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Whoever said money can’t buy happiness had obviously never been to Tokyo. Our beloved capital is a shopper’s heaven where there’s something for everyone. Obsessed with Japanese beauty? We have stores offering everything from super cute sheet masks that make you look like your favourite cartoon character, to the latest skincare and makeup that aren’t available anywhere else in the world. Want to bring home a piece of Japanese food culture? Our depachika (food halls) carry a mind-boggling array of only-in-Japan edible souvenirs, which you can enjoy using the artisanal tableware you found in the backstreets of Shibuya. And you can keep going for as long as your credit limit allows: upcycled and vintage fashion, homeware stores, discount shops, outlet malls, sneaker specialists, confectionaries… Your Tokyo shopping spree starts now.

FIND YOUR SHOPPING LIST ON PAGE 18

One-coin bars

Enjoy cheap shots at the city’s best budget bars

PAGE 62

Steamy retreat

Enjoy a weekend getaway in Hakone, one of Japan’s most famous onsen towns

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Gone fishing

Your guide to Toyosu Market, the world’s largest seafood market

PAGE 34

The inn crowd

Join the locals for a classic izakaya night out

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FEATURES AND REGULARS

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Visit theteineilife.com to read more about beer tourism in Tono!

How to get there:

1. By train: Take the Shinkansen from Tokyo Station to Shin-Aomori Station and change to the Kamakura Line which takes you to Tono Station.
2. By train: Take the Keiyo Line from Iruma Station directly to Tono Station.
SHOOT TO THRILL

Looking to liven up your Instagram feed with something more thrilling than a blurry shot of your morning coffee? Take inspiration as a seasoned photographer talks us through their favourite snap…

This photo was taken at the picturesque golfing tree alley in Showa Kinen Park. The park was especially busy this time of the year as the crowds were out to admire the golden autumn leaves.

“We just so happened to catch it at a perfect time when it was less busy and the light was just perfect,” says the photographer, who was using a Canon 5D Mark III. “I had my two dogs, Kenshiro and Yuria, sit at an angle where the surroundings were visible and wrapped my scarf around them to make them look like a couple.

For the black and white image, the photographer used a black background as he did not want a blurry shot of the tree alley. The use of a black background helps to highlight the subjects of the photo, which in this case are the two dogs and the autumn leaves.

WORD TO KNOW:

THE MOST RECOGNISABLE WORD in the English language is ‘Okay’. The Japanese use it as well — although they have their own version: ‘daijoubu’ (pronounced ‘de-jo-boo’). ‘Daijoubu’ is just as flexible as its English cousin. Don’t want a receipt at the grocery store? Wave it away with a ‘daijoubu desu ka?’ (Are you all right?) or just ‘daijoubu’? – just don’t buy him another drink.

LOCAL LEGENDS

#21: Gilyak Amagasaki

88-year-old street performer

WHILE MOST PEOPLE in their eighties are dreaming of the quiet life, 88-year-old street performer Gilyak Amagasaki, a living legend in the Japanese busking scene, just can’t stop dancing. Having started out busting moves on the streets of Ginza at 38 after giving up on a career as an actor, he has made ends meet with tips ever since and has performed throughout Japan and as far afield as Paris, London, Amsterdam and New York.

‘Typically dressed in a red loincloth, Amagasaki is known for his intense ‘devil’ or ‘prayer’ dance, in which he swings prayer beads to honour the Buddha Amitabha and his own dead mother. Many long years of performing this wild spectacle have taken their toll: the veteran showman now suffers from meniscal injuries, has had a pacemaker installed, and was diagnosed with Parkinson’s. His movements are also affected by spinal stenosis, a disease in which deformation of the bones causes pressure on the nerves. ‘My head hurts, I drool and my hands go numb. I have trouble making sense of things and can’t always get my body to obey me,’ he laments.

Despite his increasing frailty, Amagasaki has never given up on performing and he’s not about to do so now. ‘I’m a professional, so I have to keep going,’ he says determinedly. ‘Being an artist is a struggle.’

Nonetheless, he knows that his remarkable career is inevitably nearing its end. ‘I think I’ll still have two years in me. That’s the limit,’ he says, but excitedly adds that his dream is to ‘dance in the snow at the foot of Mt Fuji for the 2020 Olympics’.

Perhaps Amagasaki’s life itself — a life lived dancing in the face of weakness, loss and sadness — is his greatest performance. In the end, he says that if reborn, he would do it all over again. ‘I’d try not to get sick next time, too,’ he laughs.

OUT NOW

‘Gyoza: The Ultimate Dumpling Cookbook’ by Paradise Yamanote (Tuttle Publishing)

Widely regarded as the ‘gyoza king’ of Japan, Paradise Yamanote is on a one-man mission to make the common Japanese dumpling great again. Gyoza has been reigned off the role of a side dish for too long, eaten with ramen or as a bar snack, and more often than not, they all look and taste the same.

In this fun and entertaining cookbook, Yamanote offers up new interpretations of gyoza through 50 recipes. Aside from the typical crescent shape, you’ll learn to create potato skins that look like sakura caps, orchestras, seashells and even penguins. The fundamental tools are well-covered, too, from how to chop the ingredients to making the meat filling and ways to pan-fry. Soon you’ll be impressing your dinner guests with creative gyoza such as: Colombo’s spicy chicken dumplings, cheeseburger dumplings and the dancing octopus dumplings (complete with case-holding tentacles). For a complete gyoza feast, make sure you try your hands at the sweet dessert options as well, with fillings including strawberry, mascarpone and sweet bean paste, and bananas with mango.

NEED A BREAK from Tokyo’s concrete jungle? Head up to Satama to visit the Nordic-themed Metsä Village. The free-entry village aims to give visitors a taste of the ‘cozy and relaxing’ Nordic lifestyle right here in Japan.

The setting is definitely on point, with the village surrounded by lush forests on one side and the shores of Lake Miyazawa on the other. Inside, the Nordic experiences include workshops, cafés and restaurants, canoeing onto the lake (maybe save this one for spring?), and endless shopping: the marketplace boasts over 100 popular Scandinavian brands, including Marimekko, Iittala, Søstrene and Royal Copenhagen (cotsy, no joke).

But the biggest draw might be that, until March 4, Metsä Village is hosting a teamLab project called ‘Digitized Lakeside and Forest’, an enormous installation that will cover the lake shores with oversized lights that you can interact with. Nordic countries are said to be some of the happiest on earth and Metsä Village is doing exactly what they can to bring a smile out onto our faces.

Come March 16, Moomin Valley Park will open on Metsä grounds, where you can meet the Moomin family and their friends, enjoy live shows and visit attractions that are based on the original books. metsa-banaou.com/en
Tokyo Update

ONE DAY IN...

IF YOU DO ONLY ONE THING... Shop by Uniya for a delicious (pamela sandwich with miso) for ¥1,000, go easy and pay to queue, as they tend to sell out by 7pm or so.

Tokyo Update

Naomi Kawase selected to direct Tokyo 2020 film

The International Olympic Committee has chosen a fresh and powerful narrative to direct the official Tokyo 2020 film. Naomi Kawase, the author of the first female Japanese director to helm an Olympic film, and only the fifth female director ever in the Games’ history.

Kawase has been making her mark on the film industry both here and abroad for over 20 years, becoming the youngest winner of the Best Film Director award at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival. A list of her works in deeply personal (her debut documented her search for her ailing father) and filmic in terms of fiction and documentaries. In her proposal to the committees, Kawase explained that she hopes to capture the time and freeze these moments into memory. Kawase has to win a leg of the race. The first official film from Japan - Ken Endo’s 1964 Tokyo Olympiad - is still considered to be the high-water mark of the tradition and a milestone in documentary filmmaking.

COUNTDOWN TO TOKYO 2020

Torch relay

With the 2020 Games’ most gruelling decision – mascot selection – finally resolved (forty-five of forty-six paying attention; children from 16,769 elementary schools cast their votes among three options), the countdown to the Games propels the starting tape ahead with the flame officially lit.

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Nihonbashi

Morning

For the morning walk, catch a same-venue early train on a journey to Asakusa-bashi (or Suitengumae) to take in a quick morning bite away from the coffee shops. Head to Muranouchi (Murasaki Café;                                                     

Nihonbashi (sometimes spelled Nihombashi), meaning ‘Japan Bridge’, is the centre of Tokyo – literally, distances within the city and Japan are calculated relative to Nihonbashi Bridge. It is also the heart of the financial district and has a reputation for high-rises and high-end shopping, but with little in the way of decent entertainment or eating options. Look closely, though, and you’ll find some gems hidden amongst the steel and concrete.

Lunch

Over a Hamadeyasa mousse to be rewarded with impeccable (and very reasonably priced) tempura. Otherwise, you have a choice of whisking away the time in the many chains. Head to Usagiya on Satsuma or Tamahide on your way from the Financial District to see how Nihonbashi makes its money.

Evening

Hailing from New York’s Bowery, Cafe Gitane is now opening some Manhattan glamour to the streets of Tokyo with their first Japan branch in Ebisu. China has five reasons to head over for some New York-Tokyo fusion food you won’t find anywhere else.

Dinner

Being the heart of expense-account catering-office workers, Nihonbashi isn’t always the cheapest place to dine out in, but for quality, it is, with food from a galaxy of culture. Book a seat at Saka, which serves seasonal Japanese cuisine in a historic building, and have a retro meal at Maruzen Café, which is dedicated to the culinary equivalent of a cuddle.

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Afternoon

In the area, a plethora of upscale – and old – school – shopping options. Top this off to get into the busy department store of Mitsukoshi. For federal of which was recently renovated by architect Hikari Kamiya, the serene Tohokuni, or some of the world’s most expensive fashion from the flagship store and also the store of the premium British purveyor Smythson.

Looking further afield, the building is not only the flagship store and also the store of the premium British purveyor Smythson.

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BJ Fox
Stand-up comedian, actor, writer
Age: 37

I, GLOBAL
Domo
NHK’s mascot introduces Tokyo to the world

Explore the funny side of Tokyo with NHK comedy ‘Home Sweet Tokyo’

Meet the characters

Bryan Jenkins
In Tokyo, Bryan puts his career on hold to move to Japan and helps his wife support her father. He puts on a brave front, but deep down is struggling to come to terms with his new life as a stay-at-home dad in a city where he finds baffling.

Itsuki Jenkins
Following the death of his Japanese mother-in-law, Bryan puts his career on hold to move to Japan and helps his wife support her father. He puts on a brave front, but deep down is struggling to come to terms with his new life as a stay-at-home dad in a city where he finds baffling.

Tsuneo Matsuyma
Tsuneo Matsuyma’s life has been turned upside down; first by the death of his wife, and then by his daughter’s return to Japan— with a granddaughter and a British husband in tow. While he struggles with his son-in-law, he is smitten with his cute granddaughter Alice.

Alice Jenkins
Seven years old, born in London, but now living in Japan. Alice is tough and energetic. Bilingual, she finds herself frequently acting as interpreter for her Japanese-speaking grandfather and her English-father.

What originally brought you to Japan?
My school in West London had a sister school in Japan. When I finished school, I was sent out for a three-week Homestay, without much knowledge of Japan at the time—and kind of blew my mind. When I came home, I was desperate to go back to Japan, so I applied for the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET).

How did you start doing comedy in Japan?
I first started doing comedy when I was in Singapore. It’s kind of a typical story in that I went to an open mic night, saw some of what was deemed ‘comedy’ and thought, ‘Well, I could do better than that.’ Then of course I went up on stage and realized how hard it was. When I came to Tokyo, I decided to continue doing it. Over the first year of my being here, we built up Stand Up Tokyo (standuptokyo.com), which started as a weekly open mic at Good Heavens British Bar in Shinjuku. And over those three years, the show is now packed every week and we have touring comedians all the time.

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What was the concept for the show that you discussed?
When I envisioned the show, it was about two men who had an idea of what life was going to be and then had everything turned upside down. So in one case you have Tsuneo, the father-in-law, who worked hard his whole life and thought retirement was going to be like ‘this’, and then his wife dies and he doesn’t know how to connect to his new family. And then from Bryan’s [the main character] point of view, he was working in London and had to give all of that up. It’s about them finding themselves in the house together. What kind of audience in the show aimed at?
The initial intended audience was people who probably have an interest in Japan but don’t live here—people who are watching NHK World from overseas. The reason that we made [Bryan] speak no Japanese is because essentially he’s the audience. He’s discovering things with the audience. What helps, and what I’ve learned from the director, is that visual jokes work. If you can find a way to make a scene just visually interesting or funny, that works. And that is universal. That can transcend language barriers.

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The long goodbye

Bidding someone goodbye in Japan isn’t as easy as a simple wave of the hand. Kirsty Bouwers takes you through the different ‘goodbyes’ for different situations

**WHO’S TO SAY THAT EACH PERSON ONLY GETS ONE BODY?**

That is a question that Ory Laboratory CEO Kentaro Yoshifuji is asking. Some people find it extremely difficult to leave the house, whether due to physical disability or severe social anxiety. For those afflicted individuals, Ory Laboratory is introducing a robot that would allow them to reconnect with their family members and even the workplace. These remote remote-control robots can nod, move and speak in the voice of the person controlling it. This past November, the new full-body robot (named OriHime-D) was used for the first time. As part of the ‘DAWN ver II’ pilot project, a pop-up café ‘DAWN ver .β’ opened, where the owners were remotely controlled robots. Who was operating those robots?

For that event, we had patients suffering from ALS, muscular dystrophy and psychological illnesses. Individuals that, for whatever reason, found it impossible to leave the house—what they all had in common was the strong determination to work. The farthest operator that we had was in Shimane prefecture, more than 700km away. I think they were able to see that, using remote means, have employment opportunities for those individuals can be ‘mobile’. And for the robot operators, I hope that they were able to really feel that ‘mobility’ is possible and that they don’t have to be limited by their physical bodies.

DO: LEARN YOUR OFFICE

In business circles, a casual ‘mata ne’ just isn’t going to cut it. The safest way to bid your goodbye as your colleague is leaving is not at the end of the workday is by saying ‘sakaerusha dekite;’ the literal translation of ‘you look tired’ might sound like a bit of a diss but fear not, it’s used more as ‘thank you for your hard work.’ If you’re the one leaving the office (or the office party) in advance, say ‘saki ni shitsureishimasu’ (‘excuse me’). In the workplace, you make a phone call when you have something specific to discuss. But with those kinds of conversations alone, you can’t get to know someone intimately. But by walking home together with someone, having lunch or just chit-chatting, you can foster a real connection with your community.

Actually, within the company we have an employee with disabilities who comes to work using OriHime. Even in just a bit of conversation, as she speaks to you in real-time and nods through the robot, you get the feeling that she really is ‘there’ with you.

**SEPARATION ANXIETY**

Ory Laboratory’s avatar robots come out, we’ll have more and more opportunities to become friends with people living with physical handicaps. If this can be done, we will see a world that we haven’t seen before.

**DO: KNOW WHEN YOU MIGHT NEXT SEE SOMEONE**

Just like in English, how you say goodbye tends to be linked to how long you’re going to be apart from that person. Just popping out to the shops? A chirpy ‘take care’ (and its response, ‘itashowsaite zo’ to whoever is around) is closer to what you’d say in English. While a longing look over the shoulder at a departing loved one is part of the course, in Japan’s also the done thing in business situations—even when exiting a restaurant. When leaving a meeting or restaurant, you’ll be expected to do a short bow before leaving, but while you walk away, the waiting staff (if a more upscale restaurant) or your work partners will likely wait outside the restaurant or meeting place, standing at a distance until you’re out of sight. Acknowledge their efforts by turning around when you’re a short distance away, and repeat the bow. Instant brownie points.

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Rikugien Cherry Blossom Light-up

Rikugien is often considered one of Tokyo’s most gorgeous landscape gardens, featuring a traditional Edo-period aesthetic. Its huge cherry trees, along with the rest of the Japanese garden, will be lit up in the evening for this annual spring special, which also sees the park staying open until 9pm.

January 2019

Things to do

CEREMONIAL NEW YEAR’S HIKE ON MT TAKAO
One of Japan’s prized New Year’s traditions is waking up at dawn on New Year’s Day to ‘greet the new year’ – there’s probably no better word in Japanese – on the summit of Mt Takao, just 50 minutes by train or 40 minutes by ropeway. Starting at midnight, the head of conches as the sunrise ignites the first blast of the first day of the year. There’s probably no better place to do this in Tokyo than at the base of Mt Takao, where after the ceremony, the park stays open until 9pm.

One of Japan’s prized New Year’s ceremonies is a traditional Edo-period fire rituals, or goma. Fire is believed to purify the air, banishing evil spirits, so for three days at the end of winter – think Cirque du Soleil but with break-dancing and high-tech projection mapping. The energetic non-verbal performance blends mime, visual effects and a techno soundtrack for a bizarrely witty reverting experience.

NEW YEAR BALLET
To welcome 2019, the New National Theater is staging not one, not two, but three different ballets in succession. The first, 'Les Sylphides', is non-narrative; it doesn’t revolve around a plot but is a ballet for the pure joy of dancing. Next on the bill is ‘Petrouchka’, a narrative, burlesque ballet that follows the love and jealousy of three puppet characters. These engaging, traditional ballets were first performed by Ballet Russes at the beginning of the 20th century. Breathing new life into the tradition is the last production: a new work choreographed by Megumi Nakamura called ‘Firebird’.

NUNOMAKU IN TOKYO VOL. 12
This long-running textile fair happens every spring and summer – but this year, they’re debuting an inaugural winter fair. ‘At Sunny Winter Weave’, you can browse through a vast collection of seasonal fabric and knit goods from Japan. You'll find more accessories, rentable and interior goods for sale.

SETOGA BOROICHI MARKET
Around 700 stalls line the street of Boroichi-dori near Setagaya Station during the twice-a-year market opens at 9am and closes at 9pm. The shrine’s Tengu Ceremony.

芽吹き相撲

FURUSATO MATSURI
‘Hometown Festival’ is a once-a-year event in Japan’s other prefectures to sample enough specialities at your favourite at the costume ballet. Next, the first competition will see the modern-day equivalent of the art of dance showcases</p>
THINGS TO DO

Chinese New Year kicks off this year on February 5, with the 15 days of celebration that follow referred to as the Spring Festival. Barring hopping on a plane to China, Yokohama’s Chinatown is easily the best place to celebrate. The Lantern Festival marks the final day of the Spring Festival, with strings of paper lanterns decked along the streets, upon which messages of hopes and dreams for the new year are written.

Japanese shrines are known as one of Japan’s “Three Largest Daruma Cities”, with its annual Daruma Market boasting over 300 stalls. The market will be open on March 3 and 4, and both days will feature an oriental garden – a procession of portable shrines supported by the temple monks, elegantly outfitted in ceremonial robes.

Promotional feature

THE ROBOT RESTAURANT

Promote world peace. But you might want to walk fast.

WINTER ART FAIR TOKYO

For more illuminations in Tokyo, see tinyurl.com/TOTilluminations.

THEATRE

Enjoy authentic sumo training taught by actual sumo wrestlers. Best of all, anyone, regardless of age or gender, can join!

WERTHER

Based on Goethe’s novel ‘The Sorrows of Young Werther’, this opera follows the life of Werther, a young, solemn man who falls in love with Charlotte, a woman already engaged to someone else. It was composed by Jules Massenet, and is considered one of his masterpieces. The famous Albanian tenor Saimir Pirgu will sing Werther, and the critically-acclaimed Mihoko Fujimura will play Charlotte, her first time to sing the role.

HOW TO BOOK:

Robot Restaurant offers three shows daily, starting at 5:55pm, 7:50pm and 9:45pm (with an additional show at 4pm on Fridays, weekends and holidays), and the format is changed every few months to keep things fresh. You can reserve your spot a couple of days ahead by scaling the number below between 8am and 10pm. The entrance fee is ¥8,000, excluding food and drinks. Note: Schedule might change due to maintenance.

Marunouchi Naka-dori. Scorning the gaudy rainbow-coloured lights, for an illumination experience with a distinct sense of style, head to Marunouchi’s approximately 1 million LED lights are ‘champagne’ at the centre of the park is fantastic – snaking up through rainbow-coloured halos before diving into total darkness. The bedazzled ride at Yomiuri Land amusement park is one of the best in Tokyo. If you can stand the queue, the brilliantly lit roller coaster is fantastic.

THINGS TO DO

TIMELINE

MARCH

Shinjuku Terrace City

NEW ADDITIONS AT ROBOT RESTAURANT

This illumination takes place around Shinjuku Station’s Southern Terrace and the Odakyu Group-centred area, where the trees are adorned with delicate lights in a flower motif. Portions visible from Yamanote line trains, this one always gets car packed up on these cold evenings.

Yomitori Land

The illumination at Yomitori Land amusement park is one of the best in Tokyo. If you can stand the queue, the brilliantly lit roller coaster is fantastic.

Marunouchi Illumination

FREE entry.

Marunouchi’s approximately 1 million LED lights are ‘champagne’ at the centre of the park is fantastic – snaking up through rainbow-coloured halos before diving into total darkness. The bedazzled ride at Yomiuri Land amusement park is one of the best in Tokyo. If you can stand the queue, the brilliantly lit roller coaster is fantastic.

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Knowing where to begin a shopping spree in Tokyo is difficult. From luxury design houses and cutting-edge fashion boutiques to hand-crafted souvenirs and designer goods, Tokyo is brimming with options for those in need of retail therapy. Luckily, we’re here to guide both you and your wallet in the right direction, as we’ve distilled our favourite shopping spots in the capital into one handy list. Whatever your desire and whatever your budget, our round-up of the best shops in Tokyo will have it covered. Now prepare to go and shop ‘til you drop – or ‘til your bank account runs dry...

BEAUTY & SKINCARE

Three Aoyama

Tucked away in the back streets of Aoyama, Three Aoyama is so much more than just a beauty store. The entire complex is also home to a luxurious spa and a health-conscious restaurant called Revive Kitchen, where you can grab gluten-free sweets, vegetarian lunch dishes and desserts, including vegetarian, vegan and even gluten-free options.

True to its moniker, Beauty Library Aoyama is neat and very well-organised. This organic cosmetic shop offers a more refined form of retail therapy with a calm atmosphere and a wide variety of international brands such as Shiseido, Kiehl’s, and Weleda, you can also find domestic ones, including Chant a charm, Naturaglace, and Hana Organic and Biolab. The vast selection of hair- and skincare products made with plant-derived ingredients. They are not only kind on the environment but also gentle enough for everyday use by those with the most sensitive skin. This clean and green concept is evident in their garden-inspired store design.

Cosme Kitchen

Cosme Kitchen as your go-to shop for a holistic natural and organic lifestyle. Aside from cosmetics and skincare, you can also find aromatherapy oils, herbal tea and environmentally-friendly cleaning products. It also has a massive selection of Japanese and international makeup brands (Excel, Rimmel London, Carmake, etc.), fragrances, adhesive hair accessories, loungewear as well as special seasonal beauty and skincare products. In the basement you’ll find hair products along with foot masks (perfect for those tired feet after a day of shopping), fluffy socks for the winter, the latest trend in beauty souvenirs plus snacks and medications.

Ainz & Tulpe

Located at a corner directly across from the popular Shinjuku mall Lumine Est (Shinjuku Station East Exit), Ainz & Tulpe is brimming with an extensive array of beauty and skincare products across its three levels. The ground floor stocks Japanese and international makeup brands (Excel, Rimmel London, Carmake, etc.), fragrances, adhesive hair accessories, loungewear as well as special seasonal beauty and skincare products. In the basement you’ll find hair products along with foot masks (perfect for those tired feet after a day of shopping), fluffy socks for the winter, the latest trend in beauty souvenirs plus snacks and medications.

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Botanist Tokyo

Not to be confused with the artisanal gin of the same name, Botanist is an eco-friendly range of hair- and skincare products made with plant-derived ingredients. They are not only kind on the environment but also gentle enough for everyday use by those with the most sensitive skin. This clean and green concept is evident in their garden-inspired store design.
**Artisanal Japanese Tableware**

Far from flashy, most Japanese pottery is known for its practical but refined beauty – and the cool tableware at these ceramic dealers will add some understated luxury to your everyday life. By Shiori Kotaki

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**Pool+**

Despite its far-out location in Nerima, Pool+ is worth the trek. Alight at Fujimidai Station, walk through quiet residential streets for about 10 minutes and you’ll come across a lone, stylish structure. Inside, the minimalist décor puts the focus on the equally minimal-looking tableware.

Curated by the owner Seo, the selection here is composed of high-quality pottery and wooden tableware, all designed for daily use. Everything sold here reflects the owner’s taste for simple wares without superfluous decoration. It’s worth noting that Pool+ is cash-only and only ships to addresses in Japan.

*5-3-5 2-chome, Nerima (Fujimidai Station). 03 3402 8110. pool-plus.shop-pro.jp. 1pm-5pm, closed Sun, Wed & Thu.*

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**Utsuwa Kaede**

After 21 years selling top-grade pottery in chic Minami-Aoyama, Kaede has firmly established itself as an essential destination for shoppers with an eye for quality. Its products range from lacquerware and ceramics to glassware, and come courtesy of about 40 artists.

Each regular contributor is asked to hold a solo exhibition at the store once every two years; these feature displays often include unique creations not found in the regular selection. Each special exhibition runs for six days, during which all the featured artist’s wares are the only thing available.

The shop in Harajuku (pictured) will move to the address listed below as soon as space opens up. And there can be no doubting the craftsmanship: Mikado is jam-packed with rarities and refilled on a weekly basis.

Despite its far-out location in Nerima, Mikado is frequented by the proprietors of Michelin-starred restaurants, who visit the shop to pick out new tableware for their discerning customers. Get a few plates here and you’ll find that even supermarket sashimi morphs into a top-grade delicacy on these wares – visually, at least.

*5-5-2 Shirokanedai, Minato (Shirokanedai Station). 03 3280 0766. amahare.jp. 11am-7.30pm, closed Wed.*
Mitsui Outlet Park Kisarazu

The Mitsui Outlet Park Kisarazu in Chiba – Tokyo’s neighbouring prefecture across the bay – is the largest outlet mall easily accessible from the capital. Hop aboard the direct shuttle bus (the journey takes about 90 minutes) at Shinjuku or Tokyo Station and let yourself enjoy an extensive shopping spree.

The outlet park is designed to look like a resort and it houses Japanese and international luxury labels, covering fashion for men, women and kids, sportswear, kitchen equipment, homeware and more. Expect brands such as Diesel, Coach, Solo, Armani, Le Creuset, Longchamp, Nike, Saint Laurent and more (all usually discounted by 40% to 70% and up to 80 percent during sales). Moreover, Mitsui Outlet Park Kisarazu features 17 shops that don’t exist in any other outlet malls in Japan, including Ralph Lauren, Belstaff, Matter Gentleman and Mulberry.

A recently completed extension has taken the total of stores for youth brands to 300. So if it’s a good thing you can rest your feet (and perhaps assess the damage to your bank account) at the food court or at any of the restaurants and cafés onsite. If the 38 F&B options leave you indecisive, you can always head to the dependable Kaneko Hannosuke at the food court for its satisfying tendon (tempura over rice). Rest, refuel and get ready to go again.


Outlet Cheers

Furnished wonderland OutletCheers has a great eye for detail. The aisles may be narrow, but they are well-arranged and chock-full of unique and rare tableware from domestic and international brands, home décor items, furniture such as chests of drawers and chairs, and even the odd piece of jewellery.

The products are either second-hand goods or returned items with some damages on the packaging – which is why you’ll get them at nearly half the original price. Outlet Cheers also offers seasonal and holiday items for your home, and it’s great for souvenir hunters too as there’s a huge selection to choose from.

Domremy Outlet Ueno-Shinobazu

The convenience store, or konbini, is a great haunt for those with a sweet tooth as the dessert aisles always feature a sumptuous variety. However, picking everything that you fancy may lead to unexpected shock at the cash register. If you’re looking to binge on desserts without emptying your wallet, we have a solution for you.

Popular confectionery manufacturer Domremy has an outlet shop, which sells its all-time favourite and seasonal sweets for up to 30 percent off the original price. Don’t worry, there’s nothing wrong with them; the products are either stack overruns or are in less-than-perfect conditions presentation-wise – ie, a bit out of shape, with slightly bumped packaging etc. They taste just as good as those sold at regular stores.

The wide selection here is enough to induce a sugar high: think roll cake, pudding, fruity cupcakes, baumkuchen (German spice cake), pound cake, coffee jelly and even traditional Japanese sweets such as dango (glutinous rice dumplings) and senbei (rice crackers). We highly recommend that you stop by early as popular items tend to sell out by late afternoon.

Hotel Coco Grand Ueno Shinobazu 1F, 2-12-19 Ueno, Taito (Ueno-Shinobazu Station). 03 6230 7617. en.le-noble.com. 11am-9pm daily.
SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Waste no more: Tokyo is reimagining the sustainable fashion trend with creative upcycling, and these brands are leading the charge. By Kaila Imada and Miroku Hina

Pass the Baton Marunouchi
Pioneering Tokyo recycle shop Pass the Baton’s Marunouchi branch, located inside the Brick Square complex, specialises in pre-owned and ‘dead stock’ products that have been slightly upgraded. Provided by individuals or scavenged from the shelves of some forgotten warehouse, the items are fixed up lovingly before being put on display in the chic space, where glass walls let the high-quality wares do all the talking.

As Pass the Baton’s philosophy is all about making connections, every item comes with a tag that not only describes the previous owner, but also includes a little story associated with that very shirt, purse or necklace. Sellers can choose to contribute their proceeds to charity — an eco-conscious touch in keeping with the shop’s socially conscious ethos.

Bonum
Taking upcycling to the next level, Bonum’s fashion offerings comprise vintage and upcycled clothing. Shirts and jackets are taken apart and reconfigured into completely new tops. Denim jeans, which is a Bonum speciality, are reimagined into everything from handbags to jackets and so much more.

The items here are completely unique but you can still tell that they have that classic, timeless style to them and can be worn for years to come. The bonus about it all? Everything feels completely lived-in and comfortable, so no breaking-in necessary.

Modeco
Based in Nagoya, Modeco is an upcycling brand that makes good use of materials generally considered worthless. In the skillful hands of Modeco’s designers, industrial waste gets turned into high fashion. Their most popular item is the unisex Tommy fireman bag, crafted individually out of old firefighting uniforms that still carry the marks of battles against the flames.

Another hit is the Flooring Bag, in which old laminate flooring has been converted into a beautifully shaped, practical carrier bag. Its faux wood appearance and elegant design make it a versatile option for both formal and casual situations. While Modeco products are sold at various shops throughout Japan, buying through their online store is usually more convenient. Special edition bags created in collaboration with the ‘Catastrophe and the Power of Art’ exhibition at the Mori Museum of Art are available for sale at the museum shop until January 20.

I was a Kimono
The kimono is a beautiful part of Japanese culture and heritage and it’s still a common fashion item worn to this day. Many kimonos are kept in tip-top shape, but it’s inevitable that these things can get damaged or worn down with time.

Founded by Cristina Morini Sumi, who has a passion for antiques and Japanese culture, I was a Kimono upcycles used kimonos into gorgeous fashion accessories and home decorations. Think Christmas baubles draped with beautiful fabrics as well as earrings and necklaces fashioned from kimono-covered heads. The kimonos are sourced from various antique markets around Tokyo and are reinvented into new, modern forms in hopes of giving a new lease of life to items that were clearly originally created with much care.

Newseed
Remnants of materials used at factories, ‘dead stock’ products and other leftovers are all brought back to life through various projects thought up by the folks behind Newseed, a self-styled upcycling brand that takes regular old recycling to the next level. These prophets of sustainability not only resell old finds – instead, they add to them, taking things headed for the dumpster and turning them into brand-new fashion items.

Newseed’s funky, colourful and extremely popular badges and earrings are made of leftover acrylic materials from accessory factories, while the stylish bow ties give seatbelts bought from an old car factory a second chance. There are also seat cushions fashioned from unused airbags, key fobs crafted from advertising tarpaulin, and card holders created from leather scraps.

The brand’s online shop carries a plentiful selection of items, some of which you can also find at fashion dealers and museum shops across Japan. If you prefer bricks and mortar, there’s a full list of retailers on the website, or you can head to the always well-stocked Accommode store in Lumine Est Shinjuku.

SEE MORE
TIMEOUT.COM/TOKYO

SHOP TOKYO
Seikotei: walnut cookies

Seikotei is renowned for its handmade cookies – and for the heartwarming illustrations on its packaging. The shop has a library of over 200 illustrations, ranging from “thank you” and “happy birthday” character drawings to depictions of the Tokyo cityscape. But no matter which one you get, it will feature Seikotei’s signature squirrel somewhere. It will feel like a kid again upon tasting the refined mini-cakes, which are pleasantly soft with a gentle almond aroma.

Mini-cake ¥780.

Nanarica: honneri yokan

Traditional Japanese sweets purveyor Nanarica in Waseda has made its name with monaka wagashi – wafer thin layers of bean paste and egg yolk sandwiched between two thin wafers. It is no wonder that Nanarica in Waseda always ranks among the most popular destinations for Tokyoites on the hunt for a sweet gift. The signature ‘happy birthday’-themed ones to celebrate a whole year are particularly fond of the okagoiri, a traditional box made out of bamboo sheets and decorated with red, green and yellow drawings of the famed wagashi (traditional Japanese sweets).

Okagoiri ¥1,296.

Kotobukido: koganeimo six-pack

Kotobukido offers several types of packaging for Koganeimo, the shop’s signature potato-shaped spiced delicacy that is made with white bean paste and wasabi. We’re particularly heartwarming illustrations on its packaging. The shop has a library of over 200 illustrations, ranging from “thank you” and “happy birthday” character drawings to depictions of the Tokyo cityscape. But no matter which one you get, it will feature Seikotei’s signature squirrel somewhere.

Mini-cake ¥780.

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Okagoiri ¥1,296.

Higashiyama Ginza: okoshi

Relaxed as a luck-bringing treat since the olden days, the okoshi (puffed rice cookie) gets a 21st-century update at the sleek Higashiyama, where the colourful snacks are sold in classic designer tins. You can choose from three varieties: buckwheat seeds for a slightly sweet and rich flavour, ginger for something sharp and zingy, and daitokuji natto for a unique umami taste.

Okoshi ¥1,080.

Azabu Yasaigashi: burdock and chocolate six-pack

A nondescript Western-style dessert vendor out in exclusive Denenchofu, Azabu is the kind of shop you’d pass right by if you didn’t know it was there. But once you get a taste of the ‘Russian’ chocolate sold here, you’ll likely become a regular. Available in about ten varieties, including nougat, plum and toffee, the little flavour bombs come wrapped in retro papers so cute you’ll want to reuse them. The top choice for souvenir shoppers is the chic white tin packed to the brim with ten different kinds of chocolate.

Azabu Yasaigashi: burdock and chocolate six-pack ¥3,500.

Number Sugar: eight-pack caramel

Delicious natural caramel made without any artificial colouring and presented in a beautiful box – it’s no wonder Number Sugar in Harajuku always ranks among the most popular destinations for Tokyoites on the hunt for a sweet gift. The signature eight-flavour box contains varieties including vanilla, salt, raspberry and ginger.

Number Sugar: eight-pack caramel ¥3,024.
Connected to the east exit of Shibuya Station, the sprawling Tokyu Food Show in the Tokyu Department Store is a regular hound for the Shibuya crowd clamouring over its commendable food selection, especially the rotating feature of speciality food stands from other parts of Japan. There’s also a Vietnamese banh mi stand, plus plenty of other international food options such as Spanish and Italian in case you’re not feeling like Japanese.

Unlike most depachika, Tokyu Food Show has a designated area for you to enjoy your purchased food. You’ll find a few standing counters at the Shibuya Stand area at the west side of the depachika; conveniently enough, they even feature hooks for you to hang your bags.

Don’t miss…

Pariya gelato shop’s huge glass counter is a colourful display of mouth-watering flavours. You don’t need to pick just one: you’ll get a small spoonful of an additional flavour for free on top of your cone or cup order.

à 2-24-1 Shibuya, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3477 3111. tinyurl.com/TOTfoodshow. 10am-9pm daily.

Tokyu Food Show

JAPAN’S RITZY DEPATO (department stores) don’t just give you the chance to obliterate your entire shopping list in one fell swoop, they also contain culinary delights. The in-house food halls – or depachika – are known for their comprehensive array of gorgeous sweets and confectionery, immaculately packaged food, ready-to-eat dishes and picture-perfect bento. These food-filled basements, which are often attached to train stations, allow you to cover the breadth and depth of Japanese cuisine and beyond in a few steps.

To walk into a depachika is to submit yourself to temptation – so take your time and keep your eye out for free food samples to taste before shelling out on an actual portion. Some depachika even have eat-in counters and sections dedicated to alcohol where you can indulge in sake and wine tastings. So really, a good depachika is more than a food court or grocery store; it is all your foodie dreams come true.

The depachika food halls at the city’s many department stores carry a plethora of delicious finds with everything from ready-to-eat food to beautifully packaged gifts. You’ll feel like a kid in a candy store again, says Kaila Imada

Don’t miss… ‘Depachika’ is actually a portmanteau of ‘depato’ for department store and ‘chika’ meaning basement, but Daimaru is the first depachika with a ground floor level. Here, you’ll find a selection of perfectly packaged sweets and gifts including the overwhelmingly popular NYC Sand cookies, and nutty treats from Noix, which can only be found at this particular store.

à 1-9-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda (Tokyo Station). 03 3212 8011. tinyurl.com/TOTdaimarutokyo. 10am-8pm daily.

Daimaru Tokyo

Conveniently attached to the bustling Tokyo Station, Daimaru is understandably one of the busiest depachikas in the city as it sees constant foot traffic from peckish commuters. Heading out of town on the shinkansen? Stop by to pick up a bento for the journey. You’ll have no shortage of options to pick from since Daimaru’s Bento Street offers a staggering selection of approximately 1,000 types of bento. What’s more, most of the food stations here actually have onsite kitchens behind the shop counters, so you know you’re getting the freshest bento possible. Oh, just be wary of long queues – you’ve got a train to catch.

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à 9-1-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda (Tokyo Station). 03 3212 8011. tinyurl.com/TOTdaimarutokyo. 10am-8pm daily.
**SHOP TOKYO**

**Ikebukuro Tobu**

The biggest depachika in Tokyo, Ikebukuro Tobu’s food hall sure makes an impact with more than 200 outlets (that’s on top of the department store’s staggering 60 restaurants and cafés). You’ll want to set aside some time to make your way through the food hall which is divided into two floors: the first basement floor is home to tea and liquor shops, chocolatiers, bakeries and more. The biggest draw is another basement level of hip eateries with more than 200 outlets (that’s on top of the department store’s staggering 60 restaurants and cafés).

Don’t miss…

- The Kitchen Stage

For steep discounts, head to depachika about 30 minutes to an hour before closing. Most ready-to-eat food stations will be discounted to 30% off the regular price. If you’re feeling adventurous, you can go to any special events at the department store. But don’t forget to buy the best seasonal foods around Japan.

- Cafe Prunier Paris

Located in the flagship Isetan Shinjuku, this basement food market is well-organized and easy to navigate: you can clearly see where one section ends and another begins. It is one of Tokyo’s poshest depachikas and home to Café Prunier Paris, where you can rest your feet while savouring fine caviar and champagne. The fresh market area features tasting counters, while the roof terrace offers 360° views of the city. At work, they have comfortable seating where you can enjoy the wonders of their creation.

- Ginza Mitsukoshi

Taking over both the B2 and B3 levels of this flashy Ginza department store, Mitsukoshi features an entire floor dedicated to ready-made food, Japanese and Western sweets and baked goods. It is one of Tokyo’s most historic department stores which have a depachika, where you can find one of the city’s most impressive cheese counters and flawless Japanese fruit with prices to make your eyes water. In the touch, Ginza Mitsukoshi has refrigerated coin lockers – so you can store all your perishable goods while you continue to shop around the department store above.

Don’t miss…

- Jean-Paul Hévin

This French chocolatier is contained inside a temperature-controlled glass case on B2 to make sure all its chocolates are kept at the right centigrade for optimum taste and quality.


**INSIDER TIPS**

- Be steep discounts, head to depachika about 30 minutes to an hour before closing. Most ready-to-eat food stations will be discounted by 30% off the regular price. If you’re feeling adventurous, you can go to any special events at the department store (before immigration gates). In addition to the depachika, you can find one of the city’s most impressive cheese counters and flawless Japanese fruit with prices to make your eyes water. In the touch, Ginza Mitsukoshi has refrigerated coin lockers – so you can store all your perishable goods while you continue to shop around the department store above.

- Flying out of Haneda? Fauchon’s has an airstream outlet just for gits, head over to the departure floor at the domestic terminal (before immigration gates). In addition to the depachika, you can find one of the city’s most impressive cheese counters and flawless Japanese fruit with prices to make your eyes water. In the touch, Ginza Mitsukoshi has refrigerated coin lockers – so you can store all your perishable goods while you continue to shop around the department store above.

**SHOP TOKYO**

**Takashimaya Nihombashi**

You’ll really get an old school vibe while walking around this depachika. The iconic Takashimaya Nihombashi is set in one of Tokyo’s most historic neighbourhoods and its locale is reflected in the store’s classic interior design. For one, you’ll see that they still have attendants, complete with uniform and gloves, working each of their antique elevators. Once you get downstairs, you can shop for all your typical depachika finds, but the attentive service here really sets it apart from the competition.

Drool over Fauchon’s display of delectable baked goods, work out the courage here really sets it apart from the competition.

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Located in the flagship Isetan Shinjuku, this basement food market is well-organized and easy to navigate: you can clearly see where one section ends and another begins. It is one of Tokyo’s poshest depachikas and home to Café Prunier Paris, where you can rest your feet while savouring fine caviar and champagne. The fresh market area features tasting counters, while the roof terrace offers 360° views of the city. At work, they have comfortable seating where you can enjoy the wonders of their creation.

- Ginza Mitsukoshi

Taking over both the B2 and B3 levels of this flashy Ginza department store, Mitsukoshi features an entire floor dedicated to ready-made food, Japanese and Western sweets and baked goods. It is one of Tokyo’s most historic department stores which have a depachika, where you can find one of the city’s most impressive cheese counters and flawless Japanese fruit with prices to make your eyes water. In the touch, Ginza Mitsukoshi has refrigerated coin lockers – so you can store all your perishable goods while you continue to shop around the department store above.

Don’t miss…

- Jean-Paul Hévin

This French chocolatier is contained inside a temperature-controlled glass case on B2 to make sure all its chocolates are kept at the right centigrade for optimum taste and quality.
Simple pleasures

Want to take pleasure in the simpler things in life? The Japanese concept of zakka could be the route to a happier lifestyle. By Vivian Morelli

THIS NEW YEAR, if you’re looking to buy a more fulfilling lifestyle off the shelf, you might want to learn about the word ‘zakka’. Zakka is part of a wider Japanese ideology in which mundane, everyday objects are celebrated for their beauty and ability to bring you joy. So, what is all about?

ZAKKA: A CRASH COURSE

Zakka is a Japanese word that doesn’t really have an English equivalent. It literally means ‘miscellaneous things’ or ‘sundries’, or, to put it simply, things that cannot be categorised.

Zakka can encompass a vast range of items. They are objects to improve your home, your life or your appearance, and can include practical everyday items, things that you may not even know existed or think you needed. They are carefully hand-picked and they bring you a certain happiness. They are everyday items, elevated.

HOW DID IT START?

About half a century ago, the term ‘zakka’ referred to practical household items like buckets and brooms, but since then it has become a lifestyle. The trend peaked in the early 2000s, but it doesn’t seem to have gone away. In many ways, zakka represents the attention to detail so highly prized in Japan. Here, it’s just a way of life.

Zakka is about finding treasures and objects that express your personality. They’re not necessarily antique, vintage or even expensive. They can be cute, they can betwee, they can be kitsch. Zakka can be colourful and can be monochromatic, A-Moi.

Zakka-ya, the type of shop that sells zakka, dir every neighbourhood in Japan, and sometimes focus on apparel or home design, or even both. We rounded up a few of our favourites.

Ready to shop?

**Zakka Shop Tokyo**

This concept store stands just a few doors down from its well-loved cousin, the Norwegian café Fuglen. It was actually Fuglen that founded the Norwegian Icons design exhibition, dedicated to promoting the country’s contemporary designers in different cities around the world including London, Milan and New York. It settled in Tokyo and became a showroom in the trendy Tomigaya area.

In the showroom, reproduction vintage furniture sits side-by-side with new productions from emerging Norwegian designers – similar to the fixtures at the gorgeous Fuglen. Lamps, carpets, sofas, chairs and plates are the main offerings. This isn’t the place for small, inexpensive trinkets to adorn your home, but investment pieces to bring joy to your life or your bank balance. While it’s pleasant to browse the online shop, we recommend a visit to the showroom to admire the pieces up close, beautifully arranged in a renovated Japanese home.

- 5-16-16 Tomigaya, Shibuya (Yoyogi Station). 03 5738 7671. norwegianicons.no. Sat & Sun 11am-6pm, Mon-Thu by appointment.

**Check & Stripe**

A short walk from Jiyugaoka Station, Check & Stripe focuses on original textiles and household goods. Its fabrics are mostly made from natural materials like linen and cotton, and are sturdy enough to be used every day.

Check & Stripe’s philosophy is to provide things that are simple but of high quality. Its aesthetic revolves around muted tones and simple prints, giving everything a distinctly Scandinavian vibe.

The shop façade resembles a countryside cottage, and the cosy interiors are filled with a selection of textiles with chic patterns, including a section of Liberty London prints. Besides the fabrics, it’s a good place to stock up on buttons (sourced from all over the world), iron-on patches and all sorts of playful trimmings.

If you can’t make it to Jiyugaoka, there are a few outlets across Japan and an online store that ships overseas.

- 9-2 2-13 Mikawaya, Meguro, Shibuya Station. 03 5401 2080. checkandstripe.com. 11am-7pm daily.

**TODAY’S SPECIAL**

Although Today’s Special has several locations (Shibuya, Shinjuku, Hibiya, and even Kyoto and Kobe), the stylish Jiyugaoka branch is our favourite. The theme of the store is ‘Food and Living DIY’, and walking into the shop really does feel like stepping into your dream kitchen, complete with a long dining table and an abundance of herbs and plants.

Today’s Special is filled with local and imported gourmet food, kitchenware, stationery and skincare – don’t forget to check out the seasonal corner as well. The shop regularly hosts workshops, especially the baking ones in collaboration with other brands, which often feature seasonal and organic ingredients. Bonus: the third floor is a café, so after your shopping spree you can refuel on comfort food (and even cocktails).

- 5-17-5 Jiyugaoka Meguro, Meguro (Jiyugaoka Station). 03 5723 7135. todaysspecial.jp. Market 11am-9pm daily, kitchen 11am-11pm (last orders 10pm).

**UGUISU**

Good news for zakka lovers around the world. Uguisu has an extensive online store and ships worldwide. The online store makes it easy to find the perfect gift (or to stock up on all night knitting products), but nothing beats a visit to the flagship Uguisu Little Shoppe, a converted apartment in a quaint corner of the Azabu/Roppongi district.

The goods at Uguisu are mainly designed or made in Japan by traditional artisans, independent craftsmen and small family-run businesses. Don’t miss it’s beautiful collection of Lake Lihhi dolls, along with animal-shaped ceramic plates that will add a smile to every meal, and an array of stationery, patterned washi tape, letterpress notecards, stickers and wrapping paper. It doesn’t stop there: there are earrings, necklaces and brooches, ranging from delicate and dainty to quirky and attention-grabbing.

TOYOSU MARKET

A DIFFERENT
KETTLE OF FISH

As Toyosu Market replaces the famed Tsukiji, it ushers in the next iteration of the world’s biggest fish and seafood market. By Jessica Thompson. Photography Keisuke Tanigawa

IT WAS DESTINED to be a messy break-up: for more than 80 years, the Tsukiji market had wooed locals, visitors from around the world and its own workers with its gritty, historical charm. Labyrinthine alleyways, snugly fit shops, charismatic vendors and intimately authentic experiences – like jumping out of the way of a whirring passing turret – were an everyday appeal. While it does look weathered, Tsukiji more than makes up for it with a lot of soul.

The tattered edges of Tsukiji market had been acknowledged by officials since the 1950s. With concerns over building aging, overcrowding, adequate fire safety and hygiene – particularly with increasingly scorching Tokyo summers – decades of debate ensued over whether to invest in renovation or relocation. The decision to relocate the inner (commercial seafood) market was made in 1999, and Toyosu, a man-made island in Tokyo Bay and former home to a gas factory, was proposed as the new site. (The outer market of Tsukiji remains a bustling hub for eating and shopping despite the inner market’s move.)

But when unsavoury elements were found in the new site’s groundwater, the move was met with fierce resistance and postponed. Fast-forward several years and some enormous clean-up efforts and the new Toyosu Market finally started operations on October 11, 2018 (and opened to the public on October 13). It is estimated that a majority of the 800-plus vendors at Tsukiji made the move, along with a selection of restaurant stalwarts such as Sushi Dai and Daiwa Sushi.

In layout and vibe, Toyosu Market couldn’t be more different to its predecessor: if a visit to Tsukiji was like seeing your favourite band at a ramshackle local dive bar, Toyosu is like a stadium gig. While in Tsukiji you’re in the thick of things, mingling with the vendors, at Toyosu visitors are not allowed into the wholesale areas, be it seafood or fruit and veg, and have to take in the action from the observation galleries above. Still, some things remain the same: there’s great food, and you can get a peek into a market that employs more than 65,000 people and does over USD6 billion in sales annually – believed to be the biggest in the world.

The new Toyosu location is an enclosed, climate-controlled facility, all the better to a gas factory, was proposed as the new site. (The outer market of Tsukiji remains a bustling hub for eating and shopping despite the inner market’s move.) But when unsavoury elements were found in the new site’s groundwater, the move was met with fierce resistance and postponed. Fast-forward several years and some enormous clean-up efforts and the new Toyosu Market finally started operations on October 11, 2018 (and opened to the public on October 13). It is estimated that a majority of the 800-plus vendors at Tsukiji made the move, along with a selection of restaurant stalwarts such as Sushi Dai and Daiwa Sushi.

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The new Toyosu location is an enclosed, climate-controlled facility, all the better
to protect the precious produce from the adversities of nature. It’s built with cargo logistics in mind, and draws on one of the most powerful solar power generation systems in Japan and has buildings topped with green roofs, enhancing Tokyo’s low-carbon credentials.

Seeing such a well-loved, iconic institution change has been difficult for many, but this isn’t the first relocation Tokyo’s fish markets have undergone – their original location was not Tsukiji but Nihonbashi. During the Edo period (1603-1868), boats would deliver their catches into the port of Tokyo, and the pier of Nihonbashi handled seafood. The nearby public square naturally became home to a bustling, vibrant fish market – as seen in many ukiyo-e prints of the era. But when the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 caused fires to lash through the city, the market was reduced to cinders and was re-established at the Tsukiji location.

When visiting Toyosu, even if you’re not going for the tuna auction, go early – as in crack-of-dawn early. By around 6am, the intermediate market has wrapped up, the vegetable market has finished and the restaurants will involve a significant wait. For nostalgia, you could even pop over the bay to Tsukiji – the outer market which hosts a plethora of shops and restaurants is still alive and well.

TOYOSU MARKET: A BREAKDOWN

Toyosu is almost twice the size of Tsukiji. Seeing it all means you’ll work up an appetite. The market is divided into three main buildings, with connecting elevated walkways that extend from the Shijo-mae Station on the Yurikamome line.

How to see the tuna auction

At Tsukiji, you had to wait from 2.30am to take a ticket and hope that you’d be one of the 120 who would be let in to view the auction. At Toyosu, anyone can view the tuna auction from a bird’s-eye view in the expansive glass-lined observation gallery above.

Buyers analyse the quality of the tuna by taking a tiny section of the meat from this section, rubbing it between their fingers, smelling and tasting it to note the fattiness. They then shine a flashlight onto the flesh to assess the colour – the redder the better. From this judgement, they set the price they’re willing to bid.

By around 6am, the fish are being dragged by winning bidders onto turrets and spun off to the intermediary market for processing. From mid-January 2019, there will be a visitors’ zone down closer to the action, where you’ll be able to hear the auction and see the famous ‘toreyari’ (bidding hand gestures.)

Fish Intermediate Wholesale Market

This is where seafood arrives from Japan and around the world each day starting around 1am, and is sold in the wee hours to dealers from the Intermediate Wholesale Market and other authorised buyers. From the observation gallery here, you can get an overhead view of the famous tuna auction.

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Emerging Sciences, the teamLab Planets interactive digital art museum or a Tokyo cruise for another perspective on the city.
SUSHI-DOKORO OKAME
The original Okame sushi shop at Tsukiji was a classically rustic Edo-style sushi joint: standing-only, cramped, smoking permitted. The Toyosu version is more polished: the 13 counter seats are sparsely spread out in a horseshoe shape around the sushi chef and the restaurant is non-smoking. The Okame staff work efficiently and amiably together, interacting warmly with guests while adding special touches to their sushi, like a brush of house-made nikiri-joyu (a thin, sweetish sauce made of soy sauce, dashi and mirin) to the sushi rice looks and tastes a little more polished: the 13 counter seats are sparsely spread out in a horseshoe shape around the sushi chef and the restaurant is non-smoking. The Okame staff work efficiently and amiably together, interacting warmly with guests while adding special touches to their sushi, like a brush of house-made nikiri-joyu (a thin, sweetish sauce made of soy sauce, dashi and mirin), which was a feature of Edo-mae sushi applied to some of the fish slices. Some of the other standout items on the omakase menu may include – depending on the season – uni nigi-topped with flakes of salt, katsuo (skipjack tuna) with grated ginger, shirasu (smelt) nigi-topped with a little ponzu and daikon oroshi (grated radish), and nagi-topped with finely minced fatty tuna and spring onion.

There are two options for omakase – ¥4,600 and ¥4,200 – as well as a standard sushi-sets (for ¥2,500), special sushi-set for ¥3,500 and a kaiseidon (sashimi rice bowl) for ¥3,000.

Ryu Sushi
The interior at Ryu Sushi features a stylishly dupped stone counter, lustrous copper back wall and a floor-to-ceiling window, which floods the room with the freshness of natural light. There’s also the distinguished air of authenticity – the chefs take their Edo-style sushi seriously and have been doing so since their restaurant opened at Tsukiji over 50 years ago. In true Edo-style, you’re encouraged to eat your sushi with fingers rather than chopsticks. And don’t ask for salmon – it wasn’t a fish served during the Edo period and it isn’t now at Ryu Sushi. The restaurant has a few other unique touches, too: the small sets of makizushi rolls feature fatty buri (yellowtail) rather than the standard fatty toro (tuna), and the kappa-maki (small cucumber rolls) are filled with very finely shredded cucumber rather than a whole slice, delivering a textured crunch. The chefs will guide you on whether to use soy sauce or not – the sushi rice looks and is so delicate and balanced it doesn’t need even a hint of grated salt and is so delicate and balanced that you might not even want to use soy sauce or not – the sushi rice looks and tastes a little more polished: the 13 counter seats are sparsely spread out in a horseshoe shape around the sushi chef and the restaurant is non-smoking. The Okame staff work efficiently and amiably together, interacting warmly with guests while adding special touches to their sushi, like a brush of house-made nikiri-joyu (a thin, sweetish sauce made of soy sauce, dashi and mirin), which was a feature of Edo-mae sushi applied to some of the fish slices. Some of the other standout items on the omakase menu may include – depending on the season – uni nigi-topped with flakes of salt, katsuo (skipjack tuna) with grated ginger, shirasu (smelt) nigi-topped with a little ponzu and daikon oroshi (grated radish), and nagi-topped with finely minced fatty tuna and spring onion.

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Odayasutonkatsu
Although tonkatsu is typically pork, it’s also a selection of non-katsu options, like butter-sautéed fish.

Senriken
Savoury dishes on the menu at Senriken include kaisen classics like egg sandwiches, katsu sandwiches and the store speciality: stew served with a soft-boiled egg. For sweets, don’t miss the airy cheesecake; the ume jelly, which uses the booe–soaked plum removed from umeshu (plum liquor); the purin (like a Japanese crème brûlée); or coffee soft serve, which, if you’re dining in, will be upgraded into a teacup. Senriken is cash-only.

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THE IMPRESSION
At The Impression, you can experience a classier sushi meal without breaking the bank. The restaurant has a glowing hinoki-timber interior, the shelves are stacked with refined lacquer boxes and the immaculate-looking chefs exeute each piece of sushi with precision and subtlety.

In true Edo-style, you’re encouraged to eat your sushi with fingers rather than chopsticks. And don’t ask for salmon – it wasn’t a fish served during the Edo period and it isn’t now at Ryu Sushi. The restaurant has a few other unique touches, too: the small sets of makizushi rolls feature fatty buri (yellowtail) rather than the standard fatty toro (tuna), and the kappa-maki (small cucumber rolls) are filled with very finely shredded cucumber rather than a whole slice, delivering a textured crunch. The chefs will guide you on whether to use soy sauce or not – the sushi rice looks and tastes a little more polished: the 13 counter seats are sparsely spread out in a horseshoe shape around the sushi chef and the restaurant is non-smoking. The Okame staff work efficiently and amiably together, interacting warmly with guests while adding special touches to their sushi, like a brush of house-made nikiri-joyu (a thin, sweetish sauce made of soy sauce, dashi and mirin), which was a feature of Edo-mae sushi applied to some of the fish slices. Some of the other standout items on the omakase menu may include – depending on the season – uni nigi-topped with flakes of salt, katsuo (skipjack tuna) with grated ginger, shirasu (smelt) nigi-topped with a little ponzu and daikon oroshi (grated radish), and nagi-topped with finely minced fatty tuna and spring onion.

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Time Out Tokyo
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THE FIVE BEST
Restaurants at Toyosu Market

1. SUSHI-DOKORO OKAME

2. THE IMPRESSION

3. RYU SUSHI

4. ODAYASUTONKATSU

5. SENRIKEN
Izakaya are Japan’s answer to the pub – cozy venues where locals gather over small plates, flowing drinks and jolly chatter. Here’s how you can join in the convivial experience. By Kirsty Bouwers

HOMELY, OFTEN LOUD

and sometimes brash, an izakaya is at the centre of Japan’s social scene. It is often translated as ‘Japanese pub’ or ‘tavern’, but the best description for an izakaya comes from the word itself: it combines the characters for ‘to be’ or ‘inside’ (居), ‘alcohol’ (酒) and ‘shop’ (店) – in short, you’re probably going to spend quite some time supping booze here. There are restaurants and bars aplenty in Tokyo, but to really understand how people unwind, you have to set foot in an izakaya. So here’s a beginner’s guide to get you started on your izakaya night out. Warning: it won’t be your last.

CHOOSE YOUR SPOT

Izakaya come in many shapes and sizes – there are the large chains such as Torikizoku which seem to dot every train station; small, hole-in-the-wall family-run establishments; more upscale establishments often with private dining rooms; and everything in between.

Each izakaya often specialises in a certain thing, with the exterior usually giving small clues as to what. Plumes of smoky air and the smell of charcoal outside usually giving small spots; and the staff know how many people will be in your party by holding up the number of fingers. Wait until you’ve been put in the middle.

SHARING IS CARING

Go ahead and order what you like, but be prepared to share: there’s no bigger mood-killer than someone hogging their own plate like, but be prepared to share: Go ahead and order what you like, but be prepared to share: there’s no bigger mood-killer than someone hogging their own plate. It’s not the done thing to just walk into a place and grab a seat – instead say ‘sumimasen, onegaishimasu’ (‘excuse me’) when entering, and let the staff know how many people will be in your party by holding up the number of fingers. Wait until they guide you to a table, don’t just sit down wherever you want, unless they explicitly gesture to do so.

NOTE THE COVER CHARGE

Remember there’s often a cover charge called nijikai (entrance fee), that is automatically tacked onto your bill and is usually a few hundred yen per person. To make up for it, you generally get served a little something to start (‘speak Japanese. Order a beer to start’ (‘speak Japanese. Order a beer to start’). After that, you can either struggle through Google Translate for food options, point to whatever someone next to you is having, or leave it up to the staff by saying ‘ryori wa omakase shimasu’ (just don’t forget to set an upper price limit if you’re on a budget (say ‘made ni onegai shimasu’ after your budget; for instance ‘sansun- on made ni onegai shimasu’ if your budget is ¥3,000).

GO FOR ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK OR-EAT

Known as nomihodai (all-you-can-drink), tabenomihodai (all-you-can-eat) or, if you’re feeling gluttonous, nomihodai (all-you-can-drink and eat), this is the option of choice for those coming to izakaya in larger groups looking to get sloshed. If you drink a lot, and quickly, it’s usually a better deal than ordering individual drinks.

PAY YOUR SHARE, BUT DON’T SPLIT THE BILL

Finally, when paying, note that it’s uncommon for izakaya to allow you to split the bill and everyone pay separately unless you’ve explicitly asked for it at the start. If with a group of friends best to bring cash. The normal way is to simply divide the total by the amount of people; if people arrived later or left earlier, they’ll be expected to throw in roughly the price of their drinks and snacks. If you feel you’ve paid too much, just figure out a way for someone to buy your drinks at the next izakaya (afterparty).

IZAKAYA STAPLES

Edamame
Boiled, salted soy beans in the pod

Ehime
Grilled chicken skewers (all-you-can) often served with mayonnaise

Hiyayakko
Chilled, firm tofu topped with grated ginger, bonito flakes and more

Kakifry
Deep-fried oysters

Karaage
Deep-fried chicken

Sashimi
As the five day’s catch or a magnificent assorted platter

Yakitori
Grilled chicken skewers; see our guide at tinyurl.com/TOTyakitori
Eating & Drinking

KANOYA UENO
The izakaya competition around Ueno Station, and the stretch leading to Ameyoko shopping street in particular, is fierce. However, this four-year-old joint has done a good job at elbowing itself into the spotlight with low prices and a classy look. Their menu is a medley of izakaya classics, most of which are around the ¥300 to ¥400 mark, making it a great place for both izakaya veterans and newbies to try out a lot of different dishes without breaking the bank.

If you can spare a few extra hundred yen, have the sashimi set for a crash-course in the difference between lean, medium and fatty tuna. Note that Kanoya is both an izakaya and a namesake kushikatsu (deep-fried skewer) restaurant next door – on the left as you look at it; ask for the izakaya if you’re unsure.

à KT Bldg 1-2F, 6-9-14 Ueno, Taito (Ueno Station). 03 5812 7710. 11am-11pm daily.

UOSHIN NOGIZAKA
There’s nothing fancy about Uoshin Nogizaka and that’s what we love about this seafood izakaya. The two-floor space has a down-to-earth street food vibe: you sit on beer crates and dine at tables upcycled from wooden boxes, and the atmosphere is always fun and lively. The best part is, despite its location at the fringe of upscale neighbourhood Roppongi, the prices are kept very reasonable. Regulars swear by its sashimi and the house speciality nokkezushi, which is kappamaki (cucumber sushi roll) buried under a generous mound of chopped tuna, salmon Roe, swordfish and crab meat – in other words, the premium stuff. The cabbage salad is commendable too as this humble dish is elevated with a sprinkle of crispy fried potato flakes. For grilled fish, we suggest you ditch the menu and just pick what’s fresh from the seafood display on the ground floor. An English menu is available and some staff speak English as well.

à 9-6-32 Akasaka, Minato. 03 3405 0411. uoshins.com. Mon-Fri 12noon-2pm, 5pm-12midnight (last orders 11pm), Sat 5pm-12midnight (11pm), Sun & hols 4pm-11pm (10pm).

SHIN-HINOMOTO
The stretch beneath the railway tracks in Yurakucho has a plethora of watering holes to choose from, but Shin-Hinomoto, aka Andy’s, has been one of the favourites for decades now. Its nickname comes from British owner Andy, who took over his parents-in-law’s business together with his Japanese wife, whose family established the izakaya two generations ago.

The menu changes daily depending on what the market offers, but you can’t go wrong with a sashimi platter (hugely good value for its size, at ¥2,500 for a two-person platter) and their fist-sized karaage (fried chicken). Good luck finding a seat first though: the place gets rammed every night with a mix of locals, expats and tourists, while the jolly staff keep the atmosphere convivial.

à 2-4-4 Yurakucho, Chiyoda (Yurakucho Station). 03 3214 8021. shin-hinomoto.com. Mon-Sat 5pm-12midnight, closed Sun.

YOSHUKU NO TEPPANYA OTOKO DOJO
The very genki (cheerful) staff add flair to this izakaya, located on the far end of Shibuya towards Tomigaya. They specialise in different teppanyaki (hot plate) dishes, whether they would usually be served on one or not: think dashimaki tamago, okonomiyaki and french toast (as dessert).

If you’re a big eater, the assorted meat (¥2,480) and the sashimi (from ¥1,480) platters are a good deal, and you can always fill up with the salmon and shirasu (tiny whitebait) fried rice done over the iron griddle. Top it all off with a glass from the extensive nihonshu selection or a beer. A word of caution though: the big draft beer is so huge you’d need to lift the tumbler with both hands.

à 37-13 Udagawacho, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 5452 1598. 5pm-1am (food last orders 12midnight, drinks 12.30am), irregular holidays.

SHIRUBE
Located in the jumble of Shimokita-zawa’s backstreets, this izakaya looks as traditional as they come, but serves up izakaya classics with a twist – think wholesome nikujaga (beef and potato stew) served with garlic bread, and a glorious ‘tofu cheese’ with honey.

If there’s space and you’re not with a large group, try to nab one of the counter seats for a prime view of the chefs in action, plus a whiff of the fragrant pot of oden bubbling away. Wash everything down with a glass of sake (ask for recommendations) or one of the shochu cocktails. Reservations advised on weekends.

à Pinewood Kitazawa 1-2-14 Kitazawa, Setagaya (Shimokita-zawa Station). 03 3433 3705. 5.30pm-12midnight (food last orders 11.30pm) daily.

We’ve rounded up some of our favourite English-friendly izakaya: the same rowdy fun, but without the language barriers.
**Eating & Drinking**

**Warm hearths**

There’s nothing like an open fire on a cold night; these Tokyo restaurants and bars feature fireplaces for you to cosy up by with a good meal.

By Miroku Hina

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**MERCER BRUNCH**

Mercer is one of the top terrace restaurants in Roppongi but it need not be reserved for summer only. When night falls, the flames in the central fireplace lend a touch of romance to the setting on cold days. Meanwhile, the kitchen switches from all-day brunch options (salmon tartare, grilled sausages etc) to a hearty, Italian-inspired menu, including pizza, pasta and grilled premium cuts of pork and beef. But if you’re here during the day, the daily brunch selections offer luxurious options (ostrich steak) as well as casual staples. Parents with small kids will appreciate the smaller, calmer second room.

- 4-2-30 Roppongi, Minato (Roppongi Station), 03 3470 0211. tinyurl.com/TOTmercer.
- Mon-Fri 10am-3.30pm, 6pm-11pm (last orders 10pm), Sat, Sun & hols 10am-12midnight. Afternoon tea 1pm-4.30pm, Sat & Sun 4pm-4.30pm.

**THE PALACE LOUNGE**

Sometimes you need to treat yourself to a moment of luxury at a five-star hotel lounge, and if said lounge happens to have a proper fireplace, all the better. A short walk from Tokyo Station, Palace Hotel Tokyo’s ground-floor lobby lounge offers a high ceiling and huge windows overlooking the greenery of the Imperial Palace Gardens. It is a popular afternoon tea spot, but we prefer it on a winter’s evening when the flames dancing in the hearth provide a warm backdrop to the live piano music and quality cocktails.

- 1-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda (Otemachi Station), 03 3211 5309. pachon.co.jp.
- Afternoon tea 1pm-4.30pm, Sat & Sun 4pm-4.30pm.

**LUNATIQUE TOKIOPLAGE**

Walk down the Tama River from Futako-Tamagawa Station for about ten minutes and you’ll come across this hidden gem of a restaurant, housed in a renovated four-storey apartment building. Ten minutes and you’ll come across this hidden gem of a restaurant, housed in a renovated four-storey apartment building. Take a seat under the little chandeliers and you’ll feel a world away from the monstrous shopping complexes and residential tower blocks nearby.

The French-influenced offerings include filet mignon with foie gras, and meaty stews. And the food menu is just as comforting, with cheese fondue, pizzas concoction just for you – just let them know which flavours you prefer.

- 1-1-4 Tamagawa, Setagaya (Futako-Tamagawa Station). 03 3708 1118. tinyurl.com/TOTlunatique.
- Mon-Sat 7pm-4am, Sun & hols 7pm-2am.

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**AZABU-JUBAN KUNSEI APARTMENT BETTEI**

Hiding out in the residential streets of upscale Azabu-Juban, Kunsei Apartment is a spacious, chic spot made for grown-up relaxation, complete with a fireplace. The restaurant menu is primarily devoted to exquisite cold-smoked cuisine, such as the Dutch oven-cooked lounge wagyu rump steak, a lean cut of meat picked to bring out the ideal smoky accent. The smoke-grilled cheese is a good option too, with its smoky fragrance and crispy exterior, while everything here goes nicely with a bottle off the tightly curated wine list. Be sure to book your table in advance.

- 3-3-12 Minami-Azabu, Minato (Azabu-Juban Station). 03 5360 0043. tinyurl.com/TOTkunsei.
- Sat-Thur 5pm-11.30pm (last orders 10.30pm); Fri 5pm-1am (12midnight).

**PACHON**

Having held onto its Michelin star for nine years now, Pachon is one of the most consistently fantastic French restaurants in the city. Its red carpets and antique fireplace, said to have been built for a monastery in 17th-century France, help conjure up a special atmosphere for veteran chef André Pachon to work his magic in. The deco riled Languedoc native’s signature dish is the cassoulet, a hearty stew made here with duck and white kidney beans, which has kept the regulars coming back for over 20 years. You’ll also want to look into the selection of grilled and roasted meats such as veal, lamb and duck, prepared over the aforementioned fireplace. An evening at Pachon is best reserved for special occasions, although the lunch sets are often very good value.

- 1-5-31 Minami-Azabu, Minato (Azabu-Juban Station). 03 3475 5825. pachon.co.jp.
- 11am-11pm (last orders 10pm), Sun & hols 10am-11pm.

**YOSHINO**

The kind of bar you’d like to keep a secret, the classy but comfortable Yoshino is perfect for after-dinner drinks in good company. Low lighting, inviting sofas and a crackling fireplace in the middle set the scene for well-mannered conversation over cocktails made with seasonal fruit and vegetables. You can ask the bartender to conjure up a concoction just for you – just let them know which flavours you prefer.

And the food menu is just as comforting, with cheese fondue, pizzas and meaty stews.

- 1-5-15 Nishi-Azabu, Minato (Nogizaka Station). 03 3466 3771. Mon-Sat 7pm-4am, Sun & hols 7pm-2am.
Need a break from the mega malls of Ginza, Shibuya and Shinjuku? These local neighbourhoods offer a more intimate shopping experience. By Mari Hiratsuka

**SHIMOKITAZAWA**

Shimokitazawa is a hub for many of Tokyo’s subcultures, where you’ll find vintage and second-hand clothing stores, where students and homemaker alike can be spotted digging for bargains. Don’t miss Toyko HyakkaREN, an art-filled predominately with thrift shops and zakka stores. You should also browse through the vintage stores around the north side of the station, especially the renowned Flamingo.

**Flamingo Shimokitazawa**

This Shimokitazawa store — sizzling to its Harajuku and Kichijoji namesakes — stocks a mix of new clothing and American vintage duds that date from the 1960s to the 1980s. Thanks to its US-based buyer, new stock comes in regularly and there’s a good selection of both men’s and women’s clothing as well as retro tableware. You can count on the prices here being low, and if you stop by at the right time you might even catch one of their occasional sales. It’s easy enough to spot the shop when you’re wandering around Shimokitazawa — you can’t miss the large neon flaminco sign.

- 25-12 Klassouwa, Setagaya (Shimokitazawa Station). 03 3414 0421. tinyurl.com/TOTflamingo. Mon-Fri 12pm-9pm, Sat, Sun & hols 1pm-6pm.

**New York Joe Exchange**

Occupying what used to be a public bathhouse, New York Joe Exchange sells imported, non-branded used clothing while also buying in items from customers, or even allowing them to swap threads they no longer want for pieces from the store. Tip: look out for their sales on the first Sunday of every month, when everything is marked down to half price.

- 1-24 Klassouwa, Setagaya (Shimokitazawa Station). 03 5738 2077. tinyurl.com/TOTnyje. Mon-Fri 12noon-10pm, Sat, Sun & hols 1pm-8pm.

**Flash Disc Ranch**

Embracing on a vinyl treasure hunt? Look out for this spacious Flash Disc Ranch on the second floor of a run-down building on the south side of the station. The vintage sound system is usually tuned up almost all the way up to 11, soundtracking your search for everything from rock and jazz to house and new wave. Do check out the “Three discs for ¥2,000” box, which has been known occasionally contain real gems.

- 25-12 Klassouwa, Setagaya (Shimokitazawa Station). 03 3414 0421. tinyurl.com/TOTflamingo. Mon-Fri 12noon-8pm, Sat, Sun & hols 1pm-8pm.

**KOENJI**

Where an energetic underground music scene meets one of the capital’s best selections of small eateries and bars, Koenji hosts the renowned Asa Odori festival in August and lays claim to being one of Tokyo’s coolest neighbourhoods. Located along the Nakadori shopping street north of the station is the wonderfully chaotic Kita-Kore building, which hosts a jumble of edgy fashion boutiques, a gallery and the offices of countercultural artist collective Chim Pom. The unpretentious and incredibly well-stocked Sokkyou vintage store sits on the south side, near the elevated railway tracks.

**Hayatochiri**

Hayatochiri’s unique décor features fragmented manga pages that plaster the walls and stuffed toys that dangle from the ceiling. It stock mainly on unique, brightly coloured menswear, while many of the remade items draw inspiration from anime. Expect to find jackets and accessories that incorporate metal and plastic into their design. Don’t miss the ¥1,000 corner if you’re looking for a bargain.

- 4-13 Kita-Koenji, Nakano (Koenji Station). 03 5327 3330. tinyurl.com/TOThayatochiri. Mon Wed, Fri 10am-6pm, Sat, Sun & hols 10am-6pm.

**Sokkyou**

Evan and Koenti’s highly curated second-hand clothing store, Sokkyou has managed to build a loyal fanbase, thanks to its well-stocked selection of trendy fashion for both men and women, which ranges from ¥5,000 to ¥20,000. Here you’ll find vintage pieces pulled date from the 1960s to the present, though they’ve spotted a few rare finds from earlier eras. Sokkyou is just a 10-minute walk from the south exit of Koenji Station; you’ll find it near the elevated railway line.

- 1-14-5 Watanabe, Kita-Koenji (Koenji Station). 03 6244 9421. tinyurl.com/TOTOSokkyou. 1pm-8pm daily.

**NAKAMEGURO**

The shopping district of choice for stylish Tokyoites, Nakameguro is also a popular residential neighbourhood for Tokyo’s creative crowd. You’ll find major stores from top designers sharing the streets with longstanding specialist dealerships run by locals. Make sure to stop by the Meguro River, a wildly popular spot for both winter light displays and cherry blossom-viewing, to check out the stylish 1LDK Apartments. From there, you can move on to more reasonably priced clothing at the many outlets lining the river as well as the main shopping drag.

**1LDK Apartments**

This select shop has an air of confidence and maturity about it, and that’s due to its well-curated selection of fashion, homeware and lifestyle goods that are geared towards those who love classic styles over fads. We love the highly wearable clothes for men and women, which focus on cult brands such as MM6 and Studio Nicholson and Captain Sunshine.

- 1F, 1-7-13 Kamimeguro, Meguro (Nakameguro Station). 03 5728 7149. tinyurl.com/TOT1ldk. 12noon-8pm daily.

**Koenji**

Embarking on a vinyl treasure hunt? Look out for the spacious Flash Disc Ranch on the second floor of a run-down building on the south side of the station. The vintage sound system is usually tuned up almost all the way up to 11, soundtracking your search for everything from rock and jazz to house and new wave. Do check out the “Three discs for ¥2,000” box, which has been known occasionally contain real gems.

- 3-4-13 Kita-Koenji, Nakano (Koenji Station). 03 5278 8455. tinyurl.com/TOTkadokurasu. Mon 1pm-8pm, Sat, Sun & hols 10am-6pm.

**1LDK Apartments**

This select shop has an air of confidence and maturity about it, and that’s due to its well-curated selection of fashion, homeware and lifestyle goods that are geared towards those who love classic styles over fads. We love the highly wearable clothes for men and women, which focus on cult brands such as MM6 and Studio Nicholson and Captain Sunshine.

- 1F, 1-7-13 Kamimeguro, Meguro (Nakameguro Station). 03 5728 7149. tinyurl.com/TOT1ldk. 12noon-8pm daily.

**Concentrate**

Hiding out abit further away from central Nakameguro is the artsy Concentrate, which is easy to pass by without noticing. The entrance may look like a garage, but stepping through the door feels like opening a treasure chest: shoppers are treated to a eclectic but stylish selection of clothing, accessories, decorative knickknacks and furniture, plus hard-to-find items of memorabilia from early days at AGB Experiment, the fashion dealer that owns Concentrate.

- 3-59-4 Koenji-Minami, Suginami (Koenji Station). 03 3317 5015. tinyurl.com/TOTconcentrate. 12noon-8pm daily.

**Hachimakura**

Its main business may be paper and stationery, but where this quirky shop really shines is in the curious section: old medicine pouches, price tags, letter sets and stamps like the shelves, in perfect but unlikely harmony with the more modern wares.

- 3-59-14 Koenji-Minami, Suginami (Koenji Station). 03 6451 0534. ameblo.jp/agbyexperiment. 12noon-8pm daily.
Sneaker shops

The ultimate Tokyo guide for sneakerheads.

**UNDEFEATED**
Los Angeles-born sneaker shop Unfteated has opened a flagship location on Shibuya’s Cat Street with two levels of streetwear goods, including the brand’s sneaker collection—which has gained something of a cult following—clothing and accessories, plus a selection of limited-edition rare finds and collabs with other international labels. If you’re jet-set after sneakers, head straight to the first floor, where you’ll find a good range of Unfteated collaborations with Nike and Adidas.

9-5 2-36-8 Jingumae, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 5962 7885. tinyurl.com/TOTundefeated. 11am-8pm daily.

**ATMOS PINK**
The food-centric district of Ameyoko may be the least likely place to find an amazing sneaker shop, but Mita Sneakers is just that. Skip the shop’s small street-level outpost and go to the main store, located on the second floor of the Ameyoko Center. They have everything from Nike, Adidas and Puma to some under-the-radar Japanese brands like Patrick and Panther. They sometimes offer a pretty good selection of sale items as well.

Ameyoko Center 2F, 4-7-8 Ueno, Taito (Ueno Station). 03 6303 4613. tinyurl.com/TOTmita. 11am-8pm, Sat, Sun & hols 10am-7.30pm, closed third Wed of the month.

**MITA SNEAKERS**
This collectors shop, which recently re-opened in Harajuku, stocks some of the rarest editions in the city—think Kanye West Yeezys, models from the Off-White Nike collab and unique colourways from Adidas, all in mint condition, wrapped in plastic and awaiting you. As for the rest of the shop, you’ll find a mass of Nike styles including Air Jordans, Nike SBs and models from the Nike Running collection, as well as out-of-stock Converse and a few other rare finds.

9-2 3-30-5 Shibuya, Higashiyama (Mejii-Jingumae station). 03 3832 8346. tinyurl.com/TOTmita. 11am-8pm, Sat, Sun & hols 10am-7.30pm, closed third Wed of the month.

**STYLES DAIKANYAMA**
Styles Daikanyama has a well-curated selection of international best-sellers and some great limited-editions. The store prides itself on offering sneakers that are both fashionable and functional. Best check their website frequently to get the drop-dates of rare collaborations. For mini versions of your favourite sneakers, they’ve got a decent kids’ selection as well.

1-10 5-29-8 Jingumae, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 6303 4613. tinyurl.com/TOTSstyles. 11am-8pm daily.

**WORM**
This collectors shop, which recently re-opened in Harajuku, stocks some of the rarest editions in the city—think Kanye West Yeezys, models from the Off-White Nike collab and unique colourways from Adidas, all in mint condition, wrapped in plastic and awaiting you. As for the rest of the shop, you’ll find a mass of Nike styles including Air Jordans, Nike SBs and models from the Nike Running collection, as well as out-of-stock Converse and a few other rare finds.

9-2 3-30-5 Shibuya, Higashiyama (Mejii-Jingumae station). 03 3832 8346. tinyurl.com/TOTworm. 11am-8pm, closed Mon.

**TENGA**
A popular Japanese manufacturer of adult toys, Tenga is known for its witty designs. You can find an array of Tenga’s most popular products at specialty shops and selected Don Quijote stores across Tokyo. For full details of every item on the cover, visit timeout.com/tokyo.

© NHK•T YO Station). 03 3217 0608. nhk-character.com. 10am-8.30pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.

**DON QUIJOTE**
Don Quijote is known for its witty designs. You can purchase all sorts of Domo merchandise at the NHK Studio Park shop in Shibuya (look out for the special 20th anniversary items) and the NHK Character Shop in Tokyo Station.

NHK Studio Park, 2-2-1 Honmachi, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3460 3374. nhk.or.jp/studiopark. 10am-6pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.

**BOTANIST**
Botanist is known for its natural range of hair and skincare products. Look out for the limited-edition seasonal releases, including this moisturising winter shampoo and conditioner set.

Botanist Tokyo, Sukekawa Bldg 1F-2F, 6-29-2 Jingumae, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 5368 5147. takano.jp/takano/en. 11am-9pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.

# Shop & Style

Add these featured Japanese products to your shopping list.

**KIT KAT JAPAN-EXCLUSIVE**
Japan is famous for its inventive take on the classic Kit Kat. Get your hands on all sorts of Japanese-exclusive flavours, which range from sake and matcha to wasabi and strawberry cheesecake (pictured).

Available at major department stores and Ameyoko Center 2F, 4-7-8 Ueno, Taito (Ueno Station).

**DOMO**
Domo is the official mascot of Japanese national broadcaster NHK. You can purchase all sorts of Domo merchandise at the NHK Studio Park shop in Shibuya (look out for the special 20th anniversary items) and the NHK Character Shop in Tokyo Station.

NHK Studio Park, 2-2-1 Honmachi, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3460 3374. nhk.or.jp/studiopark. 10am-6pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.

**ANTIQUE MJQ**
We deal in European and Japanese antiques, plus vintage watches and jewellery.

For full details of every item on the cover, visit timeout.com/tokyo.

© NHK•T YO Station). 03 3460 3374. nhk.or.jp/studiopark. 10am-6pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.

© NHK•T YO Station). 03 3217 0608. nhk-character.com. 10am-8.30pm daily. Available individually or in box of six.
KARAOKE IS THE GIFT Japan gave the world, and in Tokyo establish-ments specialising in anime songs, J-pop or other under-the-radar genres. There are regular karaoke ‘boxes’ for you and your friends, one-person booths for shy crooners, and hitokara ways. There are live karaoke establishments with a proper concert-hall setting, including seats for an audience of up to 50. Karat’s band promises to at least try to fulfill all requests, however obscure, so those looking to sing something other than Adele or Arashi may want to put Karat close to the top of their list. Cheered on (or booed, depending on your efforts) by a proper crowd, you can get a taste of what professional singers have to deal with every time they step into the spotlight. 

**KARAOKE 2.0**

**KARAOKE IS THE GIFT** Japan gave the world, and in Tokyo are a number of different ways. There are regular karaoke ‘boxes’ for you and your friends, one-person booths for shy crooners, and establishments specialising in anime songs, J-pop or other under-the-radar genres.

**LIVE BAND KARAOKE STAGE** You’ll feel like a real star when you step onto the gorgeously decorated stage at, uh, Stage, Kabukicho’s finest live karaoke bar. The house band’s repertoire includes an unbelievable 15,000 songs, from which you can choose your favourites using a simple electronic controller. Booking the entire place is an option for large groups, while smaller groups are accommodated, but you’ll need to book ahead if you’re planning a concert for a group of your friends.

**BAN X KARA ZONE-GZ** Ban x Karas second Tokyo location not only lets you show off your vocal range backed by a professional band – you and your friends are welcome to also take over on the guitar, drums or some other instrument while you do your best pop idol impression. Able to accommodate groups of up to 80 people, Zone-GZ is one of the most spacious live karaoke establishments in the capital, so those of you planning a company bonding night, or who just happen to be incredibly popular, might want to give this one a go. Couples’ rooms and VIP booths cater to those on the hunt for something more intimate, and additional entertainment options range from dart- to hookah-smoking rooms.

**BAN X KARA ZONE-R** A bar and restaurant that also happens to do live karaoke, Ban x Kara Zone-R is the ideal destination for those looking for a more laid-back venue at which to perform. The resident band has been on board since 1976, and with that amount of experience in the bag, the musicians here aren’t just content with playing by the book. You can expect them to react to your vocals and switch up the tempo as needed. Their repertoire includes over 2,600 songs, from classics to the latest chart hits. And when you need a breather, just sit down and enjoy the antics of the latest chart hits. You’re sure to get you fired up for your next go. The all-you-can-drink menu – which helps even the nerves if not always the quality of the performance – boasts significantly more variety than most bottomless bars and there’s pizza available to soak up the excess. Large groups are accommodated, but you’ll need to book ahead if you’re planning a concert for a group of your friends.

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Tokyo’s Planetariums

1. COSMO PLANETARIUM SHIBUYA
   - If you haven’t been to Shibuya, chances are you’ve already admired the iconic silver-colored dome of the Cosmo Planetarium, which sits on top of Shibuya’s Cultural Center Owauda. Venture inside and you’ll be even more impressed. The cosmos is projected onto a domed screen, allowing you to boldly go where few have gone before. Plus, the seats also rotate individually so you get to behold the heavens at your own leisure.
   - 〒150-0003, Shibuya-ku, Shibuya, Tokyo. 03 3464 2131. www.cosmoshibuya.com
   - 11am-8pm, Fri & Sat 9am-9pm, closed Mon. ¥600, junior high and primary school students ¥300, FREE for younger children.

2. GINGAZA (GALAXY) PLANETARIUM
   - If it wasn’t for the faux-space shuttle on the outer wall, you’d probably have a hard time finding this planetarium. The Gingga is housed inside a Buddhist temple, making it the first of its kind in Japan. Essentially a one-man show run by starstruck monk Kasuga, the planetarium features a different programme every month, with the show narrated live by Kasuga himself (who speaks English, Italian, German, French and Romanian on top of Japanese) and an assistant who combine to offer an enjoyable mix of informative tidbits and cosmic jokes. The show only runs on certain days and is so popular you’ll need to book via a lottery system on the website.
   - 〒143-0031, Katsushika-ku, Tokyo. 03 3838 1101. www.gingaza.com
   - 3-25-1 Shiratori, Katsushika (Ohanajaya Station). 03 3838 1101. tinyurl.com/TOTKatsushikaPlanetarium. Tue-Thu, Sun & hols 7pm-12midnight.

3. KATSUSHIKA CITY MUSEUM PLANETARIUM
   - Found in Ohanajaya out in Katsushika ward, this planetarium is the first in Japan to display a ‘digital universe’, created using all the planetary data collected throughout history. Making full use of this cutting-edge technology, it curates original programmes – all featuring a live narration (in Japanese though) – once every three months.
   - 〒143-0031, Katsushika-ku, Tokyo. 03 3838 1101. www.museum.katsushika-tokyo.jp
   - 3-1-3 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima (Ikebukuro Station). 03 3989 3546. tinyurl.com/TOTKatsushikaPlanetarium. 11am-8pm. Regular fee includes admission to the museum and planetarium).

4. KONICA MINOLTA PLANETARIUM
   - Back in 1936, Yurakucho became the very first area in Tokyo to house a planetarium. Sadly, it was destroyed during the war in 1945. But now, 80 years later, a brand-new facility has opened with two large domes and a virtual reality attraction. The first dome, a multi-purpose digital theatre, is equipped with an 8K ultra-high-definition screen that stretches from floor to ceiling. The second dome houses the planetarium, also kitted out with the latest technology. The result is so close as you can get to outer space without leaving central Tokyo.
   - www.tokyoplanetarium.com
   - 〒102-0075, Chiyoda, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo Bank of Japan Bldg. 1st & 5th fl. Chiyoda (Shinjuku Station). 03 3225 3564. tinyurl.com/TOTKonicaMinolta
   - 11am-5pm. Regular fee includes admission to the planetarium.

5. KONICA MINOLTA PLANETARIUM ‘MANTEN’
   - Conveniently located inside Shibuya’s large Sunshine City complex, one of the biggest planetariums in Tokyo lets you combine your visit with a shopping spree. Konica Minolta Planetarium ‘Manten’ boasts impressive ‘starry skies’ and impactful screenings with special seats that make you feel like you’re lying on soft grass (¥3,800 for two). Ask for English audio guides at the ticket counter.
   - www.manten.konicaminolta.jp
   - 5-3-25-1 Shiratori, Katsushika (Ohanajaya Station). 03 3838 1101. www.planetarium.konicaminolta.jp/planetariatokyo
   - 11am-8pm. Regular fee includes admission to the planetarium and planetarium).

6. PLANETARIUM BAR
   - A planetarium for adults, this bar has its own Megazero Zero Platinum planetarium projector. To the uninitiated, this projector is a big deal – it was created by Japanese engineer Takayuki Ohira and can project over five million stars, a feat officially recognised by the Guinness World Records. As for the bar, beer, wine, cocktails and whisky are offered alongside light meals such as Spanish jamón ibérico and auteur udon (space food/curry).
   - www.planetariumbar.com
   - 〒141-0031, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo (Shibuya Station). 03 3989 3546. tinyurl.com/TOTPlanetariumBar
   - Mon-Thu 7pm-2am, Fri & Sat 7pm-3am, Sun & holidays 7pm-12midnight.

Want to visit the outer reaches of space but still be back in time for hotspot? Then head to one of the city’s planetariums. By Tabea Greuner

Things to Do
Strokes of genius

More than just black ink on white paper, calligraphy art is the aesthetic embodiment of Zen in Japanese culture, as Julie Anne Sjaastad discovers

ART IN JAPAN often comes from a philosophical standpoint, where the process is every bit as important as the result. This is particularly true when it comes to the Japanese calligraphy art of shodo. On the surface, this East Asian art form of high art is revered for its striking characters and ideograms made up of sweeping brush strokes. However, its beauty lies not just in its form but also in its ability to capture the artist’s state of mind. Calligraphy is part of everyday life in Japan. People learn to write beautifully in their early childhood, and some even take extra courses. For professional calligraphers, it is more than just writing with a bamboo brush and sumi-ink; it is a life-long commitment.

As an art form, calligraphy demands not only physical but mental preparation. The paper gives you only one chance. There is no room for correction as soon as the ink touches the paper; the slightest hesitation ruins the work. The angle at which the brush is held, and the pressure and speed with which one applies the brush, ink and paper, and what these three could be perceived as reflections of the great master's past, but also studying their works in order to reflect on their spirit and philosophy.

As Yamaguchi says, ‘It is a challenge for anyone to embody their spirit in handwritten words. Meditate, prepare the ink, focus on the moment, pick up the brush, and write the steady strokes in a smooth, continuous flow without hesitation. Your body and mind have to be aligned; otherwise, you will lose the essence of your own roots and traditions.’

Traditional and contemporary calligraphy

Despite the strict rules of classical Chinese aesthetics, Chinese calligraphy art is open to experimentation: Xu Bing’s ‘art installation ‘Book from the Sky’ (1988), which consists of 604 pages of meaningless glyphs, or Gu Wenda’s ‘Forest of Stone Stiles’; Retranslation and Rewriting ‘Tang Poetry’ (1993-ongoing), in which Gu carved rewritten Tang poems on stone stiles. Pushing these boundaries, Chinese calligraphy has become more accessible to a wider audience.

Yasuo Kitai, founder of Gallery Kitai, has been presenting Japanese calligraphy art at exhibitions in Europe and America. He says that Japanese calligraphy is so steeped in tradition that it becomes difficult for the artist to move beyond boundaries. This, however, does not mean that there are not new stories to tell. For Kitai, the emergence of contemporary calligraphers breathes life into such traditions.

Chinese and Japanese calligraphy

Like many art forms, Japanese inherited brush writing from China. Their therefore share many similarities. However, there are slight differences in writing and aesthetic expressions, especially between traditional and contemporary calligraphy.

Chinese calligraphy is more complex as it employs a greater number of characters. The use of kanji, Japanese calligraphy, however, has been simplified over the years. Additionally, Japanese calligraphy uses the combination of kanji characters originally from Chinese writing, and kana, a syllabic script that was developed from kana.

Today, Japanese calligraphy seeks to discover new forms while respecting its own roots and traditions.

Appreciating calligraphy art

The world at large is predisposed to believe that art normally contains a meaning. Thus, when faced with calligraphy, we assume that we need to understand the text in order to appreciate the art. However, Kitai states that it’s important to admire the art from our own personal perspective; we shouldn’t feel bound to read or translate in order to appreciate the art. However, Kitai states that it’s important to admire the art from our own personal perspective; we shouldn’t feel bound to read or translate in order to appreciate the art. It is a challenge for anyone to embody their spirit in their own roots and traditions.

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New shows to see

This winter, you can enjoy conceptual and surrealist art, mythical scroll paintings, Chinese calligraphy and much, much more.

ESSENTIAL EXHIBITIONS

**Sophie Calle ‘Exquisite Pain’ from the Hara Museum Collection**

One of France’s most famous conceptual artists, Sophie Calle is largely known for her confessional narrative works. This year, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art will reprise Calle’s work ‘Exquisite Pain’, which was originally created for the museum and first exhibited in 1999/2000.

The exhibition is divided into two parts and highlights grief and recovery of a broken heart that Calle herself experienced. The first one presents letters, transcripts of remembered conversations and photographs that relate to the story of her own life. Part two is the story of the worst day of her life. Part two is the story of the women of the royal families.

**Miriçik ‘Visiting in the Night’**

Focusing on the female individuals who worked in the film industry throughout the world and was certainly felt in Japan.

**Toshiko Okanoue, Photo Collage: The Miracle of Silence**

Surrealism – as an artistic, intellectual and literary movement – experimented and tried to find ways of visualising the subconscious mind, quickly developing several techniques in both painting and photography. The movement spread throughout the world and was certainly felt in Japan.

**Leiko Ikemura – Our Planet Earth – Earth & Stars**

Leiko Ikemura, who has lived in Europe for over 40 years. The free-flowing gestures of her paintings, drawings, prints and prints, in which shapes and contours dissolve in the soft colours she employs,1 emits a singular imagination. Ikemura’s works depict various aspects of creation with motifs including spirits, people and creatures. Her works are eminently poetic, infused with humour, affection and pain, as they convey an unyielding notion that as living beings we should strive to accept the diversity and the fluidity of life exactly as we find it.

**Kawane Kyosai: Nothing Escaped his Brush**

Known as the ‘Demon of painting’, Kawane Kyosai (1831-1889) playfully depicted spirits, animals and other worldly creatures in his works. Recent research has revealed how Kyosai expanded his artistic oeuvres by taking in advanced new painting techniques, expressions and even themes, while at the same time staying true to the traditional Kano School styles and methods.

**Roppongi Crossing 2019: Connections**

Held every three years, Mori Art Museum’s ‘Roppongi Crossing’ series provides an up-close look at Japan’s changing art scene. Its tenth edition brings together 25 Japanese artists and collectives to reflect on an era in which demands for new technologies are high and information is a commodity.

A world of diversity but also coexistence, urged by political interests and an ever-growing economic disparity has increasingly apparent on social media. The museum highlights these issues that are created through communication. As an antithesis, the participating artists offer ways of turning ideas upside down and the different types of ‘connection’ that can be found in today’s society.

**Le Corbusier and The Age of Purism**

For its 100th birthday, The National Museum of Western Art, Toyko is hosting a grand exhibition dedicated to Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known by his pseudonym Le Corbusier (1887–1965), the architect who designed this very building. Jeaneret is widely regarded as one of the three greatest masters of modern architecture, along with Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe.

Le Corbusier published a manifesto about modern architecture in 1910, calling his philosophy ‘purism’; he believed that buildings should have a clean and pure structure. Many of his buildings are characterised by pillars, separation of structural frame and walls, free-standing columns, free-standing surfaces and rooftop gardens – and the museum stands as an expression of this idea.

**The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, Feb 9-May 26**

**ESSENTIAL EXHIBITIONS**

*Art & Culture* January/March, 2019

*Time Out Tokyo* January/March, 2019

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Party politics

World-acclaimed DJ Nobu on how to save Japan’s club scene. By Kunihiro Miki

DJ NOBU BELIEVES that Tokyo’s club scene is in crisis. The widely respected techno pioneer believes a combination of generational and genre divisions are to blame. “Japan is one of the few countries by the country’s restrictive nightlife laws could see the club scene crumble. Nobu, who has gained a wealth of experience and insights during his globe-trotting career, is now determined to change all this by saving the scene that raised him. We caught up with the techno master to find out how.  You’re playing abroad almost every month these days, but has there been a recent place or party that really stuck with you? Russainia (a club in Thessaloniki, the capital of Greece, which opened in 2014 in a space underneath a football stadium). That amazing energy is something you won’t find almost anywhere else in the world. A party that would only draw like 200 or 300 people in Japan easily gets an audience of 1,500 there, and the craziness never stops – not even at 8am.

How many shows do you play per month these days? I try to keep it between six and eight, including my overseas engagements. Just to uphold quality.

You played a back-to-back set with the legendary Ben Klock at Barcelona’s Sonar Festival in June 2018. What was that experience like? It was so nerveous! Party ing at festivals and clubs in Berlin and London in my 30s left such an impression on me, but my true overseas techno baptism came in my 30s. That was when I attended a party at Berghain (a club in Berlin that occupies an old East German power plant where Klock is a resident DJ). I met Ben Klock that time too, and left Berlin a changed man.

That was around 2010, and I’m so happy to have been able to play alongside him eight years later. I really felt like my efforts outside of Japan had paid off. The overseas audience thought our B2B was sensational over in Europe, but the Japanese media just kind of ignored it.

Why do you think you – and the likes of Ryuichi Sakamoto, who also played at Sonar – have come to be better recognised abroad than in Japan? Well, there is the issue of the [local Japanese] media, the people telling the stories. No matter how hard DJs try to promote themselves, there are certain limits [here]. It is pretty sad that the music media, which I think should back up the scene and provide support, doesn’t. Generally speaking, I think the fact I was given the opportunity to do a B2B with Ben Klock is really inspiring. If it wasn’t, I might have turned it down, since our styles and approaches are quite different. But I hoped it could inspire young DJs, give them something to dream about.

Does more need to be done to address the gender imbalance in Tokyo’s club scene? Japan is far behind on a lot of things. The island nation mentality is one reason, and we need to enact change, but many DJs and fans either fear change or just sneer at these issues. In Berlin, the issues of gender and feminism are there as an obvious fact of life and you feel them very directly, which inspired me to educate myself. I think parties reflect the societies they are held in, which is why each country has its own type of parties. A lot of people in Japan don’t like or are afraid of these issues, but change won’t come unless each one of us gets up and does something about it.

Are there any other things that you think need to change in the Japanese club scene? The seniority system. I wasn’t allowed to play on the main stages of big clubs until I was around 34. Things are better these days, with more opportunities for young talents, but that custom is still alive. We really don’t need it. In Europe, it doesn’t matter if you have a long or short career – asking as you’re talented, nobody will stop you from headlining gigs. In Japan, people still look at you through the age filter.

What do you think about small clubs being raided by the police (due to licensing issues) just last year? It’s really hard for me to answer that. I haven’t been able to do anything about what has happened [raids, club regulations and changes in the Tokyo club scene in general], so I don’t have the right to comment.

Beyond clubs, many things have happened recently that make me feel like freedom is being taken away from society. Every day is a struggle. They were talking about introducing daylight savings time just for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, or telling people not to order things online during the Games to minimise traffic congestion due to delivery within the urban areas. It’s ridiculous. I’m reminded of the word ‘dystopia’ when I think of Japan these days.

But there’s positive change too, right? I think young DJs are doing a great job, and they are all super positive. Seeing them having fun doing what they do has a really good influence on me. It’s great to have them. So we old guys need to do some min skeeping for them, prepare the ground [Laughter]. I hope the parties I organise can serve that purpose [provide a space for young artists].

‘I wasn’t allowed to play on the main stages of big clubs until I was around 34!’

‘I wasn’t allowed to play on the main stages of big clubs until I was around 34!’
New kids on the block
Looking for a banging night out? Let Mari Hiratsuka guide you around the city’s best new DJ bars and event spaces

Fitting for a city that never sleeps, Tokyo’s nightlife scene is increasingly restless. The past six months or so have been particularly busy, with a diverse range of new venues popping up across town. While the DJ bar – essentially half club, half bar – remains very popular, the capital has also seen several new after-dark hangouts shape-shift depending on the time of day, operating as clubs at night and restaurants during the day. Here are the most exciting newcomers on the scene.

Deus Ex Machina Harajuku

Formerly located between Ebisu and Shibuya, the much-loved miniaturist DJ has Zubar has moved to the south side of Shibuya Station. A favourite with the underground crowd, its regulars include renowned Tokyo DJs and musicians, who come for the eclectic programming: you might hear electronica one night and jazz the other. Thankfully the Taiwanese flavours on the food menu are plenty of painfully hip patrons.

Débris Daikanyama

Established by the crew behind annual electronic music festival Zipang, Débris stages a wide range of events, from club nights to art exhibitions and film screenings. The interiors and sound system were built with the help of artists and the result is a mad mash-up of tastes and sensations. Open the door – which looks disarmingly like the entrance to a Prohibition-era speakeasy – and you’ll find yourself in a flashily neo-Asian cavern. At the bar you can choose cocktails made with Italian craft gin Malfy and ‘medicinal’ booze, while Chinese tea and congee can be ordered at the P.B. Restaurant by the entrance, whose shelves feature rare books curated by the operators of mobile library Paradise Books.

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Sankeys Penthouse Harajuku

Manchester-born club franchise Sankeys has been a Tokyo fixture since 2015, and this bar and lounge is the latest link in a chain that also includes clubs in several UK cities and an outpost in Ibiza. Occupying the top floor of the Q Plaza building in Harajuku, the Penthouse boasts eye-popping views, in addition to a top-of-the-line Alpha Recording System and a VIP bar occasionally manned by a mixologist formerly employed by Ginza’s Tender. The programming is heavy on house, techno and new disco, with events centred on the weekends. Thanks to its Harajuku location, home to Tokyo’s fashion industry, the venue gets plenty of painfully hip patrons.

MOU Shimokitazawa

Aspiring to be a hub for every sort of cultural creativity in Shimokitazawa, music bar Mou is the brainchild of DJ Moriura, organiser of the popular Shibuya club night Top Gun. The drink menu is worth posting over, as it ranges from the SSL 908, a beer brewed to commemorate the legendary Roland TR-808 drum machine, to organic wines selected by Moriura himself. Whether you’re just getting the night started or are already cooling down after a long party session, you won’t regret stopping by Mou for tunes and a sip.

Zubar Shibuya

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Cheap shots

Forget happy hours with their pesky time restrictions, these ‘one-coin’ bars serve drinks for just ¥500 or less all night long. By Mirono Hinana

SAKESTAND SHIBUYA DOGENZAKAUE

The ten varieties of sake served at Shibuya’s hakistand on any given day are picked to match the season, making it fiendishly difficult not to come back again and again. The small, standing-only space isn’t a palace, but the friendly and knowledgeable staff more than make up for it. And as you can have a taste of even the most refined nihonshu, served in wine glasses, for under ¥500, sake enthusiasts will have a field day. The equally reasonably priced appetisers include homemade liver pâté and oysters in oil, and the lack of a cover charge just puts the cherry on top.

SAKESTAND SHIBUYA DOGENZAKAUE

1F , 1-19-8 Dogenzaka, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 4516 4900.

Ginza 300Bar Next

There are no seats at what must be the cheesiest bar in flashy Ginza, but don’t let that stop you getting stuck in. All food and drinks, including the cocktails made with homemade organic herbs, go for ¥300 (tax excluded). We’re big fans of the mritos – officially approved by the Cuban embassy no less – but make sure to try the ‘botanical’ gin-tonics as you make your way through the 150-strong list of drinks. This place fills up at the weekend, when DJs spin tunes and the occasional band plays a gig. No worries if the bar gets too full; there are twoancy bars (Ginza Gochome and Hatchome) run by the same group, who has been a Ginza standby for 25 years. You’ll be glad to know that your 300Bar drink and food tickets are valid at all three outlets.

Kaku-uchi Wine Risaburou

Pick from five reds and five whites – or work your way through all ten at the friendly Risaburou, a standing-only wine bar and bistro where everything on the menu goes for ¥500. Close to Tokyo skytree, this joint is an offshoot of the popular Edos Risaburou chain, one of the best wine bars east of the Sumida River, and deals in slightly altered versions of the original’s superb pâté and aubins. Best assured, all chops are tip-top, and get this – the counter corners are even cushioned for cosier leaning. So wear comfy shoes and luxuriate in an evening of good food and good company.

DOING TOKYO ON A SHOESTRING

But don’t want to drink ¥100 chu-hais (canned shochu highballs) in front of the convenience store? It’s your lucky day – contrary to what you might think, you can get almost anything for ¥300 – or less. These range from specialist sake joints and refined wine bars to party hotspots complete with DJ booths and wild revellers.

Standing Bar 333

Giving 300Bar a run for its money in Ginza is 333, a D3 bar where you can buy most drinks for ¥333 – ¥383. The cashier men need to buy at least three ¥333 tickets when entering, while women are only required to pick up two. The tickets can then be exchanged for any of the 150 beer, wine and cocktail options. There’s nowhere to sit down but fear not, the stylish space and excellent sound system are worthy of the pool location, and local DJs play the booth almost every night. If you’re looking to make new friends in an international atmosphere without paying through the nose for the experience, 333 fits the bill.

Standing Bar 333

2F , 1-19-8 Dogenzaka, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3572 1333.

Ueno 500 Bar

You wouldn’t expect to find a bar specialising in fine wine and authentic Roman-style pizzas among the chaos of izakayas and discount clothing stores in Ueno’s Ameyoko, but 500 Bar is the best kind of surprise. You can get almost anything on the menu – 20 kinds of pizza, Italian izakaya and discount clothing stores in Ueno’s Ameyoko, but 500 Bar is the best kind of surprise. You can get almost anything on the menu – 20 kinds of pizza, Italian

GALANTE NO HANA (2018)
Director Shun Nakagawa’s latest effort breaks boundaries and introduces completely new sensibilities to Japanese cinema by perceptively describing not only the struggles and emotions of LGBT people, but also the kaleidoscope of attitudes expressed by those around them. The film begins with high school sophomores taking an LGBT awareness class, after which the students are confronted with rumors concerning the sexuality of some of their classmates. While most LGBT films tend to focus only on individual members of sexual minorities, Nakagawa’s work is rich in characters in a larger social context, even highlighting the contradictions and frustrations that emerge when kind intentions bring about unfortunate outcomes. ‘Kalanchoe no Hana’ (Tadanobu Asano) takes Kanou under his wing in more ways than one, but a falling out between the two eventually leads to a dramatic climactic showdown. The film is particularly successful when it depicts the group psychology of the Shinsengumi, which seeks to rid the brotherhood of romance between its members, supposedly in the name of unity and morale—an order that is challenged when the memorable Kanou enchants all the older men around him.

KAKERA: A PIECE OF OUR LIFE (2009)
Momoiko Ando’s directorial debut, based on the manga ‘Love White’ by Erika Sakurazawa, stars Hitaka Mitsushina as college student Kaori, who ditches her boorish boyfriend and embraces her inner lesbian. She is assisted in carving out her new identity by yakuza princess Kaori Nakamura and the middle-aged (Ryo Katsue) who, through their interactions with her, help the emotionally inexperienced Kaori grow into an independent woman.

Depicting Tokyo’s diversity and acceptance of differences, the film touches upon the city’s many coexisting identities and cultures. Besides its storytelling

BEETWEEN 40-EQUIPPED multiplexes, tiny arthouse and revival theatres, Tokyo is a filmmaker’s paradise—providing said filmmakers are fluent in Japanese. For the rest of us, seeing any film that isn’t a Hollywood blockbuster in English can be surprisingly tough. For those itching to catch a flick, here’s the lowdown on how to see the latest Japanese releases with English subtitles.

FESTIVALS
To see the newest Japanese films in English—maybe bump into a few stars—head to film festivals. The capital’s largest, the Tokyo International Film Festival, runs each year for three weeks in October, and screens dozens of Japanese films so new that most don’t even have trailers yet. That includes anime, low-budget indies, documentaries and even some big-budget premieres—the vast majority with English subtitles. Many screenings are followed by Q&A sessions with the stars, with English translators on hand to give you the chance to dig deeper into the film. TIFF isn’t the only game in town; there’s also Tokyo FILMeX, which rolls into Yurakucho each year in late November. Like TIFF, there are plenty of English-subbed films from Japan and around the world. Meanwhile, Tokyo’s neighbour, Saitama hosts the Sip City International D-Cinema Festival in July, where English subs are the norm.

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. LAWRENCE (1983)
In this story, nagisa Oshin’s cut classic is perhaps best known for its cast of non-actors featuring Tatsushi Kitanou (more famously known by his stage name Real Takashi) and musicians David Bowie and Ryuichi Sakamoto in leading roles. Taking place at a POW camp on the island of Java, the Japanese-controlled colony, the film is visually impressive, as bright daytime scenes shot under a scorching sun are interspersed with darkness and a star-filled night sky.

Bowie’s acting chops are on full display, too, especially in the scenes in which his character Major Celliers looks back on his time in England, recalling his now dead brother and the bullies who tormented him in public school. Although it touches on commandant Sakamoto’s obsessive love for prisoner Bowie, ‘Mr. Lawrence’ isn’t just a film about race, but tells a timeless story of the noble feelings evoked by mutual respect and human dignity.

THE INTERNET
Tokyo Filmfgoer (tokyofilmgoer.com) is a site devoted to where to catch English-friendly films in Tokyo. The site was founded in 2014 by FCCJ film programmers Karen Severns and Koichi Mori, who wanted to create a resource for film fans seeking subtitled screenings. Tokyo Filmfgoer is simple—it lists upcoming screenings and other film-related events that include English-language options, complete with essential information like where to get your hands on tickets.

Festivals make the case that such screenings are a win-win for film companies—they bring more viewers to Tokyo theatres, and those viewers become ‘ambassadors for Japanese film in their home countries.’ She also says she’s seen a major uptick in the number of screenings since the site was launched, and that she’s seen many people who’ve flown in from countries like Malaysia just to see the latest films in their favourite series.

So the next time you boot up Netflix for a movie night indoors, take a look around—you might well catch a big-screen alternative nearby.
Spa trek

With spectacular mountain scenery, soothing onsen and amazing art museums, Hakone makes the perfect short getaway from Tokyo. By Mari Hiratsuka. Photography Kisa Toyoshima.

THE MOUNTAIN TOWN OF HAKONE lies about an hour and a half by train from Tokyo, which makes it a popular day-trip or weekend getaway from the capital. It has had a long and illustrious tradition as a hot spring town – its name even appears in Edo-era (1603-1868) rankings of Japan’s best onsen. But Hakone is about much more than just bathing. It’s got everything from superb art museums to an active volcano – as well as a jaw-dropping view of Mt Fuji on clear days. These are our top picks of things to do and see around the area, from central Hakone-Yumoto and beautiful Lake Ashi to pools but relaxed Gora, which is still one of the most in-demand neighbourhoods for moneyed Tokyo folks looking for a second home.

Hakone Shrine

If you’re taking the ‘pirate ship’ from Togendai to Moto-Hakone, don’t forget to pay a visit to the Hakone Shrine, whose red torii gate can be seen from the waters. Said to have been built in battle, its powers have been trusted by the likes of shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu and 12th-century ruler Minamoto no Yoritomo. For a double dose of spiritual clout, continue your walk for another ten minutes to Kunuya shrine, which draws on the legend of a nine-headed dragon that managed to calm a poisonous monster that terrorised Lake Ashi way back in the Nara period (710-794). This shrine is said to bring luck in battle, its ‘peace gate’ of Hakone Shrine, which stands partially submerged in water near the shore, and majestic Mt Fuji towering over the landscape. More active travellers may want to rent a boat and angling gear and head out to try their luck with the local fish, which include rainbow trout, black bass and Japanese lake smelt.

> Hakone Shrine, 3-1 Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 7123. hakone-jinja.or.jp.
> 9am-5pm daily. ¥1,600, students ¥1,200, children aged 6-15 ¥800.

Lake Ashi

From Owakudani, get on the cable car (known as the ‘ropeway’) for Togendai and you’ll soon find yourself at the shore of Lake Ashi. Said to be about 3,000 years old, this still body of water is best viewed from the gaudy looking ‘pirate ship’ that regularly cruises across it. Gazing out from the deck, you’ll be able to spot the distinctive red ‘peace gate’ of Hakone Shrine, which stands partially submerged in water near the shore, and majestic Mt Fuji towering over the landscape. More active travellers may want to rent a boat and angling gear and head out to try their luck with the local fish, which include rainbow trout, black bass and Japanese lake smelt.

> Hakone Lake, Ashigara Shimo, Kanagawa.
> 80-1 Motohakone, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 82 1161. hakone-oam.or.jp.
> 9am-5pm daily, closed Dec 31 & Jan 1. ¥2,800, children aged 6-15 ¥1,800.

The Hakone Open-Air Museum

If you find sculptures as far as the eye can see at this unique facility in Ninotaira, which was ahead of its time when it opened in 1969 as the first alfresco art museum in Japan. Here you’ll find around 120 modern and contemporary works of art spread across the expansive 70,000 sq m park. There are works by Henry Moore and Fernand Léger plus an indoor exhibition hall dedicated to Picasso. The best part? It’s super family-friendly, and some of the installations even double as kids’ playgrounds. You could easily spend at least half a day here before soaking your tired feet at the museum’s outdoor hot spring foot bath.

> 1-121 Ninotaira, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 1161. hakone-open-air-museum.or.jp.
> 9am-5pm daily. ¥1,400, students ¥900, children aged 6-15 ¥500.

Okada Museum of Art

One of the most impressive museums in Hakone, the Okada Museum of Art displays mainly Japanese, Chinese and Korean art on five floors and across 5,000 square metres. Its collection includes works from antiquity to the present, making for a really deep dive into the history of East Asian art. The museum’s current exhibition (ends March 31) is a five-year anniversary show highlighting the very best of the Okada trove. For the perfect end to your visit, soak your tired feet in the museum’s outdoor hot spring foot bath while you admire the stunning mural of wind god and thunder god.

> 9am-5pm daily. ¥2,613, children aged 6-15 ¥1,306.

The shopping arcade in front of Hakone-Yumoto Station offers plenty of options for souvenir hunters. You’ll want to start at Tanakaya, where the shelves are lined with swopt marguerite boxes, hot spring minerals and all sorts of other quirky stuff you can only find here. For edible gifts, consider old-school sweets shop Chimoto, found a bit further up towards the hot-spring inn area. Their marshmallow-y umeboshi cakes, which you can also order at the in-house café, are popular. Note that most of the shops in this area don’t take credit cards.

> Yumoto, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa.
> 493-1 Kowakudani, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 1161. hakone-oam.or.jp.
> 9am-5pm daily. ¥1,600, students ¥1,200, children aged 6-15 ¥800.

Shopping at Hakone-Yumoto Station

Miyanoshita has attracted customers as a hot spring resort since 1878, when the famous Fujiya Hotel opened in this now very retro neighbourhood. The several late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings lining its streets are now mostly occupied by cafés, restaurants and souvenir shops. Particularly notable among these are Studio Shima, a photo studio founded in the same year as the Fujiya Hotel and visited by the likes of John Lennon and Charlie Chaplin, and Kikkaso, where you can savour a plate of traditional beef curry (¥92,613) at lunchtime. For stylish accessories and intriguing knickknacks created by local artists, check out Naraaya Café right by Miyanoshita Station.

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INSIDER TIPS

Yumoto Kenban

Up to 1,500 geisha come to practice dancing, singing and sharing experiences at traditional houses, where free shows are held monthly.

9-68 Yumoto, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 84 5310. geisha in residence. Host choir in Jan 13, 2pm.

Yoshikane Ryokan

While main drawers in Hakone are only accessible to in-house guests, this public bath, run by the venerable Yoshikane Ryokan, opens its doors to day-trippers between 10am and 10pm. In addition to hot spring baths, visitors can check out the ryokan's impressive Japanese gardens.

13-7 Yumoto, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 84 5711. yoshikane ryokan. Open 7am-9pm. Free shows are held monthly.

Travel & Hotels

WHERE TO STAY

Hakone Kowakien Ten-yu

All of the rooms at this classy inn, opened in April 2017, are equipped with private open-air baths filled with hot spring water from Owakudani. In addition to the 120 standard rooms, Ten-yu offers 24 ‘ropeway’ rooms and sukusui, with prices starting from ¥35,000 (for one person) per night. While a soak in a private bath is relaxing, make sure you check out the shared bathing facilities, which feature an infinity onsen that looks out over the vast wilds of Hakone.


Insider tips

Ropeway's Sounzan Station. A cable car ('ropeway') from Sounzan Station. A cable car (also known as a ‘ropeway’) from Sounzan Station to Owakudani Station and make sure to keep an eye out for views of Mt Fuji along the way.

9-1300-72 Gora, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 8383. Open daily, sunrise 6am - sunset 5pm (last entry 6pm). Dinner ¥5,000 - 10,000.

Gora Brewery & Grill

Opened in 2017 by celebrity chef Nobuyuki ‘Nobu’ Matsuhisa himself, Gora Brewery combines innovative, Japanese cooking with craft beer from the microbrewery on the premises. Premium creations such as crispy gyoza dumplings filled with kuroge (black-haired) wagyu meat (¥900) and voluminous sushi rolls stuffed with fatty tuna and salmon (¥1,800) with their signature Gora IPA (¥800). When you’re all filled up and satisfied, close out the evening by resting your legs in the foot bath outside.

3-10-16 Gora, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 8383. Open daily, sunrise 6am - sunset 5pm (last entry 6pm). Dinner ¥5,000 - 10,000.

FOOD & DRINK

Takeyabu

Located just off the road near Ubako, this stranger of soba noodle restaurants stands out in many ways from one. Upon arrival, you’ll be treated to the avant-garde art of owner Takahiro Abe, whose peculiar creations include sculptures decorated with broken plates and marbles – it’s all supposed to be themed on idiosyncratic French artist Ferdinand Cheval’s ‘Le Palais Idéal’.

Don’t let the offbeat visuals distract you: Abe’s noodles are excellent, with the most popular options on the menu sometimes selling out before noon. Besides the inaka seiro, featuring hand-cut noodles made with stone-milled buckwheat and served cold, we like the simple kake soba (traditional kake soba), which get their distinctive colour from a special root hasamiage (¥900). With a hostel nearby, the place often fills up with both tourists and locals from early evening, so you’ll want to book a table in advance (note that the staff don’t speak English, so get your hotel to make the call for you).

3-10-16 Gora, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 8107. itoh dining co. jp. Lunch & happy hour 1pm-4pm (last entry 3:30pm; beer ¥500), dinner 5pm & 9pm (last entry 10pm). Closed Mon.

Café Ryusenkei

This charming trailer café is technically mobile, but you can usually find it around the Hakone ropeway’s Sounzan Station. A big fan of kuro tamago, literally ‘black eggs’, which get their distinctive colour from being boiled in the sulphur hot springs. Only sold in packs of five (¥500), these eggs look perfectly normal on the inside, and locals believe that consuming them could prolong your lifespan. For the best view of the crater, take the cable car (also known as a ‘ropeway’) from Sounzan Station to Owakudani Station and make sure to keep an eye out for views of Mt Fuji along the way.

9-1300-48 Gora, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 8350. Open daily, 10am-5pm (from early to late).

Black eggs at Owakudani

The first place to visit after getting off the train at Hakone-Yumoto, the gateway to Hakone, is Owakudani: a crater formed when Mt Hakone erupted about 3,000 years ago. Steam and a very recognisable sulphur odour constantly rise from its rocky surface, allowing you to sense the power of nature with your eyes – and your nose.

The local specialty is kuro tamago, literally ‘black eggs’, which get their distinctive colour from being boiled in the sulphur hot springs. Only sold in packs of five (¥500), these eggs look perfectly normal on the inside, and locals believe that consuming them could prolong your lifespan. For the best view of the crater, take the cable car (also known as a ‘ropeway’) from Sounzan Station to Owakudani Station and make sure to keep an eye out for views of Mt Fuji along the way.

1300-489 Gora, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 83 7031. Ten-yu onsen inn. 6.30pm - midnight, closed Thu.

Karuta

Open until midnight, this friendly takayaka is one of the few options for a late-night meal outside of the hot spring inns of Hakone-Yumoto. Famed for its chankuroabe – the hearty meat and vegetable stew sumo wrestlers love – Karuta also does a range of delicious sake-compatible appetisers. Try the oyajii oomakase (¥7000), a five-skewer set of grilled pork and chicken meatballs, or some lotus root hassamiage (¥9000). With a hostel nearby, the place often fills up with both tourists and locals from early evening, so you’ll want to book a table in advance (note that the staff don’t speak English, so get your hotel to make the call for you).

1-30 Karuta, Hakone, Ashigara-Shimo, Kanagawa. 0460 84 5031. karuta hakone.com. 6.30pm - midnight, closed Thu.

Takeyabu: This is the spot you’re likely to lose your sense of time and place.

Oyaji omakase (five-skewer set) at Karuta hakone. 50 25 30 45 60
Ticket to ride

Flash your passport and get access to a host of discounted tickets for trains, buses, metro and even the shinkansen

EVERYONE KEEPS TELLING you how expensive Japan is, right? Don’t believe the hype. There are bargains to be had, particularly when travelling in this fine country. So if you’re looking to cross town or fly the length of Japan, we’ve got you covered.

TOKYO

Common one-day ticket for Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway
Unlimited one-day travel on all Tokyo Metro and Toei subway lines for, you guessed it, 24 hours. ¥900 (children ¥450)

Toei Bus one-day pass
Valid for one-day unlimited use of Toei buses around Tokyo. Don’t worry, the buses will display the upcoming stop in English. ¥500 (children ¥250)

Mt Takao Ticket
A one-day round-trip ticket from any station on the Keio or Keio Inokashira lines to Takaosanguchi Station, as well as a one-way or round-trip ticket for the Takanosu Cable Car or Chair Lift. Great if you want a more relaxing way to explore the mountain. ¥20 percent discount

GREATER TOKYO (KANTO REGION)

N’EX Tokyo Round Trip Ticket
Tokyo’s international hub certainly knows how to take care of its visitors. Only available to foreign passport holders, this option will get you a round trip on the N’EX (Narita Express) from Narita International Airport (terminals 1 and 2) to major stations in Tokyo for just ¥4,000 for adults, that’s a saving of about 33 percent on the regular fare. Tickets are valid for 14 days and available from the JR counter at Narita Airport. ¥4,000 (children ¥2,000)

JR Tokyo Wide Pass
If you’re looking for a whistle-stop tour of Kanto, this beauty will give you three days of unlimited travel on JR East Shinkansen (bullet trains) and limited express trains in the region. There are drawbacks though – tickets can only be used on consecutive days and cannot be used for Tokaido Shinkansen or JR buses. ¥10,000 (children ¥5,000)

JAPAN-WIDE

Japan Rail Pass
The top trump of rail passes, this will get you on all JR trains – including shinkansen – as well as local, JR bus services and a ferry service to Miyajima Island in Hiroshima during the validity period (7, 14 or 21 consecutive days after first use). Only visitors to Japan are eligible; it is highly recommended that you buy your pass outside of Japan (check japannet.or.jp for a list of authorised sales offices), as there are only a few vendors within Japan, who sell at a mark-up. ¥29,110-81,870

Japan Bus Pass
Run by Willer Express, which operates highway buses across Japan, this pass gets you three, five or seven non-consecutive days of travel (which can include weekends with the right pass) – within a two-month period. There are some blackout dates (namely, Golden Week and the Obon holidays in August), but other than that you can pretty much ride whenever you want within two months of your first journey. The deal is only available via willerexpress.com, and for those with a foreign passport, including residents. From ¥10,200

Note: Prices and fare conditions are correct at time of print, and are subject to change. Please check the official websites to confirm before purchasing.

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You know you’re in Tokyo when...

\[ \text{...even the animals are eccentric} \]

By Brooke Barker

EVERY TOKYOITE KNOWS the story of Hachiko, the remarkably loyal Akita dog that waited patiently at Shibuya Station every day for his owner to come home from work, even after his master passed away. The stoic mutt’s statue is an icon of Shibuya, but he’s not Japan’s only personality-filled beast. Here’s your guide to our favourites...

About the author/illustrator
Brooke Barker is a writer, illustrator and animal-lover. Her first book ‘Sad Animal Facts’ is a New York Times and Los Angeles Times bestseller, and her most recent book ‘Sad Animal Babies’ explores the perils and pitfalls of newborn animals. Her books have been translated into ten languages, including Japanese. For more of Brooke’s work, see sadanimalfacts.com.
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