slick. The walls feature notations about the different components of ramen, complete with their chemical breakdown. True to its “farm-to-bowl” ethos, Mensho lists the provenance of its ingredients, while you get to peek into the production room where they make the noodles.

While ramen is traditionally a hearty soul food with a rich, gunky soup, Mensho has taken all the beef bits and crystallised them into a modern bowl that’s surprisingly clean and light yet still flavoursome. The signature seafood ramen has a clear broth made with sea beans, scallops and sea salt, and is complemented by a dashi that looks like it’s been pitched from a modernist restaurant. Think scallops rolled in burnt Welsh onion ash, karasumi (cured fish roe) and modernist crème fraîche, while the broth has a depth and meatiness that lends itself to the sweet and tart tomatoes. Coupled with the nearly charred and the crunchy chopped onions, this rossu tsukemen is a joy to eat.

Word has it that the chef has a lot more of these unconventional ramen creations up his sleeve (nacho-soba, anyone?), which you’ll occasionally find on the special list. But you can always order the pizza soba. True to its name, this Italian-Japanese fusion dish is essentially dry noodles tossed with pizza toppings: tomatoes, garlic, pepper, olives, anchovies and the like. But the chef, who goes by the mysterious-sounding Mr M, drew on his background in the culinary arts to create a bowl that, while bewildering at first, turns out to be utterly delicious.

Whether noodles are a Chinese or Italian invention doesn’t matter at Ajito Ism: here, the ramen, Chinese in origin, has been reinvented with Italian flair. In lesser hands, this could be a disaster; another cringe-inducing Asian-Western fusion food gimmick. But the chef, who runs by the mysterious-sounding name Mr M, drew on his training in French and Italian cuisines to create a bowl that, while bewildering at first, turns out to be utterly delicious.

The tsukemen (dipping) noodles are thick, chewy and slightly doughy—yet cooked al dente. The thick dipping broth has a meatiness that lends depth to the sweet and tart tomatoes. Coupled with the nearly charred and the crunchy chopped onions, this rossu tsukemen is a joy to eat.

While the rest of the world still obsesses over third-wave coffee, Tokyo is charging ahead with a new breed of specialist cafés. By the Time Out Tokyo team

GOMAYA KUKI

Speciality: tea

Sesame is the quintessentially Japanese ice cream flavour, and at this Shibuya scoopper it’s perhaps not the most easy to come by. In the world of serious coffee culture, this is a dessert that’s often overlooked by ramen-hungry coffee fans. But at this charming scoop shop in the heart of Shibuya, the ramen, Chinese in origin, has been reinvented with Italian flair.

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BONGEN

Speciality: onigiri

Combining artisanal coffee with onigiri rice balls is certainly a novel approach—and it seems to be working. Tucked away in the backstreets of Higashi-Ginza, this tiny café features a clean and elegant Japanese-style interior: think plaster walls, cedar wood fixtures, coffered ceiling plus a lone bonsai poised behind the counter for a cool visual impact.

But the onigiri are simple but satisfying; the rice triangles have no fillings but are dusted with salt, wasabi or ume plum powder. For drinks, there are the usual café staples including drip-coffee, Americano and mocha, plus a peculiar latte made by combining matcha with a shot of espresso. There’s a soy milk option too for the lactose intolerant.

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There's no rule saying you can't have it's less crowded in the middle of the day. August's apricot and blueberry were both excellent. As expected, this café and cloud-like chiffon cake, wedged together with fruit jam and whipped cream. For its latest venture, one of Japan's most venerable purveyors of wagashi has stripped the anko (red bean paste) and it's not just confined to the cool glass and wood interior. Its signature ‘an paste’ is made by kneading red bean paste with unrefined brown sugar and maple syrup, and is featured in several original creations. There’s the éclair-like An Coupé with fluffy chunks of sponge cake folded in with whipped cream and served in a cute paper cup. Thanks to the Italians, coffee and gelato go hand-in-hand: what’s better than pairing a strong, bitter espresso with a scoop of sweet frozen creaminess? Located a short walk away from Yoyogi Park, Floto’s gelato display will tempt you with its striking array of colourful options: there’s everything from classic chocolate and caramel to seasonal fruit flavours such as peach, kiwi and Japanese beni hoppe strawberry. Floto’s beans are sourced from the famed Aso Coffee and the Rooster in Tokushima. We suggest getting the best of both worlds by ordering either the coffee float or affogato with your choice of gelato. When it’s pleasant outside, take a seat at the outdoor patio and enjoy the perfect afternoon treat. The Tokyo Fruits produces some of the best fruit parfaits around. The combination of sliced fruit, mousse, fruit jelly, whipped cream and sorbet has oodles of flavour, a winning texture and tastes every bit as good as it looks. The selection is informed by what’s in season, so you’re likely to find cherry and peach parfaits in summer, grape and sweet potato in autumn and strawberry in winter.

As for the joe, Floto’s beans are sourced from Nagasaki’s Kariomons Coffee Roaster. From the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of this specialist café, conveniently connected to Shinjuku Station, has a modern vibe and its not just confined to the cool glass and wood interior. Its signature ‘an paste’ is made by kneading red bean paste with unrefined brown sugar and maple syrup, and is featured in several original creations. There’s the éclair-like An Coupé that’s filled with cream cheese and an paste, as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait. You can even get a jar of the silky smooth red bean paste to go, and watch out for the limited edition fruit-flavoured ones as well as the tin paste café au lait.

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BRICK LANE

Speciality: cupcake
For its latest venture, one of Japan’s most venerable purveyors of wagashi has stripped the sugary confections of their pomp and splendour and instead focused on the traditional testimonee’s key ingredient – the humble anko, or red bean paste.

MONT BLANC STYLE

Speciality: Mont Blanc
While the café’s eponymous dessert is French in origin, over the years Mont Blanc has become a classic Japanese confection. Built on a cake base, this dessert piles on the chestnut and whipped cream before finishing off with strings of chestnut purée, which gives it a noodle-like appearance. At this Shibuya haunt for the sweet-toothed, this dessert is made using premium, locally-sourced chestnuts, and your order will be prepared fresh in front of you. There are only two options available – Mont Blanc in cake and parfait forms – and they both go well with hojicha, sencha or even sake (which is on the menu). Pair your sweet stop with a stroll in the nearby Yoyogi Park.

FOODMOOD

Speciality: Chiffon sandwich
The chiffon sandwich is quite the crowd pleaser – two pieces of beautifully light and cloud-like chiffon cake, wedged together with fruit jam and whipped cream. And given a seasonal twist at Foodmood, it’s even more heavenly than usual. Two speciality:

TORAYA CAFE STAND SHINJUKU

Speciality: Anko (Red bean paste)
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FLOTO

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One of the many independent cafes in Setagaya, Brick Lane stands out with its highly coveted ‘cupcakes’ that are only available on weekends and holidays. Don’t expect the usual mini round cakes with a crown of icing, though. Brick Lane’s cake is more cheery, with fluffy chunks of sponge cake folded in with whipped cream and served in a cute paper cup. Unlike your standard cupcake, these use light brown sugar for a more mellowed, natural sweetness. The flavour changes regularly: ton’s we’ve seen strawberry, peach, melon, cherry and even a Mont Blanc version (chocolate and chestnut flavour). Brick Lane also offers a range of inventive coffee drinks – caramel nut latte, coffee jelly float and espresso tonic – and they have recently started selling beans from Nagasaki’s Kitomons Coffee Roaster.

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The raw deal

Your quick and easy guide to the most iconic of all Japanese food – sushi. By Lim Chee Wah

Art direction by Mayumi Hashimoto Assisted by Kaila Imada and Kirsty Bouwers Photography Entaniya Studio
ARGUABLY THE HEALTHIEST

Sushi is enjoyed in Tokyo.

Here are five temples which elevate the belt sushi haunts to culinary

today you'll find a wide variety of

was born.

rice. The world's first fast food

while the latter added flavour to

that fish could be kept fresh,

refrigeration and vinegar meant

sushi. Busy urbanites demanded

of Tokyo, or Edo as it was called

known as narezushi).

Sushi continues to evolve, and

it's supposed to go on the fish, not the rice.

there to cleanse your palate in between bites.

in the exact way it's intended to be enjoyed.

cut – whatever the case, they prepare sushi

certain type of fish, others prefer a particular

their respective chef's unique approach.

Some age their fish, some are expert in a

exquisiteness), yellowtail (buri), shrimp (ebi)

just want tuna, otoro if you want full-fat

by hand. Some of the most popular neta

Sushi in Tokyo goes far beyond the

Sushi in its simplest form: a slice of (usually raw)

fish on an elongated bed of rice, shaped

hand. Some of the most popular neta

toppings) include tuna (maguro if you

just want tuna, aonori if you want full-fat

exquisiteness), yellowtail (buri), shrimp (ebi)

and squid (ika).

The different types of sushi

By Kirsty Bouwers

POINT TO ORDER

Condiments

Sushi is generally eaten with these condiments; use them sparingly, rather than going all-out

SOY SAUCE (SHOYU)

Presented in a flusk, to be poured into

wasabi is an indispensable condiment.

High-class sushi restaurants will often pre-season everything for you, so if

there’s none, don’t worry. If there is, note that

it’s supposed to go on the fish, not the rice.

WASABI

If it’s stoned, it’s generally not the real

thing. Real wasabi is a stem, and it’s quite

expensive. It’s traditionally grated on a

special grater, and will either be served as

a little mound or already on your sushi. If you

get it separately, put a bit on the fish, not in

the soy sauce.

GARI

Used as a palate cleanser between bites

of sushi, this thinly-sliced pickled ginger

is a nice, refreshing hit. If it’s not already

on your plate, look for a square box with

small things sticking out: that’s where it’s

usually kept.

OSHIZUSHI

A Kansai speciality, this ‘pressed sushi’

is similar to maki in having seaweed and a

filling, but the filling is a topping here, with

the ingredients sticking out from a nori casing.

SASAZUSHI

Similar to oshizushi, sasazushi is also

pressed, but wrapped in a type of bamboo

leaf. Toppings are generally fish such as

salmon and mountain vegetables, and you

can either buy them in small rectangles or in

a big cake-like sushi mound.
NUMAZUKO GINZA
Clinia is known for its expensive sushi, but prices are kept low at this popular conveyor belt restaurant, which offers all your usual sushi findings. If you’re feeling a little fancy, you can order from the premium selection. We recommend the nani umi, where the generous heap of generous size and even larger than the rice underneath, and the seared anago, where the generous heap of savoury and fruit-flavoured sushi that is so huge it completely covers the rice.
9-1-9 Ginza, Chuo Ward (Ginza Station). 03 6228 7171. numazuko-bar.com. 11am-11pm (last orders 10pm).

SUSHIDOKORO YAMADA
It’s not often you come across an omakase menu that doesn’t break the bank. But at Sushidokoro Yamada, you can enjoy the 35-piece chef’s selection for just ¥15,000. Chef Yusuke Yamada has been crafting aged sushi at his clinia establishment since 2012, and uses his experience growing up in a fishing village to practice some finely tuned sushi techniques. The restaurant is also one of the few middle-high end restaurants that don’t require months to secure a reservation or an in-the-know hotel concierge to get you a seat at the counter.
9-7-2-14 Ginza, Chuo Ward (Ginza Station). 03 3572 7534. 5pm-late. closed Sun.

EDOMAEZUSHI HANABUSA
At Hanabusa you can treat yourself to an indulgent Edomae-style sushi maiten. Choose from two different options: an omakase set for ¥13,000 or a full omakase course including small appetisers for ¥20,000. Although the prices are steep, the quality makes it worth the splurge. Fresh seafood is brought in from the Tokyo Bay area, wasabi items from Izu are freshly grated to enhance the flavours of the fish, and red vinegar and salt are used for the shari (sushi rice) to balance the sweet and umami flavours. It’s also not difficult to land a reservation either – just call and see if they have space to squeeze you in.
9-5-1-7 Hanamaki, Minato Ward (Shibuya Station). 03 3478 5935. 11.30am-2am daily.

KURA SUSHI
Kids will love this fun and playful conveyor belt sushi restaurant because for every five dishes you eat, you get to win a capsule toy filled with either a keychain or figurine of the restaurant’s original characters. Better still, most items require months to secure a reservation or an in-the-know hotel concierge to get you a seat at the counter. The restaurant is also one of the few middle-high end restaurants that don’t require months to secure a reservation or an in-the-know hotel concierge to get you a seat at the counter.
9-7-2-14 Ginza, Chuo Ward (Ginza Station). 03 3572 7534. 5pm-late. closed Sun.

UOGASHI NIHON-ICHI
Visiting a standing sushi bar is a must while you’re in Tokyo and Uogashi Nihon-Ichi is one of the best around. You’ll find this chain eatery in several areas around Tokyo, including its newly reopened outlet in Shibuya Dogenzaka. The best part about visiting this joint is watching the sushi chefs up close as they whip up your order at lightning speed. There’s an English menu – or you can just point to the seafood you recognise at the counter.
9-2-1 Dogenzaka, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3458 4011. uogashi-nihonichi.com. 11-11.30pm. Sat & Sun 11am-2pm, 5pm-11pm.

MENCHUCK
TIME OUT LOVES
As the mood for a particularly punchy bowl of ramen? These spicy noodle soups will set your taste buds on fire (in a good way).

MANRIKI
While Manriki’s owner earned his stripes at Kikanbo, a popular purveyor of spicy ramen in Kanda, his concoction here is entirely original. The Spice Ramen (¥780) features a punchy dose of curry spices but it’s not all heat – there’s a good balance of flavours from the acidity of the tomatoes and the umami-rich pork and seafood broth. It’s a generous bowl too, with chewy and plump noodles complemented by thick slices of pork, a soft-boiled egg plus a sprinkling of coriander and other aromatic herbs. It’ll leave you sweating, for sure, yet you won’t want to stop eating it.
9-4-30-11 Manriki, Minato (Minato-Kasumigaoka Station). 03 3480 7822. 11.30am-3pm, 5pm-8pm, Sun 11.30am-3pm, closed Mon (call for availability).

DOGENBOZU
Dogenbozu offers a short but perfectly formed ramen menu – shio (salt), shoyu (soy sauce) soba and mazai (mixing) soba – but if you’re in the market for a gutsy bowl of noodles, the spicy soba (¥780) won’t disappoint. Don’t let the intense redness of the soup scare you – it’s not nearly as fiery as it looks. Heat freaks, however, do have the option of customising their preferred level of heat: choose between mild, medium, spicy and head-on-fire hot (extra ¥100). Noodles come flat and curly, while a generous portion of pork slices makes this a hearty dish.
9-3-16-1 Nishi Kanda, Chiyoda (Nishi Kanda Station). 03 6264 1346. 11.20am-8:30pm. closed Wed.

MIYABI
Located in a building with more than its fair share of eateries, this noodle merchant offers a retreat from the drinking crowd and specialises in tan-men, a dish of soup noodles with stewed pork and vegetables, which is not to be confused with dandanmen (Szechuan-style sesame broth noodles). Of the eight varieties, the spicy tan-men (¥750) is the one we keep coming back to. Rich, flavourful and utterly nourishing, its complex broth benefits from a blend of homemade chilli oil and two different types of peppers. The noodles are tender with Szechuan-style maple syrup and as many vegetables as you like for free.
9-3-16-1 Nishi Kanda, Chiyoda (Nishi Kanda Station). 03 6264 1346. 11.20am-8:30pm. closed Wed.

EDAOZU
A noodle bar you can treat yourself to an indulgent Edomae-style sushi maiten. Choose from two different options: an omakase set for ¥13,000 or a full omakase course including small appetisers for ¥20,000. Although the prices are steep, the quality makes it worth the splurge. Fresh seafood is brought in from the Tokyo Bay area, wasabi items from Izu are freshly grated to enhance the flavours of the fish, and red vinegar and salt are used for the shari (sushi rice) to balance the sweet and umami flavours. It’s also not difficult to land a reservation either – just call and see if they have space to squeeze you in.
9-5-1-7 Hanamaki, Minato Ward (Shibuya Station). 03 3478 5935. 11.30am-2am daily.

TEN TO SEN
Ten To Sen has the most visually appealing spicy ramen (¥950) around, prepared with an abundance of colourful toppings: wood ear mushroom, cashew nuts, pepper, chives, coriander, burdock, red onion and pork slices. It may be pretty but it still packs a punch. Based on the Japanese-style soup curry originating from Sapporo, the spectacularly good curry is made with pork bones, chicken, seafood, vegetables and a handful of spices while a hint of sweetness works beautifully to counter the heat. Don’t worry if you’re not a spice fiend: you can choose from six levels of heat and order the rich lassi (¥850) to cool your tongue.
9-2-4-1 Kitazawa, Setagaya (Shimokitazawa Station). 11.15am-9pm, 5.30pm-10pm, irregular hrs.

NUMIZUKO GINZA
SUSHIDOKORO YAMADA
EDOMAEZU HANABUSA
KURA SUSHI
UOGASHI NIHON-ICHI
MENCHUCK
DOGENBOZU
MIYABI
TIME OUT LOVES
Spicy ramen
In the mood for a particularly punchy bowl of ramen? These spicy noodle soups will set your taste buds on fire (in a good way).

By Menchuck

Eating & Drinking
Nothing is too obscure or niche for Tokyo shops. Whether you’re looking for rare salt, kimono tumblers or artisanal paper, here are ten of the city’s best stores for finding fascinating objects of wonder.

By Kaila Imada and Tabea Greuner

**World of wonder**

Ma-suya

Ma-suya’s walls are stacked full of salt from its home base of Okinawa as well as other regions in Japan. You’ll also find some top-notch sodium chloride from France and several other countries.

You can taste everything before making a purchase, so test your tastebuds and sprinkle on salts to your heart’s content. The shop has previously exhibited pieces from Comme des Garçons’ and Yohji Yamamoto’s collections from the ‘80s.

[archivestore.jp](http://archivestore.jp). 12noon-8pm, closed Wed.

**HIBIYA CENTRAL MARKET**

Sprawled across the third floor of the new Hibiya Midtown complex, this modern marketplace is full of surprises. From high-end luxury fashion to stationery and craft gin, there’s a lot to take in as you make your way through this trendy space.

Hibiya Central Market is designed to look like a miniature town, with nine separate retail spaces ranging from a bookshop and a bar to a hip coffee stand and lifestyle store selling the latest fashion and quirky trinkets for your home. There’s even a gallery space which often hosts pop-up events and art exhibitions.

After you’ve done your shopping, don’t forget to stop by the food and drink space where you can sit back and nurse a cold one while nibbling on casual Japanese izakaya fare.

[hibiya central-market.jp](http://hibiya central-market.jp). 9am-6pm, Sat & Sun 11am-6pm.

**ARCHIVE STORE**

Hidden in a basement away from the busy streets of Shibuya, Archive Store is a treasure trove for fans of coveted Japanese and international designers such as Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, Martin Margiela and Karl Lagerfeld.

The store is worth a visit in its own right for its edgy, hyper-modern interior fitted with mirrored walls and an amorphous, dimly lit atmosphere. It almost feels like you’ve just walked into a museum: the well-curated clothes are displayed in an organised, exhibition-like order, and the more curious pieces showcased in a large glass display at the back of the shop.

Archive Store brings in new items every season, and the prices are surprisingly accessible considering the craftsmanship and the rarity of some of the selection. Do keep tabs on their website for the rotating roster of featured designers, where they’ll feature certain iconic pieces from the label’s past collections, and you’ll be able to interact and look closely at these unique items.

The store has previously exhibited pieces from Comme des Garçons’ and Yohji Yamamoto’s collections from the ‘80s.

[archivestore.jp](http://archivestore.jp). 12noon-7pm, Sat & Sun 10am-6pm.

**ASAKUSA TATSUMIYA**

Asakusa is usually full of cheap knick-knacks and tacky souvenirs, but you’ll want to stop by this small shop which specialises in kimono-covered tumblers. Currently run by the third-generation owner Shubukawa, Asakusa Tatsunamiya was first established as a kimono retailer more than 80 years ago. However, Shubukawa decided to revamp the old business three years ago after finding a way to connect Japan’s traditional elements with Tokyoites’ modern lifestyles.

The shop features a dazzling array of gorgeous kimono tumblers, each unique in design and a real piece of art. They are adorned with the most elegant and intricate parts of the obi sashes made from exquisite Nishijin-ori silk fabrics produced in Kyoto. From the selection of the pattern to the tailoring, each tumbler is impeccably handmade, which explains the higher price tag – these cups range from ¥6,000 to ¥10,000. But it will be one of the most beautiful and practical souvenirs to take home.

[asakusatatsumiya.com](http://asakusatatsumiya.com). 10am-6.30pm, closed Wed.

**UME LABO**

Plums are a popular and integral ingredient in Japanese cuisine, and this one shop in Shimokitazawa specialises in all sorts of plummy goodness. Usually fermented in sugar, honey or salt, preserved Japanese ume are characterised by their tangy, sweet and salty flavours. For those who find the salty on a little too pungent, the sweet variety makes for a perfect alternative.

At Ume Labo, you can shop for all sorts of Japanese ume products ranging from preserved whole plums to umeshu and syrups for drinks and dried varieties for snacking. What’s even better is their takeaway menu, which consists of ume juice and shaved ice topped with sugary plum – both perfect for that midday shopping break.

[umelabo.tokyo](http://umelabo.tokyo). 11am-8pm, Sat & Sun 10am-8pm.

**R FOR D**

If you’re looking for one-of-a-kind Japanese designers with aesthetics distinctive of their homeland, look no further than this boutique.

Featuring an industrial minimalist interior, the shop’s name stands for ‘Room for Designers’ and it showcases a hefty number of homewear and accessories creators, as well as regular pop-up events.

Opened earlier this year, the boutique used to be an online store before transforming into a brick-and-mortar operation featuring over 30 well-known and up-and-coming Japanese designers who have been working with the shop since its inception. Art for D is all about each featured designer having their own unique point of view; collectively they make a good showcase of Tokyo’s mix of old and new cultures as well as local and western design sensibilities.

The shop is a good place to gain some insight into the local fashion scene and try out some new designs you may have never heard of before. Who knows, they could be the next big thing.

[R for D сайте](http://R for D site). 3021-0141, Takeshita 5-ya, 11am-7pm, closed Wed.

**MA-SUYA**

This specialist shop deals in premium salt – yes, just salt, and lots and lots of different types of it. Ma-suya’s walls are stacked full of salt from its home base of Okinawa as well as other regions in Japan. You’ll also find some top-notch sodium chloride from France and several other countries.

When you enter the shop, you’ll be handed a white handkerchief to test the saltiness of the salts and see how your taste buds will react. The shop is a good place to gain some insight into the local fashion scene and try out some new designs you may have never heard of before. Who knows, they could be the next big thing.

[ma-suya.jp](http://ma-suya.jp). 12noon-1pm & 5-6pm, closed Wed.

**KISA TOYOSHIMA**

Kisa Toyoshima works with aesthetics distinctive of their homeland, look no further than this boutique.

Featuring an industrial minimalist interior, the shop’s name stands for ‘Room for Designers’ and it showcases a hefty number of homewear and accessories creators, as well as regular pop-up events.

Opened earlier this year, the boutique used to be an online store before transforming into a brick-and-mortar operation featuring over 30 well-known and up-and-coming Japanese designers who have been working with the shop since its inception. Art for D is all about each featured designer having their own unique point of view; collectively they make a good showcase of Tokyo’s mix of old and new cultures as well as local and western design sensibilities.

The shop is a good place to gain some insight into the local fashion scene and try out some new designs you may have never heard of before. Who knows, they could be the next big thing.

[ma-suya.jp](http://ma-suya.jp). 12noon-1pm & 5-6pm, closed Wed.
**Shopping & Style**

**TOKYO KITSCH**

Nestled on the old school streets of Yanaka, you’ll find this unsung little shop selling traditional, quirky, and, as its name suggests, kitschy Japanese souvenirs.

Shop for everything from traditional tableware and handmade tools to quirky cut figures inspired by Mt Fuji—inspired goods and fun mementos. The shop features a bamboo stool, a look-out for the handmade accessories and jewellery by local designers, as well as a range of some classic Japanese elements, such as hair accessories made from washi paper, and setting resembling small shinsenmaya (rice straw ropes used in lasting practice) arrangements. While browsing, look out for items from local brands, chopsticks, wasabi tube-shaped markers, strawberry chocolate boxes and more—unapologetically kitschy items. Be warned: you probably won’t leave empty-handed—but quite possibly very well-filled.

Open: 11am–8pm (Sat & Sun till 5:30pm), closed Mon.

**KISA TOYOSHIMA**

Looking like an outlet store, the expansive Sippo will delight bargain hunters with its wide range of reasonably priced goods. The selection may seem random at first glance, but there’s actually a relief hidden in the bottom, which is revealed once you pour soy sauce into the dish. You can choose from a range of cute animals (dogs, cats, pandas) or opt for some more traditional Japanese characters.

Open: 10am–6pm, closed 2nd & 4th Tues.

**IKOR LA VILLE**

Tokyo Natural Moist Humidifier

With our constant use of air conditioners for heating, a humidifier is essential for those dry Tokyo autumn and winter days. This natural humidifier combines functionality and sustainability with a bit of hometown love: the eco-friendly filter has two sides, which both show the Tokyo skyline from a different vantage point. Just add water—no electricity is needed—and your skin will thank you for months to come.

Open: 10am–6pm, closed Mon.

**HAIHARA**

If you’re looking for some exquisite, Japanese stationery, this long-established outlet in Nihonbashi should be your first port of call. Haibara counts more than 200 years in business and knows how to turn traditional washi paper into beautiful letter sets, uchiwa (round-shaped fans), notebooks and much more.

The elegant design of their products can be traced back to the late Edo (1603-1868) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods, when Haibara’s previous owners collaborated with the most famous painters of the time. Ask for their best-known item, the gampi paper, which has been in high demand since the shop first opened.

Open: 10am–6.30pm, closed Sun.

**SIPPO**

This artisanal paper is made from the outer bark fibres of gampi trees, which gives it a silk-like surface and smooth texture. This paper is extensively used in the industry supplying flower art for TV commercials, shop decorations and the like. Here, you can personalise your very own hand-picked dry flower arrangement that will make you forget all about fresh flowers.

Open: 11am–8pm (Sat & Sun till 5.30pm), closed Mon.

**BOTTLE CLEANING SPONGE BEANS**

Ever wanted to pop to the bathroom in a café and leave your laptop where it is without having to worry about it? With Trene, an anti-theft device that links to your smartphone, you can attend to your business with peace of mind.

It both emits an alarm and sends a notification to your phone if anyone tries to move the precious item it’s attached to.

Open: 10am–8pm, closed Thu.

**ARSHA SOY SAUCE DISH**

This dish may look like a simple white soy sauce dish at first glance, but there’s actually a relief hidden in the bottom, which is revealed once you pour soy sauce into the dish. You can choose from a range of cute animals (dogs, cats, pandas) or opt for some more traditional Japanese characters.

Open: 11am–8pm, closed Mon.

**EW. PHARMACY**

Dry flowers and a pharmacy-themed concept define this shop near renowned flower artist Megumi Shinozaki, who owns nearly a decade in the industry supplying flower art for TV commercials, shop decorations and the like. Here, you can personalise your very own hand-picked dry flower arrangement that will make you forget all about fresh flowers.

The range of dried flowers at the shop changes every two months. But at any given time, you have 20 varieties to choose from. Take your pick and have them arranged into a beautiful bouquet, preserved in a bottle, or displayed in an agaisu dome. Your bespoke creation will also come with detailed descriptions of the flowers’ respective symbolism and provenance. If you’re in a hurry, you can just choose from the pre-packaged dried flowers.

Open: 11am–8pm, closed Mon.

**TEETH WIPES**

These are what it is says they are—sheets you can brush your teeth with. Grab one and wipe it across your choppers to get rid of grim and odour. No water is needed so it’s perfect for a quick touch-up before a job interview or date.

Available at Muji from ¥230.

**BOTTLE CLEANING SPONGE BEANS**

Those pesky bottles just became a whole lot easier to scrub clean with this special sponge. Shaped like edamame soy beans, you can just pop them into your bottle, add water and a dash of detergent, and shake away. The beans will get to those hard-to-reach corners with minimal effort.

From ¥160. aruaru.co.jp/product/bottle-cleaning-sponge-beans

**TRENE**

The Time Out Tokyo team choose some of the most innovative and quirky products to hit the shelters for so this year. By Hiroyuki Sumi & Kirsty Bouwers

**ARTHA SOY SAUCE DISH**

**C’EST LAVIE OAK BOTTLE**

**BEST BUYS**

**KAGURAZAKA WALLETIERE YAMATOU**

Carefully crafting some of Japan’s finest leather goods since 1899, this family owned and operated brand from Tokyo are the masters of their artistry.

See the full list on timeout.com/tokyo. Most items are available at Loft and/or Tokyo Hands. Teethe wipes are available at Muji.
**Things to Do**

**Ancient Tokyo**

Relive Tokyo’s glorious past at the city’s top heritage museums. By Tabea Greuner

**TOKYO METROPOLITAN EDO-TOKYO MUSEUM**

Towering over the Ryogoku neighbourhood, this unique building, designed after a raised-floor type warehouse, houses the largest collection of exhibits covering Tokyo’s history from the Edo period (1603-1868). Stroll across an alfie-size model of the former Nihonbashi bridge and admire the large-scale replica of the Nakamura-zakubi theatre facade from above. The painstakingly researched water dioramas of city quarters will make it easier for you to understand the different lifestyles and occupations of the city’s former residents.

The exhibition is not only visually stunning, it also offers many hands-on experiences—how would you like to climb into a traditional palanquin (a box-shaped form of human-powered transport) used by the upper classes, such as part of the villa of former politician Korekiyo Takahashi and the residence of the 11th head of the Mitui family, Takakimi Mitui? All of them are accessible, but prepare for lots of slipping and sliding in and out of shoes.

- 9.30am-5.30pm (last entry 4pm), closed Mon. ¥300, high school, junior high and primary school students (must be accompanied by an adult) ¥200, FREE for younger children.

**SHIBAMACHI MUSEUM**

With almost 400 years in business, this museum, located by the Shibamachi pond in Sono, may not be the fanciest in our selection but its rustic charm adds perfectly to the experience.

It focuses on life in Tokyo’s Shitamachi in an old name referring to the city’s former working-class area in the east between the pivotal Meiji restoration of 1868 and the Great Earthquake of 1923. Here you’ll find life-size replicas of a merchant’s house as well as a small tenement building of the Taisho period (1912-26), which sports a candy shop and a carpenter’s workshop. Upstairs you can play with some traditional toys, sit down in a fully furnished model of a living/dining kitchen (a typical aspect of Japanese architecture) and see what life was like in the mid 20th century.

- 9.30am-5pm (last entry 4pm), closed Mon. ¥300, high school, junior high and primary school students (must be accompanied by an adult) ¥200, FREE for younger children.

**SUMIDA HOKUSAI MUSEUM**

This metallic structure houses the Sumida Hokusai Museum, dedicated to Suzuki Harunobu’s most famous son, the artist Katsushika Hokusai, who was an ink-e painter and printmaker in the Edo era. Admire high-quality replicas of this fabulous woodblock prints, including the internationally renowned androgynous icon, ‘Under the Wave off Kanagawa’ as well as A. Mild Freeze of a Fine Day – both are part of the print series ‘Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji’.

The permanent exhibition is set in a single room and displays works organized according to Hokusai’s different stages in life – they are accompanied by videos and multimedia touchscreens. The highlight is an alfie-size diorama of Hokusai’s atelier, showing the master printer in his early eighties together with his daughter.

Don’t miss the temporary exhibitions on the third and fourth floors as well, which are bigger and boast original artworks of Hokusai (additional entrance fee required).

- 9.30am-5pm, (last entry 45min before closing), closed Mon. ¥500, family ¥1000, university students ¥300, FREE for younger children.

**FUJIGAWA EDO MUSEUM**

Step into an alfie-size reenactment of the streets of Fujigawa in the late Edo period between 1830 and 1844. Located at the banks of Sumida River, Fujigawa was a typical neighbourhood lined with tenement houses and narrow alleys.

Walk through the replication town and enter the many different homes to get a feel for what life was like more than 150 years ago. Your experience is accompanied by sound effects – calls from traders, meowing cats or chirping birds – and don’t be surprised when it suddenly gets dark, since this museum demonstrates a full day in the resident’s life.

As soon as you enter the grounds, friendly English-speaking volunteers will be more than happy to guide you through the streets of Sagacho. You’ll learn how to stroll away futures, see how commuters earned their living and more.

- 9.30am-5pm, (last entry 45min before closing), closed Mon. ¥400, university students ¥320, junior high and high school students ¥200, FREE for younger children.

**TOKYO WATERWORKS HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

People’s lives changed drastically for the better at the beginning of the Edo period under the control of the Tokugawa shogunate, and the development of the city’s water system was a key factor.

This museum traces and explains the more than 400-year history of Tokyo’s waterworks.

First, head up to the second floor where you can see a map of the original water system (known as ‘Josui’, the woodpipe) and learn how water was distributed through a recreation of traditional wooden pipes. You can even walk through a recreation of traditional homes in the Edo period which feature a replica well (a system used to access groundwater in the olden days). The exhibits on the first floor depict the history and the technical aspects of the modern waterworks from the Meiji era until now – they feature various maps and samples of Japan’s largest cast-iron pipe.

- 9.30am-5pm, (last entry 45min before closing), closed Mon. ¥400, university students ¥320, junior high and high school students ¥200, FREE for younger children.

**EDO-TOKYO OPEN AIR ARCHITECTURAL MUSEUM**

Take a stroll through a lush green park while taking in the landscape of bygone days at this picturesque offshoot of the Edo-Tokyo Museum. Over seven hectares, the land is divided into three areas, which house 30 carefully reconstructed and preserved buildings, covering architectural designs between the 17th and 20th centuries.

Walk through a merchant’s town in the eastern area and discover flower, stationery and umbrella shops, as well as a traditional public bathhouse. The central and west zones of the park showcase the homes of the upper classes, such as half of the villa of former politician Koro Kurasawa. The garden and the residence of the 11th head of the Mitui family, Takakumi Mitui. All of them are accessible, but prepare for lots of slipping and sliding in and out of shoes.

- 9.30am-5.30pm (last entry 4pm), closed Mon (Tue if Mon is hols). ¥400, university students ¥320, junior high and high school students ¥200, FREE for younger children.
Flea markets in Tokyo

Every weekend you’ll find a handful of gloriously eclectic flea and antique markets dotted across Tokyo. Here’s our guide to the most popular and unique places to pick up a bargain, or five. By Tabea Greuner

1. AKIHABARA FLEA MARKET
   - Attention geeks: each weekend the space under the railway tracks near Akihabara Station’s Electric Town transforms into an otaku paradise, with about 40 booths selling manga and anime merchandise ranging from cosplay outfits to collectible toys, figurines and all manner of weird and wonderful items at reasonable prices. Even when it’s a wet and rainy day, you can still shop to your nerdy heart’s content, thanks to the covered location.
   - Kanda Neribeicho, Chiyoda (Akihabara Station). tinyurl.com/AFmarket. Every Sat, Sun & hols, 11am-6pm.

2. OI RACECOURSE – TOKYO CITY FLEA MARKET
   - With its 250 to 300 vendors, this is by far Tokyo’s biggest flea market and it takes place nearly every weekend in the parking lot of Oi Racecourse, also known as Tokyo City Keiba. With an extensive selection of goods, it’s not difficult to spend half a day here – and given the tempting prices, you definitely won’t leave empty-handed. Expect to find daily necessities, rare collector’s items, clothing, accessories, handmade goods, home decor, toys and even a small selection of antiques.
   - 2-1-2 Katsushima, Shinagawa (Oi Keibajo-mae Station). tinyurl.com/TokyoCityFM. Every Sat & Sun, 9am-3pm.

3. TOKYO ROMANTIC MARKET
   - Once a month the space in front of Shibuya’s Garden Tower transforms into a colourful spectacle with more than 50 booths. At the Tokyo Romantic Market, you can find a diverse variety of items from international antiques to vintage goods, handicrafts, accessories and organic food as well as flowers and plants. The vendors change monthly, so you can find something new and exciting every time you drop by.
   - 16-17 Nanpeidaicho, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). tokyo-romantic.com. 2nd Sun of the month, 11am-4pm.

4. NOGI SHRINE
   - If you want to combine sightseeing with a bit of shopping, then mark the fourth Sunday of each month in your calendar and pay a visit to Nogi Shrine in Akasaka. About 30 booths are sprinkled along the pathway which stretches from the gate to the main hall. Find clothing, furniture and tableware at this long-running flea market, which dates back to 1976.
   - 8-11-27 Akasaka, Minato (Nogizaka Station). nogikotto.com. 4th Sun of the month (won’t take place in Nov), 9am-sunset.

5. RAW TOKYO
   - This monthly event takes place in front of the United Nations University between Shibuya and Omotesando. Following the principle of reusing and not wasting, it’s a festival-like market which focuses on street fashion and vintage clothing. Apparel shops and secondhand boutiques from different parts of the city come here with their wares, making it a convenient stop for those looking for one-of-a-kind clothing, vintage shoes, accessories and other hipster must-haves.
   - To match its carefree vibe, the market features live DJ sets and gigs by talented local performers. We’ve seen live painting by artists and pop-up food stands here in the past, so it’s a flea market where you can easily spend the whole day and not feel bored.
   - 5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya (Omotesando Station). rawtokyo.jp. 1st Sat & Sun of the month, 11am-5pm.
Famed for their immersive light-and-sound installations, teamLab have a plethora of mind-boggling digital art exhibitions around Tokyo and Japan. **Kirsty Bouwers** tracks down some of the best to see right now.

**MORI BUILDING DIGITAL ART MUSEUM**

**TEAMLAB BORDERLESS**

This unprecedented ‘digital art’ museum in Tokyo opened in June 2018 inside Odaiba’s Paletto Town development, next to the ferris wheel. The 60-odd exhibitions are permanent. But true to the museum’s ‘borderless’ moniker, the exhibits are not necessarily confined to one room; they may transition from one to another seamlessly.

All the exhibits are interactive, immersive and constantly changing; you’re encouraged to touch, to dance, to follow them, with specially curated music enveloping you into the experience. As teamLab put it, ‘no two visits will be the same.’

The museum is divided into five sections with plenty to discover, and we’d recommend setting aside a few hours to see it all. There is no order to which to see the exhibits; you’re encouraged to touch and wander in any way you like and be surprised. Read on for three of our favourites.

1-3-6 Ameyabashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 104-0061. art.museum/immersive/ 

**Forest of Resonating Lamps**

All the lamps are a whole change their colour scheme at set intervals, from vivid red to intense blue or vibrant yellow at peak. However, individual bulbs also change their colour when you go near them – hence ‘resonating’ lamps.

This stunningly photogenic room is particularly popular with the Instagram crowd, and as entrance fees; you’re encouraged to take photos. Don’t forget to use an app on your smartphone (downloadable through a QR code displayed at the entrance).

**TEAMLAB PLANETS**

The same physical size as the Borderless museum, Planets adopts a ‘less is more’ attitude. There are fewer seven installations, but given they’re spread out across 10,000sq m, there are no set order in which to see the exhibits. You’re free to wander or follow a room-by-room guide.

For starters, no shoes are allowed in the museum, and you’ll be wading through knee-deep water in some places, upon which digitized fish are projected. We’d highly recommend wearing something above the knee (although skirts may not be wise due to the amount of floor mirrors).

Note that access may be limited depending on visitor numbers.

**BEYOND TOKYO**

Beat the Tokyo crowds and teamLab-ify your trip through Japan at these exhibitions.

**Mifuneyama Rakuen Hotel**

The lobby of this mountain-resort hotel in northwestern Kyushu has been permanently transformed into a sea of light bulbs that resonate with proximity. On top of this, part of Mifuneyama Rakuen Park has become the site for its annual ‘Flower Gardens Live’ until October 29 this year. Natural phenomena such as ponds, rocks and waterfalls are all projected with nature-inspired imagery, which is always, always, always interactive.


**Tokushima Bunkanomori Park**

Tokushima, Shikoku

These ‘resonating trees’ change colour when you walk past them, and emit a specific tone, which is different for every two. They made an appearance in Gion this summer, so if you missed them, head straight to Tokushima, the exhibition here is permanent.

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**New shows to see**

The autumn winds bring forth a series of exhibitions covering everything from cult anime and motherhood to the role of art as a form of empowerment.

### ROYAL SPACE FORCE WINGS OF NONNAMISME

This sprawling exhibition examines the creation and impact of the classic 1979 anime film ‘Royal Space Force: Wings of Nonnami’. Released in 1987, ‘Royal Space Force’ was produced by Gainax, who would go on to make numerous influential television series. At this exhibition, you’ll be able to see the production process of the cult classic, with the secrets of its stunning visuals and groundbreaking production methods revealed through a large collection of shooting scripts, behind-the-scenes photographs, and more. Note that there are no English captions.

- Haneda Tokyo Art Museum, until Nov 11. 19-20 Haneda, Haneda City, 042 621 6777. Tue-Sun 10am-5pm (last entry 4.30pm), closed Mon.

### LEE KIT: WE USED TO BE MORE...

A collaboration between the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Unos’ Tokyo National Museum, this exhibition traces the connection between inspirational French-American painter, sculptor and chess player Marcel Duchamp and Japanese art. Here, the works of Duchamp, who is widely credited with utterly changing the course of 20th-century art history, are displayed alongside Japanese art, in order to re-evaluate the latter through this perspective. The exhibition will be split into two parts: the first features over 1.50 of Duchamp’s works and materials as part of an international tour supervised by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, while the second part is titled ‘Rediscovering Japan through Duchamp’. Here, Japanese artworks will be shown, alongside Duchampian keywords such as ‘ready-made’, for a whole new interpretation.

- Tokyo National Museum, Oct 3-Dec 15, 1-15 Ueno Park, Tokyo, 03 3777 8600. 9.30am-5pm (last entry 4.30pm), Sat, Sun, Mon & Nov 1-30, 1-3 Nov 30-1 Dec 31, closed Nov 26-27. (3.30pm), closed Nov 26-27 (10am)

### THE FEUDAL LORD’S NOH ROBES AND MASKS: FROM THE COLLECTION OF HAYASHIBARA MUSEUM OF ART

Lovers of noh theatre should make a beeline for this exhibition on the robes and masks used during performances. Noh was established in medieval Japan, became much loved by the later samurai classes, and is nowadays also associated with the more comical kogenyo form. During the exhibition, a selection of Okayama’s Hayashibara Museum of Art’s famed collection of noh artifacts will go on display. The Shoto Museum of Art’s Hideki Shita-designed building will provide the perfect backdrop for the exhibition; its aesthetic is also classically Japanese.

- Shoto Museum of Art, Oct 5-Oct 25, 3-14-16 Senko, Shibuya, 03 3465 9421. Tue-Thur, Sun, Mon & Nov 1-30, 1-3 Nov 30-1 Dec 31, closed Nov 26-27 (10am), closed Nov 26-27 (10am)

### THE CATASTROPHE AND THE POWER OF ART

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, the museum is pulling out all the stops for its birthday this year. The exhibition examines a host of catastrophes, including the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, through the artworks they inspired. Adversers of a range of artists including Yoko Ono, Tatsuo Miyajima, Thomas Demand, Chim Pim, Tomoko Yoneda and more are all set to contribute works. It certainly looks like a good opportunity to reflect on the pains these events have inflicted on modern society and to connect them with art and its power to rejuvenate.

- Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, 3-20-2 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku, 03 3777 6808. Tue-Sun 10am-6pm (last entry 4.30pm), Sat 1-5pm (last entry 3.30pm), closed Nov 26-27 (10am)

### AWAKENINGS: ART IN SOCIETY IN ASIA 1960–1990

The changes that swept through East, Southeast and South Asia

- Mori Art Museum, Oct 6-Jan 20. Mori Tower 53F, 1-1-22 Roppongi, Minato, 03 3777 6808. Tue-Sun 10am-6pm (last entry 4.30pm), Sat 1-5pm (last entry 3.30pm), closed Nov 26-27 (10am)

This exhibition is separated into three ‘chapters’, including ‘the city’ and the ‘collective’, which function as broad themes that link the works within. With different corners of the region having seen independence from colonial rule, rapid development, the Vietnam War and more in the span of 40 years, there’s more than enough to chew on here, including new visions of what constitutes society in Asia.

- Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, 3-20-2 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku, 03 3777 6808. Tue-Sun 10am-6pm (last entry 4.30pm), Sat 1-5pm (last entry 3.30pm), closed Nov 26-27 (10am)
TOKYO MAY BE A CITY with a vibrant music culture but its clubs (aka 'event spaces') are bound by a series of regulations. There are rules restricting small clubs from operating past midnight – although some of them craftily circumvent that by opening early in the morning, like 5am, to capture the after-party crowd. Also, there’s the infamous ‘anti-dancing’ law – although recent amendments to the bill have made it far easier to get your groove on. Larger clubs, on the other hand, usually impose a cover charge from ¥3,000 to ¥5,000, which is not exactly cheap.

Yet despite these hurdles, clubbing to the beat of the city’s music experts, Time Out Tokyo editors and the city’s music experts.

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Yet despite these hurdles, clubbing to the beat of the city’s music experts, Time Out Tokyo editors and the city’s music experts.
Yokocho are narrow alleys filled with tiny restaurants and bars that offer a uniquely Japanese night on the tiles. Mari Hiratsuka guides you around the very best.

**Kichijoji**

This popular yokocho gets its name from the way its many small shops and bars are crowded with tiny bars and restaurants which may be small on space but are big on character. Some of these yokocho can trace their origins back to the post-war flea and black markets. Others are relatively new, the product of town revitalisation projects and can come across as a little contrived, like a culinary theme park.

The Kichijoji Yokocho are big on character. Reinvigorated yokocho are crowded with tiny bars and restaurants which may be small on space but were once a tight squeeze, where you’ll be literally rubbing shoulders with other patrons, such as Tight Bar, which seats only six. If you’re hungry, look for Maguro Dekoro, an izakaya offering the freshest seafood, particularly tuna.

**Mari Hiratsuka**

WHILE BACKSTREETS SPELL TROUBLE

In many parts of the world, Tokyo’s one of the safest cities around and some of the best times can be found in the city’s alleys. These yokocho, as they’re known in Japanese, are an integral part of Tokyo’s food and drink culture. Often found sandwiched between high-rise buildings or hidden behind mega train stations, yokocho are crowded with tiny bars and restaurants which may be small on space but are big on character. Some of these yokocho can trace their origins back to the post-war flea and black markets. Others are relatively new, the product of town revitalisation projects and can come across as a little contrived, like a culinary theme park. Here are the top yokocho in the city, with an in-depth guide to our favourite – Harmonica Yokocho.

**Harmonica Yokocho**

Located a short walk from the north exit of Kichijoji Station, Harmonica Yokocho is also known as ‘Drunkard’s Alley’ and is home to about 40 establishments. Most of them are tight squeezes, where you’ll be literally rubbing shoulders with other patrons, such as Tight Bar, which seats only six. If you’re hungry, look for Maguro Dekoro, an izakaya offering the freshest seafood, particularly tuna.

**Katakurki**

Despite just a curtain separating it from the street, this modern-looking restaurant is surprisingly cozy. There’s a full selection of sashimi, side dishes and sake, which makes Katakurki as ideal first port of call on your Harmonica Yokocho bar crawl. If you’re just looking for a light and quick bite, get the three-piece chef’s choice set – it’s only ¥480 for some really fresh sushi. We also recommend the ¥680 three-piece sushi set that features the luxurious chirashi (medium-fatty tuna).

**Kopanda**

This izakaya bar offers a menu of fun and inventive dishes. We recommend the immensely addictive smoked egg and potato salad, which is served with corned beef and onion chips. Wash it down with the two drinks that share the same name as the bar, such as the Panda Bear or the Panda One Cup (sake) – they both feature cute drawings of the black-and-white bear on the labels. If you want to make your yen go further, opt for the okonomi set (name literally translates to ‘Thank you for your hard work!’) this ¥1,000 combo offers you a choice of any drink plus a three-stack set that changes daily.

**Mimini**

A stalwart gyoza restaurant that’s highly popular with the locals. Mimini’s best offering is its gyoza rice set, which comes with the restaurant’s signature handmade dumpling, rice and soup. The asari fried rice (¥760) made with clam stock and the lightly flavoured butter ramen (¥760) are equally as good. Be warned though; Mimini is usually packed so expect to wait for a table to free up.

**Nonbei Yokocho**

Located near Shibuya Station, Nonbei Yokocho is also known as ‘Drunkard’s Alley’ and is home to about 40 establishments. Most of them are tight squeezes, where you’ll be literally rubbing shoulders with other patrons, such as Tight Bar, which seats only six. If you’re hungry, look for Maguro Dekoro, an izakaya offering the freshest seafood, particularly tuna.

**Tatsumi Shindo**

This retro yokocho is home to aghost of restaurants offering a variety of international cuisines. There’s the traditional Japanese izakaya Kamehameha; Yu No.2, a quirky Filipino joint that also offers Japanese food; and La Tequila, a Mexican restaurant serving delicious quesadillas. The best thing about Kameido is that you can order from the surrounding restaurants even if you’re seated.

**Kameido Yokocho**

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Nightlife

Shaken and stirred

Whether you fancy a classic drink or the kind of creative concoction you’d only ever find in Tokyo, these cocktail bars are the best in the city.

By Tamiya Sumita

COCKTAIL CULTURE IN TOKYO is a serious business, and at times it can almost feel like a tea ceremony. The bar is sacred, conversations are spoken in hushed tones, while the well-shaken bartender crackles drinks in a mirror and masterful movements. The drinks are elevated into an art form—made with the utmost precision, captioned with the freshest seasonal produce and chilled with impossibly clear ice that’s chipped by hand. Cocktail-making in Tokyo is often approached with the same perfectionist philosophy that drives the city’s food culture, and you can experience all that at these exceptional cocktail bars. Just try not to look like you’re having too much fun.

↑ Little Smith

Some of the city’s bartending greats once worked at this basement drinking den, such as Yuichi Hosoi, who has gone on to open eight outposts throughout Japan, and Fumiyasu Mimatsu, who now has his own bar in Ginza. Meanwhile, Kazuma Masutani, who still works at the bar today, is a famed bartender on the local circuit. Although it’s been open for 25 years, Little Smith still pops up in conversations about the top bars in Ginza.

You wouldn’t guess its age based on the contemporary interior design, which boasts an unusually high four-metre ceiling. The deck is barndoor swing doors and the copper sidearound an imposing column remains a much-loved aspect of Little Smith. It is the work of the late renowned architect Takahiko Yanagisawa, who was also responsible for some of Tokyo’s most iconic landmarks such as the Yurakucho Mullion and the Opera City Tower.

Whether or not to order a cocktail menu, the bar staff here, led by owner-bartender Noriyuki Sato, create drinks according to your preferences. However, you can’t go wrong with their inspired take on the classic bloody mary. It’s a complex, to your preferences. However, you can’t go wrong with their inspired take on the classic bloody mary. It’s a complex, masterful movement. The drinks are elevated into an art form—made with the utmost precision, boasting the freshest seasonal produce and chilled with impossibly clear ice that’s chipped by hand. Cocktail-making in Tokyo is often approached with the same perfectionist philosophy that drives the city’s food culture, and you can experience all that at these exceptional cocktail bars. Just try not to look like you’re having too much fun.

Old Imperial Bar

The beloved Old Imperial Bar is classic Tokyo: a genteel atmosphere, all decked out like a gentleman’s club in dark wood and leather, presided over by a staff of immaculately dressed bartenders. It’s the only place within the iconic Imperial Hotel which still retains art deco traces of its former 1920s building designed by the famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

While the quality at most bars can be directly linked to the skills of an individual bartender, at Old Imperial Bar every mixologist is equally adept at creating an impeccable cocktail. For drink that’s almost as storied as the bar, order the famous dry martini, which is the work of the late noted mixologist Yuzo Komai, an experienced bartender from Fukuoka, named his place after the hundred-petal rose ‘Centifolia’ after discovering that in some cultures, the flowers are used as a beauty aid.

A stunning collection of 100-plus antique glasses is given pride of place on the shelves behind the bar. Whether or not you’re after a classic or a house special, you can trust Komai to make you a superb cocktail—he is, after all, an award-winning maestro mixologist.

Centifolia

Despite being a relative newcomer, this pristine and smart-looking bar, all decked out in the classic get-up of wood and marble, already has a reputation about it. The owner, Yuma Komai, an experienced bartender from Fukuoka, named his place after the hundred-petal rose ‘Centifolia’ after discovering that roses are the local emblem of the Azabu-Juban neighborhood, where the bar is located.

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Gaslight

Opened in 1989, this Tokyo institution is themed after the historic members-only Gaslight Bar in Chicago, which once counted Elizabeth Taylor for one of its many celebrity clients. While you’re unlikely to spot any Hollywood stars enjoying a nightcap in Kasumigaseki, this classy bar has a similarly discreet air and is known for featuring bartending greats such as Takao Mori.

Now nearing its 30th anniversary, this elegant bar is currently helmed by owner-bartender Noriyuki Iguchi, a big name in the local bar scene who won the 2007 National Bartender Skills Competition. Take a seat at the 20-foot long counter made from African teak and order Gaslight’s famous dry martini, which comes served in a Bohemia Crystal. It is the perfect drink to cap off your night.

Rooster

Bart offering fresh-fruit cocktails have become rather common in Tokyo. But this Ginza bar—whose cheeky name is a play on the word ‘cocktail’—goes the extra mile by installing a cooler specifically for its seasonal fruit. Rooster even sends out newsletters to its regular customers to introduce new seasonal cocktails.

That nightcap in the house are at the narrow seven-seat wooden counter, where you get to watch owner-bartender Yoshiteru Imamura whip up one of his original creations. We highly recommend the Yellow Ribbon Sparkle: this citrus blended cocktail is a refreshing take on lemonade, where candied lemon peels are added to the gin base for extra punch. Despite being surrounded by countless bars—Ginza is Tokyo’s watering hole after all—Rooster stands out with its wide variety of food offerings, which means you can have your cocktail with kumquat curry and even omelet. Dinner and drinks, sorted.

Star Bar Hibiya

This Ginza-style bar, scene of its original Ginza outlet being regularly featured on best-bar lists, is another branch of the well-known Hibiya Bar.

Star Bar Hibiya feels like a step-up evolution from its Ginza outlet. There’s the same air of confidence—but the design is now built around a sophisticated bar top and modern palette of dark blue and black. The bar counter is particularly stunning: hand-polished and adapted with an art-deco-like pattern and unique natural gloss inspired by Japanese denim.

Grab a seat and order the house special cocktail ‘Park Life’. This lip-smackingly good drink is made with elderflower liqueur, middle, pineapple and lemon juices on a vodka base, and then finished with a splash of the strikingly green French herbal liqueur Chartreuse as a nod to the nearby Hibiya Park.

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Nightlife

Star Bar Hibiya

Star Bar is a household name in the Tokyo bar scene, with its original Ginza outlet being regularly featured on best-bar lists. If that outlet gets too full, make your way to its latest branch in the new Tokyo Midtown Hibiya complex. It’s rare to see a bar of such caliber venturing out to a shopping mall, yet it’s set to be the flagship outlet for the bar group.

This Star Bar in Hibiya feels like a step-up evolution from its Ginza outlet. There’s the same air of confidence—but the design is now built around a sophisticated bar top and modern palette of dark blue and black. The bar counter is particularly stunning: hand-polished and adapted with an art-deco-like pattern and unique natural gloss inspired by Japanese denim.

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TAKEUCHI SACHIKO

Hey, handsome

Where to meet some ikemen (really good-looking guys), according to manga artist Sachiko Takeuchi. By Yuki Keiser

TAKEUCHI SACHIKO

JAPAN TAKES FAN culture to the next level, as evidenced by the popularity of the okkake (groupies or loyal followers who chase their beloved performers’ tours from place to place) phenomenon. Moreover, the country also has its own take on ‘more-gentle culture,’ where fans have the chance to shake hands with, or even receive ‘gifts’ directly from, their idols.

Manga artist Sachiko Takeuchi has been an okkake for some 20 years, and has written numerous novels about peculiar places and take part in weird and ridiculous events.

We caught up with Takeuchi to hear her thoughts on what makes an ikemen and find out about some of her favourite hotspots for hunk-spotting, a number of which have appeared in her manga.

MEET IKEMEN AT AKOSHUKAI SESSIONS

To any okkake, an akoshukai (handshake sessions) means lining up for sometimes up to five or six hours for the chance to meet face-to-face for just a few seconds with their hot pop stars. Is it worth it? Takeuchi explains with a laugh, ‘It’s the only way to see your idol up close – so even a few seconds is enough to give you an emotional experience. When I went to handshake sessions with (actor) Sunao Sugimoto and (actor-singer) Haruna Muria, I was just happy to see them smile in person. It was like “vitamins” for my soul, and it made me feel energised and happy. To me, that’s what an ikemen is.’

The bookstore that Takeuchi frequently visits for handshake sessions is Fukuya Books at Shinjuku Subnade, and the title of her book being published about every week (schedules are posted in-store). The latter, however, not only hosts numerous handshake sessions and signings by writers, but also carries an extensive selection of pop star photo books, and frequently hosts otakushiki (events at which fans can purchase CDs, books etc and receive them directly from the stars themselves).

‘When I watched a crowdsourcer TV show at GDTQ, 1-7 Honode Shinjuku, Shinjuku, Shinjuku Station. 88/F. 03 5768 1369. www.ltdq.com/shijuku. Closed Mon-Fri 6pm, Sat-Sun & hols 6pm.’

LEARN ABOUT TEA FROM AN IKEMEN

Takeuchi recommends the private tea salon Chen Sica, which appears in her book ‘Makoto Tenjo Kotoshira Shitakurakku, Ikemen Tenjima (A’/Tsai Thong, All Want Is to Have Fun, So I Went to visit Some Ikemen).’ At Chen Sica, ‘Takeuchi, there are these lovely male butlers, like you see in a manga for girls. Also, all the teachers here are certified tea experts. As well as being able to chat with handsome guys, you can learn about the history of black tea and the authentic way to make it. You can even learn proper table manners.’

‘Chen Sica, Shinjuku. Make a reservation to savour authentic black tea. 3880 yens/half, 6200 yen/whole.’

GO ON A DATE WITH CROSSDRESSING IKEMEN

‘Fans have the chance to shake hands with, or even receive “gifts” directly from, their idols,’

THE BOOK: Who Let the Dog In?

WHY IT’S GOOD: Having a dog on set allows the director to explore the dynamics between the different characters. The dog’s mischievous antics add a touch of fun to the story and make it more relatable.

THE PLOT: In this film, the dog becomes the central character and the driving force behind the events that unfold. The dog learns new tricks and discovers the joys of adventure, leading its human companions on a journey of discovery and personal growth. As the dog navigates the challenges of life, it teaches its owners important life lessons about love, friendship, and the power of belief.

THE FILM: Dogs

WHY IT’S GOOD: Dogs is a heartwarming and uplifting story that celebrates the bond between humans and their canine companions. The film is a testament to the love and loyalty that dogs bring into our lives and the joy they bring to our hearts. It is a story of friendship, adventure, and the unbreakable bond between humans and their pets.

THE PLOT: The plot revolves around a group of friends who decide to take their dog on a road trip. Along the way, they encounter various challenges and obstacles, but the dog’s unwavering loyalty and determination help them overcome them. The film is a celebration of the magic and wonder of travel, and the enduring power of friendship.

THE FILM: Cats

WHY IT’S GOOD: Cats is a visually stunning film that explores the complex relationship between humans and their feline companions. The film is a meditation on the beauty of cats and their role in our lives, and the profound lessons they can teach us about love, curiosity, and the interconnectedness of all things.

THE PLOT: The story follows a group of cats who live in a vibrant, multicultural city. As they explore their world, they encounter a range of challenges and obstacles, but their wisdom and grace help them navigate them. The film is a celebration of the magic and wonder of cats, and the profound lessons they can teach us about life.

THE FILM: The Girl Who Leapt Through Time

WHY IT’S GOOD: The Girl Who Leapt Through Time is a visually stunning and emotionally resonant film that is a masterpiece of animation. It is a story of love, loss, and the power of imagination, and it is celebrated for its unique animation style and its exploration of the human condition.

THE PLOT: The story follows a teenage girl who discovers the ability to time travel, and she uses this power to explore the complex relationships and history of her family. As she navigates the challenges of time travel, she learns important lessons about love, loss, and the power of imagination.

THE FILM: Neon Genesis Evangelion

WHY IT’S GOOD: Neon Genesis Evangelion is a groundbreaking and influential anime series that has had a profound impact on popular culture. It is celebrated for its complex characters, thought-provoking themes, and its bold and innovative animation style.

THE PLOT: The story follows a group of high school students who are called upon to pilot giant robots in order to defend the Earth from alien invaders. As they battle their way through battles, they must also confront their own personal demons and the demons of war.

THE FILM: Captain Tsubasa

WHY IT’S GOOD: Captain Tsubasa is a beloved Japanese sports manga and anime series that has captured the hearts of generations of fans. It is celebrated for its vibrant characters, exciting storylines, and its unique blend of sports, drama, and adventure.

THE PLOT: The story follows a young boy who dreams of becoming a famous footballer. As he travels around the world, he learns valuable lessons about friendship, hard work, and the joy of playing football.

THE FILM: Anime for beginners

These five essential films and TV series make for a good introduction to anime. By George Art Baker

*Film*
First Cabin Tsukiji
Instead of capsules, here they offer ‘cabins’ with high ceilings, while toilets and bathing facilities are shared but separated by gender. You have a choice between the ‘business class’ and ‘first class’ cabins; opt for the latter if you want extra space, but both come with a safety deposit box, an LCD TV and free Wi-Fi. Comfy ‘cabin-wear’ is provided and other essentials are available to loan for free, and there’s even a bar at the entrance.

Rosco
Located near Komagome Station, Rosco is noteworthy for offering all guests free access to its sauna and open-air bath and spa, all of which use high-grade mineral water. There’s a women-only floor with women-only capsules and a mirror-covered powder room. Rates start from as low as ¥3,000.

Nineteen Capsule Hotel
Offering all guests free access to its sauna and open-air bath and spa, Nineteen Capsule Hotel is noteworthy for being one of the few women-only capsule hotels. Rates start from as low as ¥3,000.

SLEEPWELL ON THE BUS
Connecting Tokyo with Osaka and Hiroshima/Fukuyama, the Dream Sleeper II Superior Class is a luxurious overnight bus with 11 private cabins, all equipped with ‘zero gravity’ seats that fully recline for a comfortable sleeping position. To help you snooze better, you can play some relaxing music, choose to fill the cabin with relaxing aroma, and adjust the lighting. The bus comes equipped with a fancy powder room for freshening up, plus there’s a place to sit for work and reading, and hi-tech amenities. Upon check-in, you’ll receive an iPod Touch for controlling the various features in your pod, including the reclining bed and video projector (in selected cabins). For something even more special, ask for the Art Pods, which have been customised by local up-and-coming artists. To further promote socialising, The Millennials’ many common facilities, including the kitchen, lounge, and co-working space, are accessible around the clock.

Nine Hours Narita Airport
Catching an early flight or arriving late at night can be a pain at the far-flung Narita Airport – but not if you opt to stay at this 24-hour capsule hotel right next to Terminal 2. With overnight rates starting from ¥4,900, it’s an affordable accommodation that’s also very clean and stylish. Depending on your needs, Nine Hours can be very accommodating... just looking for a couple of hours of shut-eye? Opt for the hourly rate: ¥1,500 for the first hour and ¥500 for every 60 minutes thereafter. Even if you just need a shower and a place to sit, Nine Hours can do that for you, too.

Shinjuku Kuyakusho-mae Capsule Hotel
Kabukicho’s most convenient capsule hotel welcomes everyone – from travellers on tiny budgets to salarymen looking for a roomier and taller than your run-of-the-mill capsules but they also come equipped with hi-tech amenities. Upon check-in, you’ll receive an iPod Touch for controlling the various features in your pod, including the reclining bed and video projector (in selected capsules). For something even more special, ask for the Art Pods, which have been customised by local up-and-coming artists. To further promote socialising, The Millennials’ many common facilities, including the kitchen, lounge, and co-working space, are accessible around the clock.

Kabu Capsule
Located near Komagome Station, Rosco is noteworthy for offering all guests free access to its sauna and open-air bath and spa, all of which use high-grade mineral water. There’s a women-only floor offering complimentary amenities plus a comfy relaxation space.

The Millennials Shibuya
Aiming to attract hip millennials, just as its name suggests, this hotel has built a flashpacker lifestyle around its sleek designs and cool tech features. Its sleeping capsules – all known as ‘Smart Pods’ – are not only roomier and taller than your run-of-the-mill capsules but they also come equipped with hi-tech amenities. Upon check-in, you’ll receive an iPod Touch for controlling the various features in your pod, including the reclining bed and video projector (in selected capsules). For something even more special, ask for the Art Pods, which have been customised by local up-and-coming artists. To further promote socialising, The Millennials’ many common facilities, including the kitchen, lounge, and co-working space, are accessible around the clock. It’s located right in front of the Shinjuku Ward Office and features generously sized capsules – all 120 are called ‘Smart Pods’ – are not only roomier and taller than your run-of-the-mill capsules but they also come equipped with hi-tech amenities. Upon check-in, you’ll receive an iPod Touch for controlling the various features in your pod, including the reclining bed and video projector (in selected capsules). For something even more special, ask for the Art Pods, which have been customised by local up-and-coming artists. To further promote socialising, The Millennials’ many common facilities, including the kitchen, lounge, and co-working space, are accessible around the clock.

Nadeshiko Hotel Shibuya
Nadeshiko Hotel turns the capsule hotel concept on its head by excluding men altogether. It decorates the hallways with traditional Japanese designs and offers a nice, spacious bathing area complete with luxurious tubs made from Cypress wood. Yukata robes (lounge wear) can be borrowed at the reception, along with amenities including skincare samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples. For the full experience, freshen up at the bath, slip into your yukata, and settle in for samples.
GETTING THERE & AWAY

NARITA AIRPORT
The main international airport, Narita is 70km away from central Tokyo. The fastest way to reach the city is either the Narita Express (53 minutes to Tokyo Station, generally runs every 30min, ¥3,020) or the Keisei Skyliner (40 minutes to Ueno Station, three times an hour, ¥2,470).

The cheaper option, all of which take around 90 minutes, are the Access Narita bus to Tokyo Station or Ginza Station (every 85 minutes at peak times, ¥1,050, 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 Nippori Ueno and Asakusa, links to the Toei Asakusa metro line at Asakusa, from ¥1,030 depending on final destination). You should avoid taking a taxi, which will cost you over ¥20,000 and take up to two hours.

HANEDA AIRPORT
The airport most Tokyoites love for its sheer convenience, Haneda is actually the bigger and busier airport, but sees a lot of domestic traffic. Getting downtown is easiest by Tokyo Monorail (to Tokyo Station, 25 minutes, ¥490) or the Keikyu Bus from Shinagawa Station, 15 minutes, ¥440). The Keikyu bus goes to many central destinations and takes about 50 minutes to Shibuya (¥860). A taxi is also semi-economic from Haneda, with fares to central Tokyo being around ¥7,000 (pre-book for a flat fee).

Day passes for Tokyo Metro, Toei subways, Toei buses and JR trains are available too and are ¥600 to ¥1,590 depending on the range of services selected. If you plan to move around in one day, this may be the cheaper option. Taxis are reasonably affordable for short distances or if you’re with a small group of up to four people. It’s ¥490 for the first 1.63km and then rolls at a rate of ¥80 for every 237m. A 20 percent night surcharge is usually added between 10pm and 6am.

Taxis and Uber are generally about 25 percent cheaper than the train or bus options, but are more flexible. Both have an app, but drivers can also be found at the airport. It’s a good idea to book in advance especially during rush hours.

Monorail: (to Tokyo Station, 15 minutes, ¥490) or the Keikyu Bus from Shinagawa Station, 15 minutes, ¥440). The Keikyu bus goes to many central destinations and takes about 50 minutes to Shibuya (¥860). A taxi is also semi-economic from Haneda, with fares to central Tokyo being around ¥7,000 (pre-book for a flat fee).

Public wi-fi usage is 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 or rent a pocket wi-fi. Get your visa at the airport (either in a vending machine or at a wi-fi counter) or online at all times is to buy a data SIM card or rent a pocket wi-fi. Get your visa at the airport (either in a vending machine or at a wi-fi counter) or at larger convenience stores such as FamilyMart and Yodabashi Camera stores.

Getting Around

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 ‘Japen Tax-free Shop’ stickers. Here are the requirements:

- Minimum purchase of ¥5,000
- No purchase per day
- Photonex free consumables should not be opened while in Japan and need to be taken out of the country within 30 days of purchase, or within six months for non-consumables. Also, you have to bring your actual passport, no photocopy and no scanned copy on your phone.

MONEY
Cash is still king in Tokyo, although more and more places have started accepting cards in recent years. Don’t expect your local ATM’s joint to be one of them, though. For foreign cards, the 7-11 and JP Post (post office) ATMs are the most reliable. Some FamilyMarts now have JP Post ATMs installed – look out for a green machine.

For foreign currency, seek out the exchange booths and machines around major JR train stations (often offering better rates than at the airport). Or, get it done at major department stores such as Mitsukoshi, Isetan and Takashimaya.

SAFETY
Tokyo, and Japan in general, is pretty darn safe. But on 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’re able to help you out. The emergency services number is 119.

In case of a severe earthquake or other natural disasters such as typhoon, 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 multilingual Disaster Prevention Portal, mlit.go.jp/

For your full, up-to-the-minute guide to Tokyo visit

www.timeout.com/tokyo

Welcome to the world’s most efficient transport system
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With these cheap and cheerful ¥100 items, you can buy more gifts for everyone back home.

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The most beautiful buildings in Tokyo

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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 it can be a little intimidating. Which is why we’re pleased to hear about Moshi Moshi Box, the tourist information centre that’s right in the heart of the area.

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.

But that’s not all: aiming to serve as an entertainment centre in itself, it’s a place where overseas visitors can enjoy Japanese pop culture through activities such as dressing up in kimonos. 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 6447 2225, moshimoshi-nippon.jp. Daily 10am-6pm. 

TIME OUT READER 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 ‘101 things to do in Shibuya’ edition and the comprehensive ‘88 things to do in Tokyo’, we’ve come up with maps for nearly all the top areas including Roppongi, Shinjuku, Shibuya, Nihonbashi, Marunouchi, Koenji and Ginza.

Each edition squeezes the best of the capital into a compact pamphlet, complete with a city map, and we’ve included everything from offbeat art galleries and trendy cafes to ancient shrines and hipster hangouts.

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.

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...the novelty snacks and candies are out of this world

By Meg Kitamura

TOKYO IS THE GLOBAL CAPITAL of avant-garde snacks and candies, where the pleasure lies in the inventiveness – or in some cases, the sheer ridiculousness. Get ready for a good treat – or a good laugh.

CHEWING GUM
A piece of this sugarless chewing gum a day keeps the dentist away – apparently – which is ironic since rumour has it that there are even more dentists than convenience stores in Tokyo. We’re guessing nobody has the time to brush their teeth twice a day in one of the busiest and most hardworking cities in the world.

BIZARRE FLAVOURS
Snack flavours in Japan are as bizarre and intriguing as the country’s subcultures. Think salmon-flavoured candies, vegetable-flavoured chocolates for kids who won’t eat their veggies, eggs Benedict-flavoured potato crisps, grilled lamb-flavoured caramel and – get this – chewing gum that will apparently make you smell better. This gum instantly sold out on its first appearance on two.lt/zero.lt/zero.lt/six.lt because it not only helps with bad breath but the rose fragrance and menthol are said to help mask body odour, too. New snack flavours come out almost on a monthly basis; it sure looks like someone’s going crazy in the R&D lab and nothing is off limits.

PLAY SNACKS
Not content with just chewing on sweets? There are hand-shaped candies you can play rock-paper-scissors with, and even some with a hole in the middle that double as a whistle. Who needs expensive board games when you can get these cheap and edible thrills for ¥100 or less?

DIY SNACKS AND CANDIES
Enjoy playing with your food? These DIY candy kits will have you making soda- or fruit-flavoured ‘sushi’, ‘ramen’, ‘pizza’, ‘taiyaki’ (fish-shaped cake) and ‘doughnuts’. You can even make your own savoury ‘burger’ snacks. All the tools and moulds you need are in the box, along with the flavouring pastes and powders. While most of these candies or snacks do not require any actual cooking as the solution solidifies at room temperature, the more elaborate recipes might call for the use of a microwave.

NON-MELTING CHOCOLATE
Eating chocolate tidily is no easy task: if it’s too hot it melts, and if you hold it in your hands for too long it turns into a sticky mess. That’s why non-melting chocolate, which preserves its shape and texture even on the hottest of days, could very well be the best thing since sliced bread. This is all thanks to a baked outer layer, which also helps preserve the smooth texture of the goodness inside.

TOILET SODA
Japan has a thing for toilets. Not only is the nation home to the most cutting-edge lavatories in the world, it also has the most pocket-friendly version, too. For ¥300, you get to sip soda from a handheld and perfectly hygienic toilet. Yum. Just pour drinking water and the packet of flavouring into the water tank and wait until the solution overflows into the bowl – voila! The latest edition even lets you decorate your miniature toilet with stickers. We’re not kidding.

YOU KNOW YOU’RE IN TOKYO WHEN...

CHEWING GUM THAT ALSO BRUSHES YOUR TEETH
...
PHOTO:
NX300h “version L” AWD メーカー希望小売価格 5,971,000円*

ボディカラーはソニックホワイト（085）。オプション装備車。

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