One Night in Tokyo
In July 2017, a brand-new theater opened in Tokyo’s Yurakucho area. Named Alternative Theatre, this state-of-the-art venue will bring exciting performance art to the masses. The main goal of the venue is to create high-quality entertainment that appeals to both Japanese locals and visitors from around the world by providing non-verbal performances and music.

Alternative Theatre implements state-of-the-art technology, including a fly system and LEDs that cover the walls and ceiling of the interior. No matter where your seat may be among the 410 available, you will be treated to exciting performances unique only to Alternative Theatre.

 ACCESS

Yurakucho Center Bldg (Yurakucho Mullion) 7F, 2-5-1 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo JAPAN

- 3-minute walk from the central exit / Ginza exit of Yurakucho station on the JR Yamanote line
- 3-minute walk from the D8 exit of Yurakucho station on the Tokyo Metro Yurakucho line
- 1-minute walk from the C4 exit of Ginza station on the Tokyo Metro Ginza / Hibiya / Marunouchi lines
- Direct connection to the A0 exit of Hibiya station on the Tokyo Metro Hibiya / Chiyoda / Toei Subway Mita lines

A SAMURAI RISES IN TOKYO
Exciting non-verbal, Japanese sword action!

The year is 2020.
In the massive metropolis of Tokyo, a lone samurai appears...

STARTING FROM
7.7.2017

SAMURAI ENTERTAINMENT

Alternative Theatre
Yurakucho Center Bldg. (Yurakucho Mullion) 7F, 2-5-1 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo JAPAN

Tickets & Information Tickets
https://www.alternative-theatre.jp ¥ 8,000

Printed by ABC
Hello Tokyo…

Thirsty? We bet you are after taking a look at the cover of this mag, which features either a suggestive serving of sake or a seductive sakura cocktail.

That’s right – we’ve gone all out and created two distinct covers for our ultimate guide to Tokyo nightlife, an intoxicating tour through the capital’s finest bars, waterfront spots and romantic restaurants. Head straight to page 20 for everything you need to plan an unforgettable night out in Tokyo, be it on your own, in the company of friends, or with that special someone. And if your idea of a perfect after-dark adventure includes tasting our cover cocktail, well that’s available at the Tenderly bar in Omori – see tinyurl.com/TOTtenderly for details.

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July-September 2017

Making a splash

How to get wet and wild this summer

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Just add water

Kentaro Imai: the man with grand designs for communal bathing

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Meet Tokyo’s most exciting young chefs

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PHOTO: KEISUKE TANIGAWA

WHAT YOU SAID

‘The government shouldn’t even own anything, let alone a cash cow like Japan Tobacco’

WHERE IN TOKYO

‘Typical US-induced nonsense – it should stay the way it is!’

IS THIS?

‘Finally’

‘Just ban the damn smoke’

THAT’LL TEACH YOU

‘Light at the end of the tunnel after decades of hell!’

NO SMOKE WITHOUT IRE

Tokyo needs to decide whether it wants to stay nicotine-stained for 2020

Japan may soon be renowned for its healthy cuisine, but we are sure that the international community will land or rise with its public health issue: smoking in public places.

While smoking outside in non-designated spaces (while walking) is considered a social sin, people lighting up indoors with no air or air in the world is common across the nation. For many visitors to our dear city, these smoking laws reflect the world that has been flipped upside down, and with the Olympics on the way, calls for a complete ban on indoor puffing are growing louder and louder.

A new bill first proposed by the government in late 2016 would make it mandatory for restaurants and bars to install separate smoking rooms with proper ventilation or go completely smoke-free. However, this bill – even after being watered down – is facing heavy opposition from several directions, with the partially government-owned tobacco company, Japan Tobacco co and the restaurant industry leading the resistance alongside pro-smoking politicians.

At least the health ministry seems behind the ban, citing Japan’s feeble attempts to prevent passive smoking in public places.

We’ll keep holding our breath at our local izakaya in the meantime.

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IF YOU EVER HAPPEN to find yourself wandering the city’s watering holes, bar-on-the-go Twillo has to be one of the most eccentric. Mixing drinks with candlelight and pouring them into wine, spirits, cocktails and Cuban cigars. The travelling bartender, Shotaro Kamijo, has been roaming Tokyo’s streets with his cart since 2006. After stints as a banker and a secretary for the Japanese Diet (parliament), Kamijo decided to go into the mobile boozing operation. Although finding Twillo can be devilishly difficult, especially if you don’t read Japanese, it’s absolutely worth the trouble. Kamijo serves up a snappy selection of beer, wine, spirits, cocktails and Cuban cigars. The magic of Twillo is in its power to turn a piece of familiar streetscape into a piece of any old city street into a party place by drawing in passers-by from all walks of life for new and unlikely encounters.

Three Tokyo places offering truly customisable cuisine

THE COUNTER BOPPONGI
Santa Monica icon The Counter launched its first-ever Tokyo venture last August. The ordering system here is a item-to-item menu, unique to each location. Just don’t take anyone indecisive.

BAR AMARENA
After a brief stint as a restaurant, you can choose virtually everything yourself. From the ingredients to be used for your meal to its size and even the cooking method employed. They display their daily changing, colourfully garnished in a glass case so you can see exactly what you’re paying for and the service chiefs – who are all very energetic – make it your way.

PULP DELI & CAFÉ
A deli where you can customise your meal to your liking, with a heavy emphasis of fresh veg and winter items. However you put your lunch together if the sun’s out get it to go: the neighbouring park is a lovely launch spot.

City Dispatches

A FORGETTABLE MEAL
With Japanese society greying at a rapid pace, the number of people living with dementia is hitting new records every year. Although this obviously causes all sorts of social issues, not everyone is succumbing to the doom and gloom often associated with the theme. Take a recent, rather special pop-up eatery in Yoyosu. Named ‘The Restaurant of Order Mistaker’, it was run by employees with dementia, meaning that the chances of your order being forgotten or mixed up were quite high. One customer reported having their hamburger order turned into a set of gyoza, but knowing that the staff had dementia, they noted that they left with a deeper understanding of what it meant to have the disease and how to deal with it. The restaurant was opened by a group of organisations, including the host, Maggie’s Tokyo, a support centre for those affected by cancer. Although this pop-up only lasted for one weekend in June, another edition is in the works for September 23, which is World Alzheimer’s Day. Don’t forget...

#15: Shotaro Kamijo, the travelling bartender

If you ever happen to find yourself stumbling upon his outlandish brand of service, bearing a little splash of colour and fun to everyone’s day. Get your eyes on his Instagram every day. He shows up at a location, brings out his fabulous drinks, brings a little splash of colour and fun to everyone’s day. Get your eyes on his Instagram every day. He shows up at a location, brings out his fabulous drinks, and won’t be returning this year either. Another favourite, Jingu Gaien, barely escaped the same fate and is back on track for August 20. More cracker parties out in the ‘burbs, in addition to the venerable Sumida River Fireworks, seem a go at least. Keep your eyes on our website for more information and sudden cancellations.

KEEPING IT COOL

How to not succumb to the sweltering summer heat

WATERMELON UMBRELLAS
Whenever it’s today dry, try to stay dry by using small umbrellas, bringing a little splash of colour and fun to everyone’s day. Get your eyes on his Instagram every day. He shows up at a location, brings out his fabulous drinks, brings a little splash of colour and fun to everyone’s day. Get your eyes on his Instagram every day. He shows up at a location, brings out his fabulous drinks, and won’t be returning this year either.

ASE-WAKI SHEETS AND PADS
Literally ‘arm pit sweat sheets’ (or pads), these little gems may work for you on hot days when a bottle of water won’t cut it. New Formula! (Sunscreen and anti-marks) are rarely seen in the streets, but at least they’ll make you look the right size and stick tight onto your armpit. A pad, stick one on your clothing, right where your armpit odour prevention is not fully in check this way, although it won’t completely stop the heat- and humidity-induced body fluids will be kept fully in check this way, although it won’t completely stop the heat- and humidity-induced body fluids will be kept...
**THINGS TO DO**

**Earth Garden Summer**

Every three months Tokyo’s ecologists, horticulturists and hippies descend on Yoshiyuki Park for the quarterly Earth Garden. The summer edition will feature the usual plethora of organic-minded stalls, food booths and workshops, with the addition of a night-time fleamarket and live music from acts including nu-jazz outfit Lotus Land, indie poppers Nonburi, rapper Tkda Kurobuchi and dancehall foursome Nego.

**SUMIDA RIVER FIREWORKS FESTIVAL**

Tokyo’s annual display of pyrotechnics is one of the biggest in the world, with more than 22,000 fireworks on display over three nights, including July 28-30 at Naeba Ski Resort, and August 2-6 at Shinjuku’s Field and Makuhari Messe, a 22,000-seat arena that was developed in the 1930s. The festival began after the plum that Yoriyoshi is granted, and the Sumomo (named after the plum) was developed in Fuchu shrine. Their wish was for victory in an ongoing war at that time.

**HENTAI ANIMATION NIGHT**

This year’s annual Hentai Anime Night, a show that should manage to mess up the mind of anyone not familiar with the extreme side of Japanese visual culture.

**ASAKUSA SAMBA CARNIVAL**

The biggest and most beautiful of Japan’s summer music festivals, Fuji Rock Festival, now in its 23rd year. It was first staged as part of a ceremony to pray for the victims of a severe famine that struck in the previous year. Today, it’s by far the largest display in the capital – this year’s festival will involve more than 22,000 fireworks – and regularly draws close to a million spectators.

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THINGS TO DO
SUPER YOSAKOI FESTIVAL 2017
The original yosakoi dance started life in Kochi in 1954, where it was intended to help revitalise the struggling post-war economy, and Tokyo's own Super Yosakoi festival has been going for over a decade now. The event sees 200-odd teams of brightly attired dancerstrying to outdo each other as they strut their stuff to the rhythm of the ‘naruko’ – a type of clapper that the people of Kochi originally used to scare birds away from their fields.

MUSIC
SUNRISE TOKYO
Taking place in Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture every year, Japan’s most prestigious world music festival Iwakuni Music Festival Meets the World has been going strong since 1991. This smaller-scale Tokyo version of the fest is held at Shibuya’s WWW Hall complemented by more intimate shows at WWW X in Shibuya, one of Tokyo’s popular bars. The year’s headline acts include Chick Corea, Aki Hata, Peter Erskine and Gonzalo Rubalcaba.

MUSIC
SLOW LIVE '17
One of summer’s most popular music festivals, Slow Live shows live acts from the 14th year in a row. This is your chance to enjoy laid-back tunes courtesy of domestic indie favourites including Hanaregumi, Akasa Toki, Glim Spanky and Tiso-Ohashi at a traditional temple down in the southern suburbs.

TO DO
SUKIYAKI TOKYO
Costumed kids hit the streets in an energetic crowd which requisits the entire, otherwise quiet and unassuming, neighbourhood.

TO DO
NEZU SHRINE FESTIVAL
The nation’s biggest Indian festival returns to Yoyogi Park with traditional music and dance, food stalls and plenty of sweaty folks in ‘happi’ coats – a centuries-old highlight at a traditional temple down in the nearby Bunkyo neighbourhood.

TO DO
NAMASTE INDIA
The nation’s biggest Indian festival returns to Yoyogi Park with traditional music and dance, food stalls and plenty of sweaty folks in ‘happi’ coats – a centuries-old highlight at a traditional temple down in the nearby Bunkyo neighbourhood.

MUSIC
ULTRA JAPAN 2017
The first three Tokyo versions of Miami-born EDM spectacle Ultra have all been smashing successes and this fourth edition looks set to follow suit. Revelers dressed in neon and frills will be descending on Osaka to enjoy the laptop-busting antics of superstar DJs including Afrojack, Kygo, The Chainsmokers and Steve Aoki, plus live performances by Empire of the Sun, Pendulum and Porter Robinson.

MUSIC
TIME OUT JAZZ FESTIVAL
Japan’s biggest jazz festival always features a highly diverse lineup of artists and venues, with concerts at NHK Hall complemented by more intimate shows at WWW X in Shibuya. One of Tokyo’s popular bars.

MUSIC
YOUR WEARABLE
One of Japan’s most influential art festivals returns in August with a high-profile programme, including contributions from international stars such as Al Weiwei, Maurizio Cattelan and Olafur Eliasson, while other artists will be highlighting the physical location of the Triennale by creating artworks themed on figures and events from the history of Yokohama.

Promotional feature
FIVE REASONS TO CHECK OUT THE YOKOHAMA TRIENNIALE

A HIGHLIGHT AMONG Japan’s art festivals, the Yokohama Triennale returns for its sixth edition this August and will again centre on the Yokohama Museum of Art and its immediate surrounds. Big name international participants include Al Weiwei, Maurizio Cattelan and Olafur Eliasson, while other artists will be highlighting the physical location of the Triennale by creating artworks themed on figures and events from the history of Yokohama.

1. Al Weiwei’s mega-sculptures
Chinese artist Al Weiwei turns everything from life jackets to bits of flame into giant sculptures that play on the themes of construction and destruction. The superstar activist’s recent works that draw heavily on the global refugee crisis will be featured in the Triennale.

2. Artworks by one of Italy’s greatest satirists
Italian photography maestro ‘Yokohama’ is one of the most surreal publications of its kind, and the oft-blud visual landscape it plays with an echoed co-founder Maurizio Cattelan’s provocative sculptures and artworks. Tough subjects and striking visuals dot Cattelan’s CV, from an installation featuring a Pop Pope John Paul II struck by a meteorite in Paris to a solid gold toilet in New York’s Guggenheim. We can’t wait to see what the art world’s resident prankster brings to Yokohama.

3. It’s in Japan’s most cosmopolitan city
A century ago, when Japan opened up to the rest of the world after 250 years of seclusion, the city of Yokohama was the first place to bear the fruit of foreign influence. By adopting an open-door policy to both culture and trade back then, the city was soon the most cosmopolitan place in Japan, and remains the country’s cultural melting pot. It’s fitting, then, that the Triennale takes place at venues such as the Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse, a symbol of the city’s international history.

4. It’s one of Japan’s most influential art festivals
International art showcases have become all the rage in Japan over the past few years, with dozens of festivals taking place every year around the country. But most of these still look rather green when compared to the Yokohama Triennale, which has been going since 2001 and again invites large-name international participants including Chinese artist Ai Weiwei’s mega-sculptures and Maurizio Cattelan’s large-scale installations.

5. There will be a giant monster, too
Not many international art festivals can boast an appearance by an overgrown radioactive lizard, but it seems like the Yokohama Triennale is doing things differently. Take the rubber-shaped creation complete with a Godzilla-style eye, set to stare ominously at Yokohama in the basement of the 100-year-old Yokohama Port Opening Memorial Hall throughout the festival.
That’s how many hangover days per year us Tokyoites admitted to in Time Out’s recent survey – a figure that’s twice as high as Sydney (66%) and a third higher than Mexico City (60%). Hopefully the city’s taxi drivers, lifeguards and operators of heavy machinery are in the remaining 27%.

Almost two thirds of us think there’s nothing wrong with drinking a tipple over lunch. That’s trailing only Barcelona (69%), Sydney (66%) and Mexico City (60%).

Almost 200,000 people work in Tokyo’s boozing business – a figure that adds up to just over six employees per establishment, or the total population of Salt Lake City, Utah, where bars are, uh, less prevalent.

According to your City Index responses, that’s the total amount of bars, pubs and clubs in Tokyo. Hard to believe? Hey, Shinku’s Golden Gai alone has over 270, while Ginzan has around 350.

The average number of times a ‘nomihodai’ (all-you-can-drink) deal lasts at izakayas, pubs and even bars (see page 56 in Tokyo. Being allowed to literally drink as much as you can handle over 120 minutes can sound anywhere from too good to be true to flat out deadly, depending on your perspective, but it’s a common arrangement at watering holes throughout Japan.

That’s the cost of a typical night out in Tokyo. Being allowed to literally drink as much as you can handle over 120 minutes can sound anywhere from too good to be true to flat out deadly, depending on your perspective, but it’s a common arrangement at watering holes throughout Japan.

About 14% of us are fine with getting ‘drunked out’ by our driving partners, the highest percentage of any city in our survey.

According to government data from 2014, that’s the total amount of bars, pubs and clubs in Tokyo. Hard to believe? Hey, Shinku’s Golden Gai alone has over 270, while Ginzan has around 350.

38% of us think hangover days are a waste of time – the majority of any city in our survey.

The most baffling number in our survey – almost one in five of us think over two hours is how long it takes to get a hangover. Hey, we’re clearly hardier than the drinkers of Sydney and London, who claimed 24.5 and 23.3 respectively.

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Our City Index also revealed we visit a bar or pub only 23 times a year, or less than once every two weeks. Really?

In our survey, 59% of us said we were most likely to get an all-nighter off to a late dinner. Hey, what else are you going to do after the office would result in very different numbers, but let’s not go there now.

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According to government data from 2014, that’s the total amount of bars, pubs and clubs in Tokyo. Hard to believe? Hey, Shinku’s Golden Gai alone has over 270, while Ginzan has around 350.

26% of us think morning coffee isn’t an essential part of the Tokyo lifestyle – the percentage of any city in our survey.

The average number of hours a ‘nomihodai’ (all-you-can-drink) deal lasts at izakayas, pubs and even bars (see page 56 in Tokyo. Being allowed to literally drink as much as you can handle over 120 minutes can sound anywhere from too good to be true to flat out deadly, depending on your perspective, but it’s a common arrangement at watering holes throughout Japan.

According to your City Index responses, that’s the cost of a typical night out in Tokyo. Being allowed to literally drink as much as you can handle over 120 minutes can sound anywhere from too good to be true to flat out deadly, depending on your perspective, but it’s a common arrangement at watering holes throughout Japan.

That’s the cost of a typical night out in Tokyo. Being allowed to literally drink as much as you can handle over 120 minutes can sound anywhere from too good to be true to flat out deadly, depending on your perspective, but it’s a common arrangement at watering holes throughout Japan.
Congratulations, you’ve been invited to a Japanese wedding! Now, after the first giddiness has receded, it’s time to think about how the hell you’re actually going to get through it without making a culturally insensitive fool of yourself. Luckily, we’re here to help.

Kirsty Bouwers

**DON’T: FORGET TO RSVP (WHETHER YOU’RE GOING OR NOT)**
A Japanese ‘hiroen’, a fancy wedding ceremony often held at an upscale hotel’s banquet room, is a unique experience, so move heaven and earth to be there. Either way do not forget to send back the slip that came with the invitation card, filled in properly to show whether or not you will be attending.

Circle 出席 ('shusseki') if you’re coming or 欠席 ('kesseki') if you, for some inexplicable reason, will not be able to make it – presumably you are in prison or trapped under something heavy.

**DO: GO ALL ’80S PROM DRESS**
Yay, slinky cocktail dress time! Think again. There’s an unspoken dress code that applies to female guests in particular. Channel your inner American high schooler on her way to prom and get yourself a shiny-fabric dress – it’s the one occasion where a bit of sheen is the done thing. Tone down the vivid colours, stick to knee-length (no mini dresses, no maxi dresses) and cover thy shoulders – with a shawl if you have to. Above all, keep those shoes closed. Even at the height of summer, no toes are to be flaunted, no matter how great your pedicure. Men, no white suits (that’s for the groom) nor black ties. And for either sex, the universal rule holds true: whatever you do, please don’t try to outdress the bride.

**DON’T: FORGET TO PAY (OR PICK THE WRONG ENVELOPE)**
Like anywhere in the world, weddings in Japan cost money. A lot of money. Partially as a way to make up for this, guests are expected (read: required) to ‘donate’ money, known as ‘goshugi’, when attending. ¥30,000 per person for friends and coworkers is the going rate these days in big cities. For a boss or senior colleague, it’s more like ¥50,000. The notes should be ¥10,000 bills which can’t be evenly split (so ¥30k is fine, ¥20k a no no) and go for the flashiest, prettiest envelope you can find – no minimalist business, as the simple envelopes found right next to the ‘shugibukuro’ (wedding money envelopes) at convenience stores are those used for funerals. Also note that the afterparty (‘nikka’ has a separate fee, often around ¥10,000. Some choose to skip the hiroen and just go to the nikka, at the height of wedding season, that choice may be the last thing standing between you and abject poverty.

**DO: LOOK UNDER YOUR SEAT**
The upside of having to pay for a wedding is that it comes with a lot of goodies. And not for the newlyweds, but for you, the humble guest. When the hiroen starts clearing out and everyone starts heading home or to the afterparty, be sure to grab the bag located under your seat; it’s not a life vest, but a ‘hikidemono’, a well-stocked goodie bag. Contents can range from expensive confectionery to tableware and even a gift catalogue (letting you pick out something you actually want).

**DON’T: PARTY TOO HARD**
Contrary to wedding ceremonies in some countries (we’re looking at you, Great Britain), a Japanese reception is not the place to get sloshed, dance on the table or try to snog one of the bridesmaids/best men. The hiroen is for being somewhat solemn and civilly tipsy, with the only emotion coming into play being some light tears shed upon watching the video of the newlyweds’ journey to romance. Upside? No obnoxious drunken uncles.

Two powerful earthquakes hit Kyushu’s Kumamoto prefecture on April 14 and 16, killing at least 49, injuring thousands and forcing many local residents to abandon their homes. Historic Kumamoto Castle also suffered extensive damage. The recovery process is well on its way, but serious challenges still remain. Our thoughts go out to everyone affected by this disaster.

Visit forkumamoto.yahoo.co.jp for more information on how you can help the disaster victims.

Stay strong, Kumamoto
I, TOKYO
Alexandra Pasqualli-Gaudy
Staff member of The Global Families
Age: 39

When did you first come to Tokyo, and what made you choose the city as your new home?
I first came to be with my boyfriend, who was studying here in 2011, but we left two years later. We didn’t think another opportunity to live here would come along, but it did! In 2015, we came back to Tokyo on exactly the same date we left two years earlier.

The Global Families (TGF) offers a chance for Japanese and non-Japanese families to meet up. What inspired you to work for them?
I thought it might be a great chance to expand my world in Japan as a mum with no job and few connections. I loved the idea of creating bonds between Japanese and non-Japanese families, and providing international families with opportunities to learn more about Japan.

What are the most interesting and attractive aspects of your work?
One of my projects was a hanami picnic in Shinjuku Gyoen. I created maps for the kids, who had to complete tasks before collecting their rewards. We had activities such as face painting and drawing workshops. The kids and their families had a wonderful time–enjoying the crowds. As someone far away from her family, friends and habits, I feel like I am part of a group and I feel useful.

What programmes and activities does TGF offer?
From simple picnics with games and workshops for kids to film screenings, we have a broad range of activities. One recent popular event was hanging out at the horse racing stadium in Chofu. Kids can ride ponies and carrriages, take part in a picnic and watch the races together in the VIP room.

What differences and similarities do you see between Japanese and non-Japanese families?
The main similarity is the struggle to find things to keep the kids occupied in this big city – something or somewhere both kids and parents can enjoy. The differences? The way [Japanese] families handle their kids. They never seem to lose their temper, and for that I admire them. Also, Japanese families give their kids more freedom.[I’m a young age] than we would normally do in France. For instance, seeing little ones getting on the metro by themselves.

When did you first feel like a Tokyoite?
I might not fully be a Tokyoite yet, but I feel at ease here because I’m able to speak a bit of Japanese, go around and feel a sense of accomplishment. Also, when we go back to France for a holiday, I miss the life in Tokyo, and say “when we go back home” when I talk with my husband.

NHK World offers a wide range of multilingual news and other programmes. Do you have a favourite programme?
I find NHK World very interesting and helpful. Especially ‘Journeys in Japan’ and ‘Tokyo Eye 2020’. Each programme is just 20 to 30 minutes long, so I can watch with my three-year-old daughter.

Finally, any survival tips for international families?
If you want to feel at ease and not far from home anymore, join us! You’ll meet other families and, who knows, make new friends. It can be hard when you don’t speak much Japanese and Japanese people don’t speak much English. But with kids? You don’t have much choice, so you’ll need to step out of your comfort zone. Kids are great for bonding with people you wouldn’t have talked to otherwise.

Get closer to the action
Four ways Grand Sumo Highlights helps to improve your sumo-watching experience

BOASTING A 1,500 YEAR history, sumo is enshrined into Japan’s culture. Although its rules are simple, the many ritualistic aspects can make the world of sumo quite difficult to understand – but not if you tune in to Grand Sumo Highlights (GSH), one of NHK World’s most popular programmes. This highlight show airs four times daily during tournaments, while the website offers you all the information you’ll need to enjoy every aspect of the sport. Here’s how GSH will get you ready for the dohyo.

1. IT’S ALL IN ENGLISH
GSH is Japan’s only English-language sumo programme. The play-by-play commentators analyse what to look out for and how the wrestlers are doing in each bout. Hot Pots, one of the Japanese experts, gives us a few advance pointers. ‘Keep your eyes on every move as a wrestler makes from the time he steps into the ring – the gods are as important as the bout itself – sleeping heads to repel the gods’ attention, showing their open palms to prove they are unarmed, throwing salt to purify the ring…’ the more you learn, the more interesting it becomes.

2. YOU GET THE FULL DEETS ON THE WRESTLERS
The rikishi, or wrestlers, are ranked in divisions. Learning about each rank is one of the most popular ways to enjoy sumo. On the GSH website, wrestlers in the top maku-uchi division are all introduced, while the top rikishi – those of yokozuna (grand champion) and ozeki rank – each have their own video biographies. You’ll soon find your favourite.

3. YOU CAN LEARN THE TECHNIQUES
It’s exciting to see how sumo wrestlers, who weigh 160kg on average – clash in the squared ring. There are 42 recognised ‘kimarite’, or match-winning techniques, and five non-techniques (ways to lose), all defined by the Japan Sumo Association. You can learn the most frequently used techniques by watching the video masterclasses on the site.

4. YOU CAN STUDY THE HISTORY AND ASK QUESTIONS
The Sumopedia section of the site offers short video guides to enrich your sumo experience. Learn about techniques, traditions and famous wrestlers of the past. Also, on the GSH page, you can send your questions to anunciator Morita, who will give you the answer for you. Here’s an example... why do the wrestlers stamp the feet in the ring at the start of the bout? They’re trying to send evil spirits away, so of course, it’s an evil spirit! It’s all in the code on the right.

Visit nhk.jp/nhkworld to find out how you can get NHK World TV 24/7 in your country, on your TV, computer or mobile device.
The best bars, waterfront spots and romantic restaurants, plus superb musical hideouts, seductive cats and other curious characters – it’s your ultimate guide to after-dark action in the capital.

Eager to try the tipple on our cover? Then make your way down to Omori bar Tenderly, run by the masterful Yuko Miyazaki. More than just a local sensation, her shrine to classic cocktails attracts patrons from all over Tokyo and beyond.

→ Omori-Kita Park Bldg 2F 1-33-11 Omori Higashi, Ota (Omori Station), tinyurl.com/TOTtenderly, 5pm-1am (Fri until 2am, holidays until 12midnight), closed Sun.
One night of romance

By Tamasaburau

THERE ARE THOSE who say that bars are no place for a date. These people are fools. True, you run the risk of the bartender eavesdropping and you are often spied upon by the many other patrons. But conducting your courtship at the counter also means great views, killer cocktails and a place to drown your sorrows should it not work out. Here are the ten boldest, centre-stage spots in the city.

ISHINOHANA

Seasonal cocktails are the specialty at Ishinohana, Shibuya’s answer to the high-end cocktail joints of Ginza. As a basement location just a minute’s walk from Shibuya Station, owner Shinobu Ishigaki wields an array of fresh fruit and vegetables when creating his distinctive drinks. He also fancies himself as something of a boozey matchmaker: share your mood and watch as he conjures up a gorgeous creation to suit it. If you’d rather go by the book, there are entire menus devoted just to mojitos and martinis, plus a sizeable list of originals in constant flux. The quality is generally very high indeed, and the atmosphere considerably less intimidating than at Ginza’s bartending temples – you can even peek inside through the windows, which is rare at top-class Tokyo bars.

> 8-1 3-12 Shibuya-shi, Shibuya-ku, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3585 7300. facebook.com/bar.tiare.

BART IARIÉ

Named after the supposedly lucky-bringing national flower of Tahiti, Tiare is the domain of Yoike, a former-All-Japan badminton champ. Apple is the specialty, but Yoike is a kind of coffee drinker and will happily suggest other options. He’s a bit of a showman, and will often perform his tricks at the counter. Tiare is the perfect place for lovebirds who just want to focus on each other while sipping on some of the prettier drinks in town.

> Akasaka Magdalena Hotel 1F 1-4-22 Akasaka, Minato (Akasaka Magdalena Hotel). 03 6867 1090. Facebook.com/bar.tiare.

ANGEL’S SHARE

When newly distilled whisky is stored in casks and matured, a minuscule amount of it evaporates every year. This lost portion is said to have been drunk by angels, and is thus referred to as the ‘angels’ share’. In other words, the powers that be give their blessing to the distiller in exchange for a tiny portion of his product. With its name derived from such an obscure term, you might suspect that this specialist bar in chic Futako-Tamagawa is one of those places where conscientious bar staff have endless conversations about whisky and its many nuances, steering away from the joyous, city-dwelling cocktails and straight whisky. Imai’s passion runs deep, and his guidance is sure to lead both of you deep into the fascinating world of fine malts.

> Minato Futsu 3-1-3-13 Tamagawa, Minato (Futako Tamagawa Station). 03 3791 0220. king.ambassador.jp/bar_angel_share.

BAR NOIR

A veteran barman with stints at luxury hotels such as the Westin Tokyo and the Ritz-Carlton under his belt, Takeshi Saito exudes an aura of quiet confidence – this is a man who has seen the world, served a stiff drink and listened to his stories. Saito’s Ebisu haunt follows his lead – the decor is smart, but the atmosphere is very welcoming. The conventional thing would of course be to sit at the counter and watch the proprietor craft whichever cocktails he deems appropriate for the two of you, but we’d recommend heading to one of the table seats facing the windows. Looking down from the fifth floor, you’ll be able to do some serious people-watching with your companion before or after dinner in one of the city’s most stylish neighborhoods.

> Ice Cube 3-1-23 Ebisu Minami, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3725 8890. icecubes.com. 6pm-1am; closed Sun.

MADURO

The journey to the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo’s classy bar is a significant part of its charm. Get yourself to Edogawabashi Station then, rather than hailing a cab, walk along the Kanda River with your date until you reach the hotel’s Kabanmura gate. Enter and admire the gorgeous Japanese garden you’ll find yourself in. Once you start feeling thirsty, cross the Benkei bridge and pick out a table at the luxurious Le Marquis. The four seats at the Italian marble-covered counter are appealing, but taking yourself into one of the sofa rooms – they let you pick and choose your spot – is very welcoming. The conventional thing would of course be to sit at the counter and watch the proprietors craft whichever cocktails they deems appropriate for the two of you, but we’d recommend heading to one of the table seats facing the windows. Looking down from the fifth floor, you’ll be able to do some serious people-watching with your companion before or after dinner in one of the city’s most stylish neighborhoods.

> Ice Cube 3-1-23 Ebisu Minami, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 3725 8890. icecubes.com. 6pm-12midnight; closed Thu.

LE MARQUIS

A welcoming atmosphere, service that won’t let you down, rare whiskies and brilliant cocktails – a cigar if the occasion calls for it, live jazz and a lavishly decorated interior – everything appears perfect for a date at Roppongi’s Maduro. Only thing you’re really in need of is to reach it first – after taking a winding approach through the lobby of the Grand Hyatt hotel and navigating a maze of hallways and elevators, you’ll need to cross through a mysterious passage that feels like walking on water before arriving at the bar’s heavy wooden doors, beyond which you’ll find a total of 108 seats reserved exclusively for sophisticated sippers. Underneath the high ceiling lies several sofas, box seats separated from each other with glass-laced partitions, and even a few small private rooms – they let you pick and choose your spot depending on your, and your partner’s, mood. Note that there’s a ¥2,000 cover charge every night after 8pm.

> Grand Hyatt Tokyo 4F Roppongi Hills B 5-3-2 (Roppongi), Minato (Roppongi Station). 03 6633 8783. hotel.grand-hyatt.com/jap/en/le-hotel/ dining/Maduro.html. 6pm-1am; closed Sun.

Note that there’s a ¥2,000 cover charge every night after 8pm.
WHISKY LIBRARY

The brand-lined streets of Aoyama feel like they’re a long way from the wind and window-views more of Scotland, but it’s where you’d find a plush and discreet haven steaming to busting with a bold range of Scotch. Pass the church on the ground floor of the elegant Santa Chiara complex and climb the stairs to find the door to Whisky Library, where the bookcases are filled not with dusty old tomes but with a stunning collection of more than 1,200 different bottles. Aiming to help newbies learn more about the overwhelming variety of fine malts, this bar has none of that ‘connoisseurs only’ attitude sometimes evident at other Tokyo whisky bars, and instead provides a simple menu of standard options to get you started. The 82 seats include sofas and stools and are set in private rooms, encouraging you to admire your drink from a variety of angles and in different lighting conditions – you’ll feel like you can see the bookcases are filled not with dusty old tomes but with a stunning collection of more than 1,200 different bottles. Aiming to help newbies learn more about the overwhelming variety of fine malts, this bar has none of that ‘connoisseurs only’ attitude sometimes evident at other Tokyo whisky bars, and instead provides a simple menu of standard options to get you started. The 82 seats include sofas and stools and are set in private rooms, encouraging you to admire your drink from a variety of angles and in different lighting conditions – you’ll feel like you can see the different bottles. Aiming to help newbies learn more about the overwhelming variety of fine malts, this bar has none of that ‘connoisseurs only’ attitude sometimes evident at other Tokyo whisky bars, and instead provides a simple menu of standard options to get you started. The 82 seats include sofas and stools and are set in private rooms, encouraging you to admire your drink from a variety of angles and in different lighting conditions – you’ll feel like you can see

MOTIF

Finding your way up to this hotel bar right by Tokyo Station can be tricky, but nailing it on the first try is also a sure way to impress your companion. Skip the main entrance to the office-filled, 35-storey Pacific Century Place building on Hibiya-dori and instead make your way for the right hand side of the structure, where you’ll see a sign for the Four Seasons Hotel. Enter through the sliding doors, go all the way to the end of the corridor, take the dedicated elevator to the seventh floor and head around the back to encounter a bar so blissful that you’ll hardly believe it sits inside a faceless glass-and-steel tower. Facing the train tracks and enveloped by flowing water. As for the drinks, consider opting for some Mancino Sakura & Sumire vermouth – a Mandarin Bar original – as an alternative to cocktails. Enveloped by flowing water. As for the drinks, consider opting for some Mancino Sakura & Sumire vermouth – a Mandarin Bar original – as an alternative to cocktails.

SKY LOUNGE AURORA

Picking the Keio Plaza’s Sky Lounge as one of Tokyo’s top date bars might seem like a cliché, but we maintain that this expansive spot, reopened in December 2016 after a complete overhaul, is a reborn classic. The spectacular views of Shinjuku’s business district remain unchaged, but the black-tiled interior is all new. Also spruced up is the back counter-only bar in business since 1971 on the north side of the space. Its windows look out over all of Tokyo’s greatest hits: the metropolitan government building in the west, the Skytree, Tokyo Tower and central Shinjuku to the east, and Nishi-Shinjuku’s V-Minato- towers to the north. Greatly watched to the sun sets across from the metro government’s Kanso Tange-designed headquarters while your two sip on cocktails in the light-filled space. But the Sky Lounge’s highlights reach beyond the setting; mixing drinks here is Kazuya the setting; mixing drinks here is Kazuya

MANDARIN BAR

Nihonbashi, the heart of old Edo, now has its share of high-rises, but none of these towers stand out quite like the one the Mandarin Oriental hotel. Directly accessible from Mitsukoshimae subway station and perched on the 37th floor, the hotel’s signature bar affords impressive views of the surrounding business district. It’s not all about those Blade Runner-esque vistas. The Mandarin Bar is famed for its interior: local design hoachioriya Kosaka was asked to create ‘something sexy, but like nothing you’ve seen before’. His spacious layout incorporating a Zen pool and an array of designer furnishings succeeds on both counts. The central counter is dazzling, while the sofas by the windows offer the ultimate date experience. If it’s a special day for the two of you, consider sharing a luxurious night of dinner and champagne at the table so we maintain that this expansive spot, reopened in December 2016 after a complete overhaul, is a reborn classic. The spectacular views of Shinjuku’s business district remain unchaged, but the black-tiled interior is all new. Also spruced up is the back counter-only bar in business since 1971 on the north side of the space. Its windows look out over all of Tokyo’s greatest hits: the metropolitan government building in the west, the Skytree, Tokyo Tower and central Shinjuku to the east, and Nishi-Shinjuku’s V-Minato- towers to the north. Greatly watched to the sun sets across from the metro government’s Kanso Tange-designed headquarters while your two sip on cocktails in the light-filled space. But the Sky Lounge’s highlights reach beyond the setting; mixing drinks here is Kazuya

Kurando, the proprietress at Shibuya ‘snack’ bar Utsuro Kanazawa, is an eager traveller. Originally from the island just north of Tokyo, she spent years running pop-up boozers at art fairs in the countryside before setting up her joint in the capital in 2016. Although she spends most of her nights at the bar, Kurando occasionally wanders into competing establishments on her nocturnal journeys... ‘Before opening my own place for the night, I usually start out with a proper meal at Otsuchiya: Tenmabashi Hongo 8F, 2-8-4 Shibuya, Shibuya, 03 5400 7071, 5pm–1pm, closed Sun & hols. 2nd Mon of the month,’ an eatery right by my bar. They specialise in local cuisine from Kagoshima prefecture down in Kyushu – think plenty of seabream and chicken – and I love the laidback county accents of the employees. Another unmissable early-evening spot at Fujiya Honken (2F, 2-8-2 Nihonbashi-Kakogawa, Shibuya, tizifurl.com/ FUKY100, Mon–Fri 5pm–9:30pm, Sat 5pm–8:30pm, closed Sun & hols. 4th Sat of the month) Iconic, 150-year-old basement bar is as retro as it gets, and I love the old-school appetisers that go so well with Hayashi, abure snacks, kaisen don. It makes the basis for a crisp, refreshing DIY cocktail. Later at night, I join the poor souls who’ve missed their last train home at the Sky Lounge. Late at night, I join the poor souls who’ve missed their last train home at the

SEE MORE

TIME OUT TOKYO

ONE NIGHT IN TOKYO

A MADAM’S AFTER-DARK GUIDE TO SHIBUYA

Kurando, the proprietress at Shibuya ‘snack’ bar Utsuro Kanazawa, is an eager traveller. Originally from the island just north of Tokyo, she spent years running pop-up boozers at art fairs in the countryside before setting up her joint in the capital in 2016. Although she

AFTER-DARK
One night of fine food

The culinary delights that’ll make your Tokyo date unforgettable, in the form of four stellar restaurants.

By Sarah Crago

CHINA BLUE

If you’re seeking a lavish beginning to your evening then China Blue on the 28th floor of the Conrad Tokyo hotel won’t disappoint. Chef Albert Tse made his name in Hong Kong and Singapore before moving to Japan and commandeering the Conrad’s cloud-sothing restaurant in 2005. Despite the name, the food at China Blue is actually a happy fusion inspired by Tse’s Asian travels.

Each dish is impeccably presented and arrives begging to be Instagrammed before being dug into. If you can tear your eyes away from your plate, the stunning views over the harbour, including the twinkling Rainbow and Tokyo Gate bridges in the distance, are worth capturing.

The ‘Couples Course’ is actually seven – a tasting menu which features chef Tse’s signature dish, barbecue spare ribs with sweet and sour sauce, as its centrepiece. This isn’t your average finger food, as the sticky ribs are adorned with fresh strawberries, wasabi leaves and myoga (Japanese ginger). Artfully presented, it could be mistaken for your dessert.

Despite the name, the food at China Blue is actually a happy fusion and commandeering the Conrad’s cloud-bothering restaurant in 2005. Tse made his fame in Hong Kong and Singapore before moving to Japan as its centrepiece. This isn’t your average finger food, as the sticky ribs are adorned with fresh strawberries, wasabi leaves and myoga (Japanese ginger). Artfully presented, it could be mistaken for your dessert.

The menu accommodates both à la carte and three prix fixe options – five, six or seven courses – which take the pressure off choosing, allowing you to sit back, enjoy the sequence of dishes and take in the spectacular vistas.

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You aren’t the only one to make that lift journey – the flapping fresh contents visibly impressed, you should check them for a pulse.

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A little tip when booking is to ask for one of the windowside tables with the best views of Tokyo Tower, although this iconic feature of the capital’s skyline is at least partially visible from all vantage points inside the main dining room.

The only problem is you could destroy the evening’s romantic atmosphere by steadfastly refusing to let your partner have even the smallest taste.

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FISH BANK TOKYO

Fish Bank wastes no time in taking your breath away. The restaurant’s dedicated lift in the Shiodome City Center building rises to the 41st floor so quickly you fear you may be on hypersomnolent. The floor to ceiling windows present all of Tokyo to you in miniature while the high ceilings, elaborate crystal chandeliers and a glass-fronted wine room housing over 1,000 bottles are almost as impressive. If your dining partner isn’t visibly impressed, you should check them for a pulse.

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FRETTLEY PARADISO

A new challenger for the title of Tokyo’s most romantic restaurant is Fratelli Paradiso, hailing from Sydney. Its ‘all day’ approach to eating – not as common as you’d think in the capital – means you can stop by for a glass of natural wine and a delicious plate of food at the bar any time of the day or make a lunch or dinner reservation to really make the most of it.

Located in the Omotesando Hills complex, it’s the perfect end to a day of shopping or the start of a night out in busy Shibuya or fancy Aoyama. The vibe is contemporary Italian bistro – swanky but not wanky. You’ll notice the marble bar, inviting tan leather banquettes and the menu chalked up casually on the dining room wall.

All of the bread and pasta are made fresh on-site, a signature being the scampi spaghetti, which fits a whole scampi served in its shell alongside a simple, fresh tomato pasta. Whatever your choice, a meal at Fratelli Paradiso is not complete without their signature tiramisu. It’s got the perfect balance of creamy versus light and airy, with just the right amounts of coffee and booze.

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The only problem is you could destroy the evening’s romantic atmosphere by steadfastly refusing to let your partner have even the smallest taste.
**One night of casual drinking**

Where to go when you’re just looking to down a few cold ones in good company – these are four of our favourite watering holes in the Shibuya-Ebisu-Meguro area.

*By Yukako Izumi*

**ANOTHER 8**

The sister shop of Kyoto-based craft beer and sake bar Before 9, Another 8 landed in the bustling April, opening in posh Meguro in a space that used to be a garage. A place for laidback drinking, it’s got tables and benches both inside and out front, in addition to a stand that tends to get very crowded on weekends. Although beer is the specialty at Another 8 – the place is equipped with 20 taps in total – it’s a wonderful addition to an offbeat neighbourhood where sex shops co-exist with stylish restaurants and even a shinto shrine. Partially opening up onto the street, the ground floor is where to enjoy a drink on your feet and always gets crowded once the sun goes down, while tables are found in the quiet space upstairs. Bringing a touch of Scandinavian flair to Shibuya, Mikkeller – it’s the kind of place we’d like to stop by every night.

*9-10 1F Shinnyo, Shibuya (Shibuya Station); Mon-Thu 12noon-1.30am, Fri 12noon-2.30am, Sat & Sun 12noon-1.30am*

**MIKKELLER TOKYO**

You can’t keep Mikkel Borg Bjergsø and his signature ‘gypsy brewery’ down. The Danish beer rogue was forced to close his short-lived Tomigaya bar in winter 2016, but he’s now back on the scene. After a few months of pop-ups and other foamy events, a new permanent location finally saw the light of day in April 2017. Mikkeller Tokyo now sells its deliciously complex ales, while those looking for good too – we’re big fans of the marinated eight taps – there is also a small but very nice at Another 8 – the place is equipped with tables and benches in a space that used to be a garage. A place for capital this April, opening in posh Meguro.

*12noon-12.30am.*

**ØL TOKYO**

When the sun begins to set over Oku-Shibuya (‘inner Shibuya’), the trendy back bars before Chiba and her team rolled into town in July 2015. In fact, it’s you back for one last round. Gem lives up to its name, especially in July-September, 2017 July-September, 2017 Time Out Tokyo

*Gem by Moto*

A drinks menu is provided at Ebisu’s Gem by Moto, but locals know you’ve got to stop by every night. A drinks menu is provided at Ebisu’s Gem by Moto, but locals know you’ve got to stop by every night. Moto, but locals know you’ve got to stop by every night. You can’t keep Mikkel Borg Bjergsø and his signature ‘gypsy brewery’ down. The Danish beer rogue was forced to close his short-lived Tomigaya bar in winter 2016, but he’s now back on the scene. After a few months of pop-ups and other foamy events, a new permanent location finally saw the light of day in April 2017. Mikkeller Tokyo now sells its deliciously complex ales, while those looking for good too – we’re big fans of the marinated eight taps – there is also a small but very nice at Another 8 – the place is equipped with tables and benches in a space that used to be a garage. A place for capital this April, opening in posh Meguro.

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*9 3-8-6 Ebisu, Shibuya (Shibuya Station); 03 6455 0684, menu.co.jp/impress/menu/moto.php; Sat-Fri 5pm-12midnight, Sat & Sun 6pm-12pm, closed Mon.

**A TASTY NIGHT IN KINSHICHO**

**SUGOROKU**

If you prefer a less troublesome but equally handsome date, head for Shinjuku’s retro Café Arles. Working the floor here is the owner of a loving, caring personality, this is a kitty who’ll put the neighbourhood’s host club playboys to shame.

*4-8-5 Kamezawa, Sumida, 03 6906 2904, 11.30am-12midnight, Mon & Sun 11.30am-10pm, closed Tue.

**Harumi Tsunoda**

Curry House (03 6284 1711, 5pm-10pm, closed Mon) or Bangladeshi import Asia Curry House (9-24 Kinshicho, Sumida, 03 6346 6094, 11am-9pm, closed Mon) use their broth from and top their bowls with madai (red sea bream), while Saichin (6-6 Kinshicho, Sumida, 03 6284 1712, 11.30am-10pm, closed Mon) flew in straight from Norway. The 20 taps serve a range of Nordic brews plus a rotating selection of guest beers. Food trucks occasionally park in front of the bar to compensate for its evry sparse food menu, although we love the house-made waffles, filled with goat’s cheese – when in Norway and all.

*4-7-9 Sugiyoshibacho, Shibuya (Shibuya Station); 03 5738 1066, Sun-Thu 12noon-1.30am, Fri & Sat 12noon-2am, closed Mon, closed Sun.*
ONE NIGHT IN TOKYO

One night by the water

By Mari Hiratsuka

IN PART THANKS to all the Olympics-related construction happening out by the bay, Tokyo’s waterfront areas are undergoing a quiet revival, with new restaurants, cafés, hip hotels and other exciting hangouts popping up here and there along the capital’s rivers and canals. Led by the inclusive Mizubiru project, which aims to make the most of recently released regulations and a growing interest in reviving our city’s reputation as an aquatic metropolis, this welcome trend has also resulted in the emergence of several interesting after-dark destinations.

Read on for our picks of the most romantic waterfront hideouts in Tokyo right now.

LUNATIQUE TOKIOPLAGE

If you are after some old-school charm in Futako-Tamagawa, dodge the new and imposing Rise shopping complex and instead head east to find this lone four-storey house hidden out by the Tama River. It houses a great French restaurant and the top two floors have terrace seating with dizzying views. Hot tip: the Skytree and the golden, uh, mirror 7F, 2-15-5 Kuramae, Taito (Kuramae Station). 03 5820 7310. privado.jp. 7pm-1am, closed Mon, 2nd & 4th Sat, Sun of the month.

CAFE MEURSAULT

Grab a seat by the huge windows at this hip café perched partially above the Sumida River for spectacular views over lit-up Asahi Building. If you’re really lucky, you might be able to snap one of the tables on the small terrace and feel like you have the city all to yourself. Meursault’s 20-strong cake selection and eclectic drink menu are almost as dizzying as the views. Hot tip: this is probably one of the best places in the area for catching the annual Sumida River Fireworks, set for July 29 this year, but you’ll need to move really quickly to secure a spot – bookings are taken from July 3.

NIHONBASHI ICHINO ICHINO ICHI

Nihonbashi, the bridge that gave an entire central Tokyo district its name, is steeped in history as it was once the starting point for the five main routes that connected Edo with the provinces. Today the best place to admire the lit-up structure and the canal running underneath it is from the terrace seats at this classy Japanese restaurant and bar, named after its address and extremely popular among local businesspeople who stop by for a quick after-work drink. For a quieter experience, grab one of the stools by the counter and dig into the Madai no donabe-meshi, a rice dish with red sea bream cooked in a clay pot – the perfect companion to a couple of sake shots. Get there early for the happy hour (5-7pm), when draft beer, nihonshu and cocktails can be had for just ¥300 a pop.

PRIVADO

Press the intercom at the front entrance of one of the newer buildings overlooking the Sumida River in Kuraame and you’ll gain entrance to an elevator that’ll take you up Privado, an appropriately ‘private’ bar that is, in our book, one of the most impressive date spots in all of eastern Tokyo. In addition to a strap – drawer margarita, you’ll find a plentiful selection of vintage whiskey and cigars. Book in advance for access to one of the few terrace tables, which provide attractive vistas out towards the Skytree. For a change of pace, checkout ‘ping-pong bar’ Ribayon on the fourth floor of the same building and is a great pick for closing out the night. Another nice option is Bulgari Bar (Bulgari Ginza Tower 10F, 4-8-8 Ginza, Chuo, tinyurl.com/TOTbars, 5.30pm-11.30pm, closed Sat, Sun & hols) has been a local favourite for over half a century. Cheaps, tasty and cheerful. Take-chan (4-8-8 Ginza, Chuo, 03 3561 6889, 5pm-6.45pm, closed Sun & hols) has been a local favourite for over half a century. I’m usually content with just having a few drinks over dinner, but on nights when I feel really thirsty, I head for Privado.

Komei Motoji: the president of Ginza Motoji, a kimonu purveyor that operates three shops in Ginza. He has lived and breathed Tokyo’s glitziest neighbourhood since 1979, never taking a day off, but making up for it by enjoying Ginza’s nightlife to the fullest. These are his top after-dark picks in the area.

Tavel: ‘My job, and work: 365 days a year. But sometimes you need a break, and that’s when I head to Tateru Yoshino Ginza (Pias Ginza 12F, 4-8-10 Ginza, Chuo, tateruyoshino.com/ginza, 1.30pm-2am, 6pm-9pm), a French restaurant not far from our main shop. Chef Yoshino worked under Joel Robuchon in Paris and creates amazing dishes, but the location is unbeatable too – on the 12th floor of the Pias Ginza building, with views over the entire neighborhood. Make sure not to fill up completely, as we’re heading to a yakitori joint next.

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Time Out Tokyo July-September, 2017

(one night in tokyo)
ONE NIGHT IN TOKYO

One night of music

While their personalities and atmospheres differ, these five Tokyo music bars are all guaranteed to give you a night to remember. By Kunihiro Miki

GRANDFATHER’S
Established 40 years ago, Grandfather’s is the current daddy of the city’s vintage music bar scene. The snug venue pioneered a playlist style that was uncommon at the time, blending together rock’n’roll song to song. Today, the tunes are selection of popular music (mainly AOR, funk and soul) from the 70s. When vinyl records were commonplace. After all these years, the interior is unchanged but well maintained, adding an extra level of charm to the music.

MUSIC BAR BERKANA
One of Shibuya’s many ‘box clubs’, this DJ bar in the back streets of the Jinnan district is known for hosting the occasional secret set from big-name spinners. No matter who is playing the small dance floor, it is always full of people dancing, with the audience often taking to the stage themselves.

TENGU SHOKUDOU
Think ‘Tokyo music bar’ and you’ll probably imagine something like Tengu Shokudo, a moody, classy corner of the otherwise sterile Yebisu Garden Place. Its large windows look out over the JR train tracks, while the drink menu lists a rotating selection of Japanese craft beer, more than 200 kinds of whisky, and a rotating list of more than 200 kinds of gin. A DJ steps into the booth and takes control of the perfect sound system – the crystal clean Tannoy speakers and powerful McIntosh amp will make you feel like you are hearing even old classics for the first time.

KOARA
One of Shibuya’s many ‘box clubs’, this DJ bar in the back streets of the Jinnan district is known for hosting the occasional secret set from big-name spinners. No matter who is playing the small dance floor, it is always full of people dancing, with the audience often taking to the stage themselves.

A chef’s tour of Shinjuku

Thomas Angerer is executive chef at the Park Hyatt and oversees the hotel’s eight award-winning restaurants including the iconic New York Grill. He has lived and worked in Shinjuku for four years – who better then to guide us through the area’s best late-night bars and restaurants?

For my perfect night, I’d start in the hotel – watching the sunset while having some cocktails at the New York Bar (Park Hyatt Tokyo, S2F, 3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku, shinjuku, rinzai.com/TQ ParkHyattK/; 3pm-12am, Wed-Sat 3pm-2am) and then proceed to the New York Grill, which is just steps away. I’d order the owner does an amazing Moscow mule – he infuses the vodka with ginger for two weeks and then proceeds. Entrance fees are rare and drinks are very reasonably priced.

Bartender Koara (above) – the perfect spot to enjoy a few drinks and talk to the friendly staff.

GRANDFATHER’S: MANABU MOROOKA. INTRO: KISA TOYOSHIMA. MUSIC BAR BERKANA: KEISUKE TANIGAWA
How can a watch make a difference on missions?

It makes a difference in many ways. For instance, punctuality was key in the JMSDF. When on missions such as searching for submarines, after taking off from a destroyer, the very first thing we did was communicate with the crew of all helicopters in our team, calibrating our watches and setting them to the exact same time. Especially co-pilots had to be aware of the time, reporting back to base on everything from flight time to how long we have left before we run out of fuel. On particularly sensitive missions, everything – even landing on a ship in the middle of the sea – needed to be done in the correct time. JMSDF soldiers are ordered to use analogue watches, as digital ones can be confusing at times. And on missions that cover multiple time zones, we always referred to GMT (Greenwich Mean Time), so having a watch that could display both that and Mean Time, so having a watch that could display both that and the base informed. They have to jot down every detail of the mission while flying, so during my co-pilot years, I would wear a watch on my right wrist in order to write while always keeping an eye on the time. JMSDF soldiers are ordered to use analogue watches, as digital ones can be confusing at times. And on missions that cover multiple time zones, we always referred to GMT (Greenwich Mean Time), so having a watch that could display both that and the local time was very helpful.

Sounds like the G-Shock is the perfect watch for a pilot, don’t you think so? It is. During my time in the JMSDF, I used a G-Shock, as did most of my colleagues. Actually, I recently talked to my former co-workers who are still in the force and they told me how reliable the watch is. I completely agree with them. In my last five years before resigning, I was part of a rescue crew. The JMSDF rescue team is the asset of last hope. If they told me that I had to jot down every detail of the mission while flying, so during my co-pilot years, I would wear a watch on my right wrist in order to write while always keeping an eye on the time. JMSDF soldiers are ordered to use analogue watches, as digital ones can be confusing at times. And on missions that cover multiple time zones, we always referred to GMT (Greenwich Mean Time), so having a watch that could display both that and the local time was very helpful.

Yoshiyuki Satoh, an ex-helicopter pilot for Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), tells us how a watch can be the difference between life and death in extreme situations. When up in the sky, he relied on the G-Shock’s accuracy, durability and special features to ensure that every mission was a successful one.
Cooking up a storm

Mikako Mochizuki counts down the five most exciting young chefs making a splash in Tokyo’s culinary scene

SHUSAKU TOBA AT GRIS

Forgetting the customary apprenticeship abroad, 32-year-old Shusaku Toba studied the art of both Italian and French cooking right here in Tokyo. Toba’s homeboy attitude has resulted in an incredible fusion of Washoku and cuisine française. At Gris in Yoyogi-Uehara, he conjures up artistic dishes such as the cacao nib foie gras sakura. This bonsai-inspired dish consists of a foie gras mousse and macaron base paired with essentially Japanese ingredients including miso, buckwheat seeds, and cherry blossoms pickled in salt. The slightly bitter cacao nibs sprinkled on top provide the finishing touch. Toba, who aims to create flavours ‘unique to Tokyo’, also dreams of making his place an international destination – if Toba won’t go to the world, then the world will come to Toba. Lunch ¥4,500, dinner ¥7,000.

MASAKAZU TAIARA AT DON BRAVO

A restaurant that can raise the profile of an entire neighbourhood is a rarity, but Italian eatery Don Bravo has managed just that out west in Kokuryo. 38-year-old chef Masakazu Taiara’s Italian food unique to Japan is the product of a long culinary journey: after kicking off his career under the revered Tosei Hayashi at much-missed Hiroo eatery Arca, Taiara honed his craft at several Michelin-starred establishments in Italy before returning to Japan to open Don Bravo in his humble home hood of Kokuryo. The local flavour is pronounced in Taiara’s dishes, which are made with ingredients sourced from across Japan. In summer, the prix fixe menu features such as the artistic shiitake mushroom boudin noir narazuke, all made with uncured ham, burrata and copious amounts of maple syrup, are what make eager gourmands trek across town and queue up before the 8am opening time. Breakfast ¥1,000, dinner ¥5,800, à la carte available.

TAICHI HARA AND YUICHI GOTO AT PATH

Having brought a puff pastry-powered bromance to ecological eating, using ingredients and cuts of meat that might be discarded at more expensive settings, Path has already made a splash in Shibuya. Former sous chef position under Christophe Paucod at Kagurazaka’s L’Effervescence in Nishi-Azabu, owes some of his fame to Kazunari Nakamura. The double-Michelin-starred master’s right-hand man for years, Nakamura struck out on his own in 2014, taking over La Bonne Table – a casual alternative to his pricey former haunt. Still only 36, the jovial cook has earned many a fan with dishes such as the artistic shiitake mushroom bread with brown rice noodle, all made with ingredients delivered fresh directly from farms and fishermen. His harmonious symphony of Western and Japanese flavour is made by cutting small slits into the stems of the mushrooms, baking them until fragrant, and then combining these with bacon, sausage and vegetables pickled in sake lees. While everything packs a punch, there’s more to La Bonne Table than flavour. Nakamura is dedicated to ecological eating, using ingredients and cuts of meat that might be discarded at more expensive settings. ‘Edible ingredients are a limited resource,’ he says. ‘So I try to serve sustainable food.’ Lunch ¥3,960, dinner ¥8,250 (à la carte available after 8.30pm).

KAZUNARI NAKAMURA AT LA BONNE TABLE

Hidden away in a quiet back alley just steps from the hustle and bustle of Harajuku lies Kiki, the domain of haute cuisine wizard Yuki Noda. Having moved to France at 22, Noda (now 34) worked for venerable Paris establishment Taillevent before returning to Japan to take up the sous-chef position under Christophe Paucod at Kagurazaka’s L’Effervescence. Noda went independent in 2011, leaving behind the hallowed halls of Michelin-starred restaurants in favour of a more casual setting in the form of Kiki. Hoping to attract a young clientele with seven-course dinners priced at a reasonable ¥5,000, he particularly fond of seasonal fruit and berries. His salad lyonnaise combines Indian mustard, arugula and beets with strawberries and raspberries, bacon and chicken. Relying exclusively on Japanese ingredients, he believes that French cuisine on these shores should aim to reveal the ‘non-Japanese side’ of domestic produce. Lunch ¥3,800, dinner ¥5,000, à la carte available.

Eating & Drinking

YUKI NODA AT KIKI

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GYOZA, THE JAPANESE, pan-fried version of China's boiled or steamed ‘jiaozi’ dumpling, has long been an essential snack enjoyed by everyone from ravenous five-year-olds to inebriated salarymen in need of a late-night stamina snack. Here, we look at five Tokyo specialists that, while embracing tradition, offer new and exciting takes on this dish.

GYOZA BAR COMME A PARIS

As the name implies, this Sangenjaya eatery is low on airs and graces. Thankfully it is big on to-in-ter-at-mosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can. As the name suggests, the focus here is on lamb gyoza, a departure from the usual pork varieties. The dumplings are stuffed with lamb and lamb and come in a house-made dumpling that can barely contain the explosion of juicy lamb. And as with the original Ajibo, the wine list is carefully curated: look out for natural wines picked out by Shimakatayama, the owner of pioneering Roppongi wine bar Shonzui. With reasonable prices, a diverse range of wines, and a down-to-earth atmosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can.

GYOZA SHACK

At the same time that this Sanganjaya eatery is low on airs and graces. Thankfully it is big on atmosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can. As the name suggests, the focus here is on lamb gyoza, a departure from the usual pork varieties. The dumplings are stuffed with lamb and lamb and come in a house-made dumpling that can barely contain the explosion of juicy lamb. And as with the original Ajibo, the wine list is carefully curated: look out for natural wines picked out by Shimakatayama, the owner of pioneering Roppongi wine bar Shonzui. With reasonable prices, a diverse range of wines, and a down-to-earth atmosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can.

GYOZA REVOLUTION

The beloved comfort food is having a new moment in the sun. By Yasuhiro Shimbo

For most gyoza fans, the dumplings are meant to be washed down with beer – but the good folks at this hip Aoyama joint are going against the grain, and pairing their dumplings with wine. Yangxiang Ajibo, its newly opened and wonderfully casual Okachimachi sister branch, upholds this tradition while adding a few twists to the menu. Don’t miss the boiled Yangxiang gyoza, stuffed with lamb and lamb and nearly wrapped in a house-made dumpling that can barely contain the explosion of juicy lamb. And as with the original Ajibo, the wine list is carefully curated: look out for natural wines picked out by Shimakatayama, the owner of pioneering Roppongi wine bar Shonzui. With reasonable prices, a diverse range of wines, and a down-to-earth atmosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can.

ANDA GYOZA

Anda Gyoza in Tokyo’s hip Aoyama has one of the most laid-back eateries in all of Tokyo. No surprise then that the owner relishes it was always intended to be a place for casual snacking – a diner you could stop by in your pyjamas if so inclined. Unlike at most gyoza joints in town, Anda’s dumplings are boiled, not fried, making them light and stomach-friendly even late at night. The dough is made from whole-grain pearl barley, while the edges of the dumplings are tucked in so as to give them a cute, flower-like appearance. In another break from tradition, all four fillings on the menu are completely garlic- and chive-free. Choose from ginger-cabbage, coriander-cucumber (both mixed with chicken), pickles-daikon (mixed with pork). Combine your pick with a serving of minced pork rice or a bowl of lightly flavoured seaweed soup. Drinkers will want to check out the fearsome Baijiu highball.

IKEKIRI GYOZA

Belying on the gyoza-making magic of septuagenarian superchef Madame Rose, this Reiget- Ohashi shop is so welcoming and homely you’ll want to move in. Rose used to only make gyoza for her family before being persuaded to make her dumplings public by a business-minded acquaintance, and the home comforts remain. Start with the Hajimari no Zen (‘beginning platter’), which lets you sample five different types of carefully crafted gyoza, including a chicken-and-lamb variety, a veg-only version, and gyoza large enough to house a whole shrimp. They all pair in comparison to our favourite, the Akausugyo, which features soft, moist skin infused with chicken broth and it’s said, can only be perfectly recreated by Madame Rose herself. Got someone to impress? Opt for the garlic-free, ginger-flavoured dumplings, which were added to the menu at the request of the many club hostesses that used to frequent the shop back when it was still based in Shinjuku.

YANGXIANG AJIBO

Ajibo, a Kanda eatery renowned for its northeastern Chinese cuisine, is one of the city’s top purveyors of all things lamb. Yangxiang Ajibo, its newly opened and wonderfully casual Okachimachi sister branch, upholds this tradition while adding a few twists to the menu. Don’t miss the boiled Yangxiang gyoza, stuffed with lamb and lamb and nearly wrapped in a house-made dumpling that can barely contain the explosion of juicy lamb. And as with the original Ajibo, the wine list is carefully curated: look out for natural wines picked out by Shimakatayama, the owner of pioneering Roppongi wine bar Shonzui. With reasonable prices, a diverse range of wines, and a down-to-earth atmosphere and the best lamb gyoza in town, this spot is already wildly popular – best book a seat while you still can.

GYOZA, THE JAPANESE, pan-fried version of China’s boiled or steamed ‘jiaozi’ dumpling, has long been an essential snack enjoyed by everyone from ravenous five-year-olds to inebriated salarymen in need of a late-night stamina boost. Gyoza is now even being adopted by aficionados of Japanese food overseas, with fancy ‘gyoza bars’ springing up in cities like Paris, New York and London recently. But back at the source, there’s some intriguing innovation going on, too. In this break from tradition, while embracing tradition, offer new and exciting takes on the humble dumpling.
Wrap stars

Mart Hiratsuka points you in the direction of Tokyo’s finest falafel

FINDING A PROPER FALAFEL joint in the capital can be a bit of a mission. One of the most culturally diverse places on earth, Tokyo appears to have a habit of blind spots when it comes to food from the Middle East. But, if you know where to look, the city is home to some absolutely superb falafel – though you might need to trek halfway across town to get your hands on it. Here are our five favourites.

KUUMBA DU FALAFEL
Shibuya’s best falafel shop is harder to find than a hashem-selling chameleon. Perched on a highway intersection a good 15 minutes’ walk from Shibuya Station, it doesn’t even have a sign outside to indicate that you’ve found the right place. Culinary pilgrims will be rewarded for their perseverance, though. Kuumba du Falafel’s sandwiches (¥1,200, half size ¥880) are superb, crammed with so much fresh veg, fried aubergine, hummus and tahini sauce that they’re almost impossible to eat without making a mess. If you’re eating in, try adding some of the spicy sauce available at the tables – though you might need to trek halfway across town to get your hands on it. Here are our five favourites.

PITA THE GREAT
No prize for guessing what the speciality is at this long-running Tameike-Sanno takeaway, which opened back in 1993. Pita the Great prepares its bread in-store, and you’ll notice customers surreptitiously brushing flour from their clothes while they wait for their orders to arrive. The shop’s signature falafel sandwich (aka the ‘Big Pita’, ¥900) is a real piece of work, dried fava broad beans rather than chickpeas. They’re often eaten plain in Egypt, but you can have them in a pita sandwich (¥40) topped with pickles, tomato and sesame sauce. Lamb and chicken kebabs, Egyptian stew, and fried chicken bento are also on offer. There’s only room for eight diners inside, so when the sun’s out, get your food to go and head for the nearby Kitazawa Park.

TA-IM
Run by a Japanese woman with an Egyptian husband, this inconspicuous and homely deli in Higashi-Kinzanze does its falafela little differently. Here you’ll find a southern Egyptian take on the flavour bombs, made with dried fava broad beans rather than chickpeas. They’re often eaten plain in Egypt, but you can have them in a pita sandwich (¥850) topped with pickles, tomato and sesame sauce. Lamb and chicken kebabs, Egyptian stew, and fried chicken bento are also on offer. There’s only room for eight diners inside, so when the sun’s out, get your food to go and head for the nearby Kitazawa Park.

RITAWIRI
Located in a back alley, Ritawiri is a takeout-only shop without a sign on the door. It’s run by a Japanese woman with an Egyptian husband, and they serve a basic falafel sandwich (¥600) to go. They have two sizes – small and large – and the falafel is cooked to order. The chicken bento is also a hit; you can try it with falafel, too. You can also order falafel from the takeaway stand outside. It’s open from 11am until 3pm and 5pm until 8pm. The falafel sandwich is ¥700, and the chicken bento is ¥1,000.

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Summer got you feeling all hot and bothered? Here are some of our favourite summer beauty and skincare products to cool you down.

By Kaila Imada

**Fresh faced**

**CANMAKE CREAM CHEEK**
Rich in antioxidants, this multi-purpose oil has been used for centuries as a moisturiser for both the skin and hair. As a facial moisturiser it can protect against environmental exposure, but it is also its own, taming those frizzy flyaway hairs and keeping things smooth and sleek when the humidity gets a bit unbearable. ¥1,200 for 100ml.

**D47 Design Travel Store, Shibuya Hikarie 8F, 2-21-1 Shibuya, Shibuya (Shibuya Station). 03 6427 2301. hikarie8.com/d47designtravelstore.**

**BIORE UV AQUA RICH WATERY ESSENCE SPF 50+**
The one thing that absolutely everyone should be wearing this summer, sunscreen is a Tokyo-essential come rain or shine. The city’s keys have a habit of catching people out, so layer up with Biore’s finest. Formulated with a high SPF and waterproof properties perfect for the sweaty months, it is one of the best sunscreens going. ¥964.

**Ainz & Tulpe Harajuku, 1F & B1F, 1-13-14 Jingumae, Shibuya (Meiji-Jingumae Station). 03 5775 0561. ainz-tulpe.jp. Daily 10am-11pm.**

**SHISEIDO MEDICATED BABY POWDER**
Use this nifty powder compact during the warmer months to keep that not-so-pleasant facial shine under control. Although it’s labelled as a baby powder, it also works for adults, is gentle on the face and doubles as a finishing powder to set makeup before heading out the door. ¥350.

**All Loft stores in Tokyo, left spins? tv Lova.**

**MAKANAI COSME KONNYAKU SPONGE**
Long heralded as a super food, it looks like konjac could save your skin too. This sponge is made from natural fibres derived from the root of the konjac plant and expertly exfoliates and cleanses the skin after a long day out in the heat. The sponge contains natural moisture-rich properties so you don’t even need any soap – just make sure to wash your face before using it. ¥756.

**Makana Kagurazaka, 3-1 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku (Iidabashi Station). 03 3235 7663. makana.cosme.co.jp. Mon-Sat 11am-8pm, Sun & hols 11am-7pm.**

**KEANA NADESHIKO RICE MASK**
This hydrating mask is made from organic Japanese rice with a nourishing serum of ingredients derived from sake, rice bran oil and rice-eramicles. Just apply it to your face whenever you need a cool down. ¥560.

**Arco & Yoji Hasegawa, 1F & B1 12-14 Jingumae, Shibuya (Minato, Jingumae Station). 03 5775 0663. also Yahan (Shibuya). Daily 11am-11pm.**

**OIL-BLOTTING FACIAL PAPER ABNATURORIGAMI**
A little skin saviour, these luxurious blotting sheets will wipe away everything. Summer throws at your skin and are made from deerskin wax (traditional Japanese) paper. The sheets don’t disturb the make-up that’s already applied on your face, while still maintaining the health and vitality of your skin. It is an ingenious step for those summer rocks upon the chin. Starting at ¥440.

**Nijo Haneda Airport, 2F, Haneda Airport, Blc. www.njyo.co.jp/page/haneda.png. 24 hours daily.**

**MASUNAGA 1905**
This famed framer has been turning out one-of-a-kind Japanese-made frames from Fukui prefecture since 1905. Their flagship store in Kitte Asakusa offers an exclusive array of frames and sunglasses that lean heavily on timeless styles. Each pair of glasses are lovingly handmade with over 200 steps to turn raw materials into eyewear perfection. From ¥35,000.

**3-12-6 Kitte, Nishigyo, Minato (Kitte Station). 03 3482 1805. masunaga1905.com. 11am-8pm (7pm on Sun), closed Tue.**

**THE EYE TEAM**
The sunglasses shops leaving everyone else in the shade

**KAMURO**
What once began as a small eyeglass shop in Ginza has now turned into a full-blown business. Kamuro’s styles and colours are as quirky as it gets, while the frames are made to fit gently around a variety of nose types. Have fun trying on their glasses for a fashion-forward look that might make it a bit hard to pick out just one. From ¥23,000.

**3-16-16 Kitte, Nishigyo, Minato (Kitte Station). 03 3624 7602. kamon.net. 11am-8pm (Sun 7pm), closed Wed.**

**SOLAKZADE**
Not your typical eyewear shop, Solakzade’s Harajuku boutique is home to a distinctive range of vintage and antique styles sourced from Japan and around the globe. The shop has a particularly broad selection of styles in its 8,000-frame trove, including new shades that date back all the way to the 1800s. The basement of the shop is reserved for customization, restoration and repair, where their expert team are also able to create the perfect pair of bespoke glasses. Vintage glasses from ¥20,000.

**2-12-6-14 Jingumae, Shibuya (Minato, Jingumae Station). 03 3478 3345. solakzade.com. 2pm-8pm (Monday appointment only).**

**SPECTACLES MUSEUM**
From the more is more school of thought, The Spectacles Museum boasts rack upon rack of budget-friendly frames. While it can make for a dizzying browsing experience, you’re sure to emerge with a unique pair of sunglasses at a friendly price. From ¥2,000.

**3-16-16 Kitte, Nishigyo, Minato (Kitte Station). 03 3624 7602. kamon.net. 11am-8pm (Sun 7pm), closed Wed.**
Five Tokyo shops worth visiting for campers, hikers and climbers. By Shiori Kotaki

WITH SUMMER FESTIVAL SEASON already upon us and the city quickly getting too hot for comfort, it’s time to head out into the great outdoors. But hiking in sneakers or trying to desperately pitch your parents’ old tent when the rain is already pouring down can make anyone want to turn into a couch potato. Avoid equipment mishaps and get geared up the right way at these four Tokyo shops, which will have you looking the part in no time. And for those who'd rather rent than buy, we've included a one-stop hire outlet as well.

Akishima Moripark Outdoor Village

For more variety than you could ever ask for, make for this cluster of 14 outdoor-focused stores way out in Tokyo’s western suburbs. The shop selection at Moripark Outdoor Village includes clothing, bag and tent specialists, plus big name brand outlets such as Coleman and The North Face. There’s also an inside processing service that’ll help you attain the perfect fit for your walking or hiking boots. Our favourite is the bouldering and yoga gym, which can be used by anyone who completes the registration process. And when you tire of all the shopping, head for the central plaza and its three restaurants and cafés.


Yamadogu Rental Shop

If you’re a less committed camper – or simply don’t fancy flying back with three times the baggage – stop by this Shinjuku dealer for a quick rental. They allow you to bring the gear back straight after use, without worrying about cleaning or carrying it all the way back to Tokyo – use the COD slip provided to drop your item off for return shipping at the nearest convenience store. Two days with a seven-piece hiking set, which includes rainwear, trekking poles, alpaca pack and shoes, can be had for ¥13,000, while more expensive packages also come with helmets. Individual pieces of clothing are also available, so music festival-goers can easily pick up an extra layer of wear in advance just to be on the safe side. See their English-language website for a full list of items and reservations.


L-Breath Shinjuku

In addition to an enviable location – just two minutes’ walk from Shinjuku Station’s southwest exit – this urban megastore stands out with its unparalleled lineup of camping gear, sportswear, hiking boots and cycling gear. The ten-storey complex is almost too large to take on in one go, so you might want to check out only a few floors at first. The standout section is on the third floor, where more than 500 backpacks of all shapes and sizes line the walls. You’ll find everything from serious hiking packs to kids’ versions, with even more stock hidden away in the back. Detailed explanations for each backpack are written in Japanese on labels near each bag, while English speakers will find the expert staff more helpful.

6-1-15 Shinjuku, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Station). 03 3354 8951. www.yamarent.com/en?language=en. 11am-8pm (Sun & hols until 8.30pm), closed Wed.

Maunga Kichijoji

Both buyer and seller of outdoor clothing and camping equipment, Maunga is a superb destination for those on the lookout for secondhand gear at reasonable prices. Cleaned and repaired, the items are ranked by condition – A to D – and priced accordingly. Most of the stuff on display is graded B or C, and are about half the price they’d be new. You’ll find shoes, clothing, backpacks, hats, cooking utensils, lamps and tents, with available brands including local stalwarts Montbell, Keen and Gregory.


Montbell Futako-Tamagawa

A Japanese outdoor brand founded by mountaineer Isamu Tanaka in 1975, Montbell set up its latest Tokyo outpost in Futako-Tamagawa in April this year. Specialising in items that are light and easy to carry, they currently operate 13 outlets across the city, with this two-storey one being one of the largest. On the ground floor you’ll find the Stretch Wind Parka, a supremely flexible jacket that, although not 100 percent waterproof, can handle light rain and makes for the perfect emergency solution when the weather turns sour up in the mountains.

Art & Culture

Just add water

Kunihiro Miki meets sento architect Kentaro Imai, who is pouring new life into Tokyo’s bathhouse culture

IN 1968, FOUR YEARS after the first Tokyo Olympics, there were 2,660 sento bathhouses in Tokyo. Today that number stands at 600 – a dramatic drop that is reflected across the country and concisely illustrates how serious the issues facing Japan’s public bathing culture have become. With even box-sized studio apartments in Tokyo now coming equipped with a tub, sleek spa facilities (so-called ‘super sento’) dominating the market, and the proprietors of old-school bathing establishments ageing along with their buildings, there appears to be little that can be done to save the sento.

But where most Tokyoites see crisis, Kentaro Imai sees opportunity. An architect who has already led the renovation of around 15 sento, most of them in Tokyo, he is attracting people back to the bathhouses with beautiful interiors that fuse traditional Japanese imagery with modern designs. Dubbed ‘designer sento’ by the media, Imai’s creations are winning fans of communal soaking new hope. ‘It’s incredibly unfortunate that we seem to be losing our public bathing culture, which was once an integral part of life in Tokyo,’ he says. ‘In order to make sure that this tradition lives on, I try to keep the original style and details of bathhouses intact while adding new elements that make the experience more pleasant. Ideally, the result feels both new and familiar.’

Imai is also confident that his reimagined bathhouses can encourage the ‘super sento’ gang to return to the original. ‘As long as customers feel satisfied and comfortable, they’ll keep coming back,’ he says. ‘If you have the right concept, that’s possible – you don’t have to install a huge number of different baths or turn yourself into a spa. Although the sento industry’s structural struggles, most notably the difficulty of recruiting and educating the next generation of proprietors, won’t be resolved overnight, Imai’s work has given fans of communal soaking new hope. We’ll be watching his next move closely – who knows, perhaps public bathhouses are in for another post-Olympic golden era? ’

OKURAYU

Imai’s newest creation was completed in late 2016 way out west in Machida. Aiming to stem the flow of customers leaving Okuraya for the new ‘super sento’ opened nearby, the owner hired Imai to freshen up his traditional bathhouse. The architect’s response was to cut down on, well, everything – an approach that resulted in what could be Tokyo’s most minimalist soak spot.

TAIHEIYU

Imai’s first bathhouse project was the wholesale renovation of this Adachi-ku sento completed in 2001. Making the most of the relatively small space, Imai added a lengthy ‘walk-through bath’ reflecting his vision of how old and cramped Tokyo sento can be turned into more open spaces.

KOHEISEN

Kohmeisen reopened in 2014 in the heart of trendy Nakameguro. A reborn ‘outside bath’ is available on only one side of the sento, so the men’s and women’s sides are swapped every week to allow everyone to experience rooftop bathing – a rare treat in central Tokyo.

CHIYONOYU

With its deep blue wall tiles and high ceiling, one corner of Meguro’s Chiyonoyu resembles a cave. An Imai original, this quirky bath is filled with artificially carbonated hot spring water and was designed to be a place to clear your mind. Known as a ‘meditation bath’, it’s a familiar feature at Imai-designed sento across Tokyo.

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New shows to see

Explore the diversity of Southeast Asian art, look back at the career of a Japanese photography legend and peek into the Buddhist underworld at summer’s best art events

ESSENTIAL EXHIBITIONS

PERROTIN TOKYO

The new Perrotin Tokyo is the 11th space in Perrotin’s gallery empire that now stretches across eight spaces in five cities. This inaugural show in Tokyo features a survey of the resin-based, worlds-of-light sculpture work of Milan-born artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo both charmed and confused his 16th-century contemporaries with fanciful portrait headpieces made of items such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish and books. Rediscovered by the Surrealists in the early 20th century, Arcimboldo is now considered a pioneer. Centred on a revue of Arcimboldo-inspired creations, the exhibition pays homage to French artist Pierre Soulages, who turns 99 years old this year. His connection with Japan runs deep, having first exhibited on these shores way back in 1951. His work together.

Nobuyoshi Araki: Photo-Crazy

Nobuyoshi Araki is arguably one of Japan’s greatest living photographers. Having worked consistently – some would say maniacally – since the 1960s, his oeuvre has been met with exalted praise and deep criticism alike, with people divided over his sensual, occasionally semi-pornographic imagery. This mega-show sees more than 1,000 of the divisive snapper’s newest photographs displayed alongside scrapbooks from Araki’s early years. One of the underlying themes here is the relation between life and death which is also the red line tying all of Araki’s work together.

Deconstructing Paradise

To deconstruct paradise is to reflect on the many cultural and spiritual ideas around paradise and the netherworld in art. Curated by Paris-basedparallel curator and cultural producer Xander Welsch, the exhibition explores the diverse and fascinating interpretations of paradise and hell in art and culture.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI: COLLECTION FONDATION ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Alberto Giacometti’s fascination with life and death is also the red line tying all of his work together. The artist’s unique approach to this theme is explored in the Fondation Alberto Giacometti’s new exhibition.

INTRODUCTION TO CERAMICS: DISHES AND PLATES, LARGE AND SMALL

You’ll be able to learn the ins and outs of ceramic plates at the Nezu Museum’s highly educational summer special, which goes beyond simply explaining the history of notable pieces by demonstrating how people of bygone days actually used them in their daily lives. You’ll find dishes up to 60cm in diameter from the Chinese Yuan dynasty (13th-14th century) alongside delicate Japanese plates from the 18th century onward. After ponds, these beauties for a couple of hours, you’ll never look at your own dishes in the same way.

AMBIENT: LIFESTYLE ITEMS DESIGNED BY NAOTO FUKASAWA

Product designer Naoto Fukasawa has worked for everyone from no-brand giant Muji to Italian powerhouse company Alessi, while several of his designs have also been added to the permanent exhibition at New York’s MoMA. Considering such heavy weight credentials, it’s surprising that this Shihano display is his first solo exhibition in Japan. The show space is divided into sections and decorated to resemble the rooms of a house, with Fukasawa’s award-winning appliances, chairs and lights installed throughout to display his work in the environment it was meant for – the home.

SUNSHOWER: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA 1960S TO NOW

Boppongi is experiencing a complete Southeast Asian art takeover this summer, as both the National Art Center and the Mori Art Museum dedicate their vast halls to contemporary works from across the region. Focusing on art from the 1960s up to the present, ‘Sunshower’ could be the most significant exhibition of Southeast Asian art Japan has ever seen. It consists of nine sections, including ‘Passion and Revolution’, which focuses on the struggle for democracy in the post-colonial age, and ‘Day by Day’, multifaceted as it looks at everyday life in rapidly globalising and economically dynamic societies.

HELLO ALICE!

Get ready to dive into Lewis Carroll’s wonderland! The Museum of Modern Art Tokyo takes you on a journey through the fantastical world of Alice in Wonderland, featuring a series of works inspired by the iconic character that has captured the imaginations of generations. From paintings to sculptures, the exhibition brings together a diverse selection of artworks that explore the themes of fantasy, exploration, and the power of imagination.}

GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO <SPRING>, 1563, OIL ON OAK WOOD, MADRID, MUSEO DE LA REAL ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES DE SAN FERNANDO

GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO <SUMMER>, 1563, OIL ON OAK WOOD, MADRID, MUSEO DE LA REAL ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES DE SAN FERNANDO

GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO <FALL>, 1563, OIL ON OAK WOOD, MADRID, MUSEO DE LA REAL ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES DE SAN FERNANDO

GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO <WINTER>, 1563, OIL ON OAK WOOD, MADRID, MUSEO DE LA REAL ACADEMIA DE BELLAS ARTES DE SAN FERNANDO

Photo: Ryoichi Uehara
Music

Titanic tunes

Takahiro Takeuchi looks back at the history of anime songs through five timeless hits

Music and Japanese anime have always been intertwined. The intro and end credits are usually accompanied by a song—usually one that embodies the show or film’s worldview. In the 1960s anime developed into a musical genre in its own right, evolving into what is now one of the most popular types of Japanese music out there. Many are the joys of anime and don’t know where to start, fear not—we’ve picked out the five tracks that define this most joyous of genres.

1960s: The birth of anime song culture

Titans March' from Astro Boy (1963) by Kamitakada Boys Choir

Anime songs exploded into the public consciousness with the emergence of 'Tetsuwan Atom', Japan’s first full-scale animated TV series, known internationally as 'Astro Boy'. Hayao Miyazaki’s work at Studio Ghibli was considered art, while franchises such as 'Evangelion', 'Pokémon' and 'One Piece' conquered pop culture. Anime songs followed suit, and it was no longer rare to see themes performed by established artists on the mainstrem platform. The result was chart toppers such as 'Older Pompompon' from the kids’ show 'Chibi Maruko-chan', which sold over 1.6 million records.

1980s-90s: Anime as social phenomenon

'A Cruel Angel’s Thesis' from Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995) by Yoko Takahashi

The term 'otaku' (geek, usually one obsessed with anime and manga) was coined in the 1980s and soon they had inherited the earth. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s anime and manga broke into the mainstream. Hayao Miyazaki’s work at Studio Ghibli was considered art, while franchises such as 'Evangelion', 'Pokémon' and 'One Piece' conquered pop culture. Anime songs followed suit, and it was no longer rare to see them performed by established artists on the most mainstream of platforms. The result was chart toppers such as 'Older Pompompon' from the kids’ show 'Chibi Maruko-chan', which sold over 1.6 million records.

2000s: The internet age and the voice actor boom

'Hare hare yukai' from The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya (2006) by Haruhi Suzumiya, Yuki Nagato and Mikuru Asahina

By the time the new millennium rolled along, late-night series, which often tackle darker and more controversial topics, were proving that anime wasn’t just for the kids. The popularity of these series was fuelled by online word-of-mouth and music that was embraced digital. The internet was becoming a breeding ground for exclusively anime-focused songwriter and singers, with composers uploading their works to public platforms and singers then posting their covers of these songs. The success of 'Hare hare yukai', the ending theme to the first season of late-night schoolgirl adventure series 'The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya', established a new style of anime song in which characters from the show sing and dance to the theme. Consequently, a select few stars led by Nana Mizuki began to blur the boundaries between voice acting and musical stardom.

2010s: The late-night anime boom and idol anime hits

'Guren no yumiya' from Attack on Titan (2013) by Linked Horizon

The current decade has seen former late-night cult shows such as 'Puella Magi Madoka Magica' and 'Attack on Titan' grow into massive mainstream hits and spawned hugely popular feature-length films. Another trend has been the rise of anime series themed on 'idol' groups (pop groups performing heavily choreographed song-and-dance routines) — 'The Idolmaster' and 'Love Live!' among the biggest hits — and these themes turning out smash songs tied to their respective series’ story lines. The latest craze, led by the 'Kemono Friends' series and its impossibly catchy opening theme, is so-called 'moe' anthropomorphism, in which animals, objects and even abstract concepts are represented as cute human characters — most of which can sing, of course.

1970s: The emergence of the anime song artist

'Space Battleship Yamato' from Space Battleship Yamato (1974) by Isao Sasaki

The 1970s saw the curtain open on a golden age of anime. This was the decade that gave rise to classics including 'Space Battleship Yamato', 'Galaxy Express 999' and 'Mazinger Z'. The theme music from these series ended up being major anime song hits and were performed by the likes of Isao Sasaki and Ichitaro Musinko, both now considered legends of the genre.

These specialised artists performed at concerts and on radio and TV music shows, helping anime become appreciated as a musical genre in its own right.

1990s: The internet age and the voice actor boom

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**Beats international**

Got musical itchy feet? Kunihiro Miki and Hajime Oishi guide you to five Tokyo music bars where you can dance to tunes from distant shores.

Bar Bossa

**Will take you to: Brazil**

The Brazilian-ringed Bar Bossa is one of Shibuya’s great hideaways. The music ranges from samba to bossa nova and charango while swinging gently to the mood-setting tropical beat. More a spot for mellow dining, listening and drinking in good company than a wild party venue, Bossa doesn’t take solo patrons, so consider going with a good friend or that special someone.

© Tokyo Grace Hotel

Bar King Rum

**Will take you to: the Caribbean**

Equally devoted to the Caribbean’s signature liquor and the region’s musical genres, including ska, calypso and reggae, King Rum is a little piece of the tropics just a stone’s throw from Ikebukuro Station. With close to 350 different bottles lining the shelves behind the bar, you’ll have a real hard time finding a better rum lineup anywhere in the city, while the sun-drenched beam shining from the speakers make your drink taste even better. Cuban cigars are available for those who like to double time finding a better rum lineup anywhere in the city, while the sun-drenched beam shining from the speakers make your drink taste even better. Cuban cigars are available for those who like to double time finding a better rum lineup anywhere in the city, while the sun-drenched beam shining from the speakers make your drink taste even better. Cuban cigars are available for those who like to double time finding a better rum lineup anywhere in the city, while the sun-drenched beam shining from the speakers make your drink taste even better. Cuban cigars are available for those who like to double time finding a better rum lineup anywhere in the city, while the sun-drenched beam shining from the speakers make your drink taste even better. Cuban cigars are available for those who like to double

Bar Blen Blen Blen

**Will take you to: Brazil**

If you’re in the mood for drinking the night away to Brazilian grooves, head straight for this second-floor hideout in Shibuya where the samba and bossa nova are always turned up to eleven and the bar serves expertly mixed caipirinhas until 4am. Far more than a nostalgia hideout in Shibuya where the samba and bossa nova are always turned up to eleven and the bar serves expertly mixed caipirinhas until 4am. Far more than a nostalgia hideout in Shibuya where the samba and bossa nova are always turned up to eleven and the bar serves expertly mixed caipirinhas until 4am. Far more than a nostalgia hideout in Shibuya where the samba and bossa nova are always turned up to eleven and the bar serves expertly mixed caipirinhas until 4am. Far more than a nostalgia hideout in Shibuya where the samba and bossa nova are always turned up to eleven and the bar serves expertly mixed caipirinhas until 4am. Far more than a nostalgia

World Kitchen Baobab

**Will take you to: the Caribbean, Africa, Central and South America**

A cosmopolitan Kichijoji spot where you can enjoy music, food and alcohol from warmer climate zones, World Kitchen Baobab is almost considered a sacred place by Tokyo’s world music fans, it’s full of precious records and paraphernalia collected by the owner on his travels. There’s a particular focus on Latin and African beats, with performing artists serving up everything from reggae to Brazilian pop and 60s-style surfrock. Check their website for the gig schedule and prepare for a wild outfit give Japanese folk a punk facelift. Beneath the high-speed metallic clanking of atarigane (small gongs), their pounding compositions sing forward like a stampede, often incorporating shamisen sounds that could cut as well come from electric guitars. If punk had existed in the Edo era, this is what it would have sounded like.

World Kitchen Baobab

© Tokyo Grace Hotel

THREE TOKYO BANDS PUTTING A NEW SPIN ON EXOTIC RHYTHMS

**MINYO CRUSADERS**

Blending Japanese folk with Latin beats, this Tokyo collective brings together two polarised musical forms and creates a harmony so funky you can’t help but stand up and dance. American roots guitar is not by Cooder is reportedly thin.

**OKI DUB ANI BAND**

Led by Oki Kano, a descendent of northern Japan’s indigenous Ainu people, this six-piece play dub and African rhythms on traditional Ainu instruments such as the tenno, a three-stringed contraption. At times, the end result sounds like nothing else on earth, a weird and intoxicating mix.

**SEPPUKU PISTOLS**

Wielding ukulele drums like they’re deadly weapons, these wild outfits give Japanese folk music a punk twist, their pounding compositions sing forward like a stampede, often incorporating shamisen sounds that could cut as well come from electric guitars. If punk had existed in the Edo era, this is what it would have sounded like.
Mari Hiratsuka explores

Traditionally a sedate spot, Tokyo’s most touristy set: start out at the magnificently illuminated Sensoji before digging demand. Here we look at how to have fun in Asakusa once the sun has

Until very recently, that is. The run-up to the 2020 Olympics has seen a new breed of hip hotels and hostries open in Asakusa – a trend that’s led to a crop of novel after-dark spots popping up to meet rising demand. Here we look at how to have fun in Asakusa once the sun has set. See story on the magnificently illuminated Sensoji before diving deeper into the neighbourhood’s nightlife charms.

1. SENSOTEMPLE

Tokyo’s oldest and grandest temple is widely busy during the day, but visiting after dark is usually far more rewarding: many crowds are manageable, the mighty temple structures are lit up until 11pm, and the closed rolling doors of the 2.5m Nakamise-dori shopping street are straight off an Ukiyo-e Hokusai painting. Strolling through the Kaminarimon gate and down the artsy arcade is recommended for romantics, while the Rokaya-lined street on the west side of the temple complex is where to kick off a Tokyo-fuelled evening.

2. GONPACHI ASUKA

Famous as the restaurant that inspired the ‘Crazy 88’ fight scene in Quentin Tarantino’s ‘Kill Bill’, not many people know that Gonpachi is actually a small chain of restaurants, each with its own distinct vibe and atmosphere. While QT’s muse is in white Asakusa, this branch opened in January 2017 and is first in Asakusa, just a few steps away from the Kaminarimon and next to Azumabashi, with a great riverside view from the second floor. The Gonpachi folks craft everything from scratch: their soba is handmade in house every day, while the supremely bee-friendly yakitori skewers are grilled on binchotan (Japanese white charcoal) for a smoky kick. Note that reservations are recommended for the riverside seats.

3. JAKOTSUYU

Although it’s only five minutes’ walk from Asakusa Station, in an alley just off Kokusai-dori, this sentō bath house tends not to get much tourist traffic – which is all the more surprising when you consider that it’s been going since the Edo period. The owners have given the place a few overhauls since then, and hardcore shikama-dake geeks may be disappointed by the functional, modern interior. Still, the obligatory painting of Mount Fuji looms over the indoor bathing area, which features tubs filled with mineral-rich, dark brown water, while a stone path leads to the relaxing open-air zone complete with infrared open-air bath. The place is open until midnight, making a moonlit dip possible.

4. ASUKA BATTING STADIUM

Blow off some steam by swinging at mechanical pitches or perfecting your own fastball in the bullpen – this retro batting centre, opened in 1998, is instantly recognisable by the glowing neon sign that spells out ROX (the name of the building) and the giant globe above the entrance. Each ¥400 game gets you 20 pitches. The complex, which also houses other sporty mini-game areas and a Taito video game arcade, stays open until 1am every day.

5. WIRED HOTEL ASUKA

Conjured up by Portland-based creative agency OMD/GGQ, known for their Ace Hotels in London and across the US, and the folks behind Tokyo’s ubiquitous Wired Café chain, the stylish Wired Hotel is one of the most exciting openings in Asakusa this year. On its ground floor you’ll find Zakbaran, a café-bar that features local artists and a strictly curated, 12-strong sake lineup, alongside a strictly curated, 12-strong sake lineup, Meanwhile, the regular ‘Alixasse’ 100Mile networking events usually see an engaging lineup of guest speakers and are fun for locals and visitors alike.

6. UUTO CAFE

Opened in 2013, Uuto is a late-night, cocktail-focused hangout. It’s run by a composer who needed a place to test the sound quality of his work, and apparently on a whim, decided to establish an entire café for the purpose. Having switched to a late-night format a year ago, it’s where to sip fine coffee and snack on luxury desserts while taking in smooth tunes flowing from speakers tuned to pin-drop perfection. If body fat percentage isn’t high on your list of concerns, go for a glass of fine wine to some sake from the owner’s extensive collection.

7. ASUKA GOLDFINGER

Run by Asakusa Jinno – a local rock saxist who combines swing, rockabilly, klezmer, polka and waltz into a wild, mosh-inducing mix – this casual bar on Kokusai-dori stands out among the countless ‘snack’ bars frequented by the neighbourhood’s green-eyed live performers, which range from indie gigs to burlesque shows. Take place here every night except Tuesdays. What’s a fun date without forgetting to show up? Don’t forget to seek out local bar Furi Pun in the back: this techno- and dance-focused hideout often hosts underground DJ nights. Adventurous musos looking to explore the local scene will love a night at Goldfinger.

8. ONGIRASAKU YADOROKU

Owner Asakusa Yadoroku has survived earthquakes, redevelopments and a multitude of foodie fads. Founded in 1994, Tokyo’s oldest onigiri specialist is distinguished by its counter, which is reminiscent of those found at upscale udon restaurants, but the shop itself remains adorably down to earth. Now run by the grand children of the founder, whose wit it up after her husband simply couldn’t be bothered to work any longer, Yadoroku roughly translates to ‘no-good sofa spud’ – which must have led to some interesting conversations around the dinner table. Rice balls can be had for around ¥200, with filling options ranging from the common salmon and kombu seaweed to salted and fermented fish innards (shio-kara) and ginger pickled in miso. You can get your onigiri fix until 2am, making this a top destination for a post-drink snack.
The best all-you-can-drink deals at Tokyo hotels

Upgrade your nomihodai – bottomless glass – experience with these luxuriously limitless booze deals.

By Mayumi Koyama

ANAL InterContinental: Champagne Social
Every bubble-blower dream, the ANA InterContinental’s ‘Champagne Social’ lets you savour multiple brands multiple times. Chose one of the three ‘levels’: Bronze for four to five to five – all plasers let you choose one of bubbles from a three-string menu. To top things off, the cocktails included also feature champagne; you have to consume the fine stuff as soon as a bottle is opened, so unfinished bottles of Taittinger, Louis Roederer and the like are reborn as sprightly mimosas.

Four Seasons Hotel at Marramouchi: Champagne Free Flow
Satisfying the hungers as well as the thirsty, the Four Seasons deal invites you to fill your belly while whasing the food down with top tipples. Choose from champagnes including Pommery Brut Royal or go for some of the bar’s original cocktails while enjoying two dishes – a cold appetiser and a warm main – courtesy of the Motif’s chef, Hiroyuki Asano.

ANA InterContinental: Motif: The Black Bar
Following its ‘black afternoon tea’, a chic experience where inky dishes are served on monochrome tableware, the Motif has put together another Instagram-worthy ‘black’ menu. This artistic menu – think crab cake with black tomato, prosciutto with black pepper and marinated black olives – is accompanied by themed original cocktails. Try the Aman Black Espresso Martini, made with the hotel’s own brands of espresso, coffee liqueur and vodka, and the Black Berry Cooler, which is a blend of three kinds of berries, vodka and cocacola. For an extra ¥3,200 you can upgrade to unlimited champagne. This artistic menu

Prince Park Tower: Twilight Plan
The Prince Park Tower stands right next to the iconic Tokyo Tower, and the hotel’s 33rd-floor lounge takes advantage, offering dynamic views of our city’s pretty orange icon. Note that a reservation only gets you through the door and doesn’t guarantee a specific seat, so best be early if you want to nab one of the five pairs of coveted window seats. The bottomless Twilight Plan is only available on weekdays and includes free-flowing Barons de Rothschild Brut and over 40 kinds of the resident mixologist’s cocktails. Don’t miss the signature mojito or the lemonade, both communal tables for those who feel sociable and cosy nooks for those who don’t.

Sherry Wine Social lets you savour multiple brands multiple times. Chose one of the three ‘levels’: Bronze for two kinds of wine, Silver for three and Gold for five – all plans let you experience with these luxuriously limitless booze deals. By Mayumi Koyama

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The perfect spot if you’re doing your drinking alone, the Sheraton’s Late Afternoon Tea has both communal tables for those who feel sociable and cosy nooks for those who don’t.

Food is served on a three-tiered platter packed with finger sandwiches, salads, tarts, cheeses and cappucio. The drink offers include Kirin and Asahi beer on tap and Duché Chevallier Spanish cava which, when combined with the calming views just from the tin-house duo and serene views of the hotel’s delightfully illuminated Japanese garden, will soon have you in a state of chilled-out bliss.

For people who are connoisseurs, upgrade to the ‘First class…’ deal, which includes unlimited amounts of the champagne of the month, a guest bubbly brought in from some of France’s top maisons.

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WHETHER IT BE from visitors, locals or the flashy robo-trucks constantly careening across the city, it’s highly unlikely you’ve never seen or heard about the Robot Restaurant. This popular hotspot deserves its fame, offering visitors a unique Tokyo experience loaded with bombast. Located down Sakurada-dori in Shinjuku’s neon-lit Kabukicho district, the Robot Restaurant has been welcoming guests since 2012 and continues to reinvent itself for both first-time and returning customers.

WHY IT’S WORTH IT Where else in Tokyo can you enjoy a satisfying hento meal along with tub-thumping drummers, gravity-defying dancers and robots rocking out to Michael Jackson? The 90-minute show is a delightful assault on the senses, sure to lift your spirits and have you wiggling on the edge of your seat while the kawaii troupe comes next with nostalgic tunes and choreography apparently inspired by the King of Pop. The show ends with a feast for the senses, with a mix-match of robots in rainbow wigs, retro cars and a metallic horse (or perhaps a unicorn?) parade through the crowd.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SHOW Nor is your typical dinner theatre, the current show kicks off with a robot dancing set along with massive neo-lit floats, zinged-out daruma dolls, dancers in manga-inspired wigs and the show’s signature mechanical sushi boat. Act two features a battle of the bots where giant jungle creatures gang up against a team of evil robots from another universe. An unexpected breakout of robot-line dancing comes next with nostalgic tunes and choreography apparently inspired by the King of Pop. The show ends with a feast for the eyes as a mix-match of robots in rainbow wigs, retro cars and a metallic horse (or perhaps a unicorn?) parade through the crowd.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW Make sure you arrive early as the mayhem from behind closed doors until the first intermission. Bonus: If you arrive early enough, you’ll be treated to a little pre-game show up at the restaurant’s lounge floor, including live singing, a robot playing the electric guitar, plusa crazy, sake-taking drumming crew to get you into the mood for things to come.

HOW TO BOOK: Robot Restaurant is open for three shows daily, starting at 5:30pm, 7:30pm and 9:45pm (with an additional show at 4pm on 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 calling the number below between 9am and 10pm. The entrance fee is ¥8,000, excluding food and drinks. Note that the schedule might change due to maintenance. Shinjuku Robot Bldg, 1-7-1 Kabukicho, Shinjuku (Shinjuku Station). 03 3200 5500. www.shinjuku-robot.com. 4pm-11pm daily.

ON A BALMY SUMMER EVENING, nothing beats catching a film under the stars. Take your pick of urban screenings in Tokyo, or head out into the countryside for outdoor film festivals held at mountain campsites or ski resorts. These parties are usually all-night affairs, complete with DJ sets, food markets and fun for young movie buffs in the making. Here are our top picks of a fresco film events going on in August and September.

On August 3, trashy Japanese indie films join forces with locals at Yamanashi’s Lake Motono for this music and film extravaganza taking place over the first weekend of August. During the day, you can catch a 60s and DJ performances all around the gorgeous campsite venue, while the movie screenings start after sunset and go all night. The lineup consists mostly of cutting-edge Japanese cinema (not subtitled, unfortunately), such as Koji Fukada’s ‘Harmonium’, which won the Jury Prize at the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes 2016, and coming-of-age comedy ‘14 That Night’.

STARDUST THEATER IN HARAMURA An annual summer highlight for Kanto area folks fond of watching movies in the great outdoors, Stardust Theater returns to Naganu’s picturesque Yatsugatake Natural & Culture Park for its 32nd edition. Head out into the mountains for a roughly month’s worth of cinematic experience, beautifully projected onto a massive screen, and enjoy an offbeat film experience under the starry sky far away from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo. Just don’t forget your warm jacket, as the 1,300m altitude ensures that it gets rather chilly at night. The programme, which hasn’t been released yet, is usually a nice combo of old and new, Western and Japanese.

KOHAN FILM FESTIVAL Japanese indie filmmakers join forces with locals at Yamanashi’s Lake Motono for this music and film extravaganza taking place over the first weekend of August. During the day, you can catch a 60s and DJ performances all around the gorgeous campsite venue, while the movie screenings start after sunset and go all night. The lineup consists mostly of cutting-edge Japanese cinema (not subtitled, unfortunately), such as Koji Fukada’s ‘Harmonium’, which won the Jury Prize at the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes 2016, and coming-of-age comedy ‘14 That Night’.

MUINTO CINEMA CAMP 2017 Muinto Cinema Camp may well be the most exclusive open air movie event out there. Taking place at a private camp site in rural Shimoka, which can only be reached by boat, this is where to watch films in the great outdoors without having to worry about light pollution, noise or skinflints – last year’s programmes will be released in August, so keep your eyes peeled.

YEBISU GARDEN PLACE PICNIC CINEMA Catch a movie on a hot summer evening at Ebi’s Garden Place, where screenings start from 7.30pm for 12 days from August 3. The free films will be shown on a big screen set up in the middle of the complex, with the programme including life-affirming films such as Irish musical comedy ‘King Street’, Giuseppe Tornatore’s Oscar-winning ‘Cinema Paradiso’, and Koji Fukada’s ‘Harmonium’, which won the Jury Prize at the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes 2016, and coming-of-age comedy ‘14 That Night’.

Promotional feature

WHY you should visit the Robot Restaurant while in Tokyo. By Kaila Imada

Where to watch movies under the open sky this summer. By Mari Hirasaka

Monthly promotions

July-September, 2017 Time Out Tokyo
TOHOKU UPDATE

A change of art

Nick Narigone explores how a new arts festival is aiming to become a symbol of recovery from the triple disasters of 2011

It was the longest four days of Tatsumi Miyajima’s life. The vice president of Tohoku University’s Academy of Art and Design was in the disaster zone where the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami hit. It took four long days for him to return to the Yamagata campus in northern Japan and confirm that his students were safe. Miyajima, one of Japan’s most renowned contemporary artists, was soon getting his hands dirty — raking mud out of tsunami-stricken homes in nearby Ishinomaki. Once the immediate tasks were complete, the 60-year-old turned his mind to how he could use his talents to help the area rebuild.

‘I had always wanted to contribute to Tohoku in some way as an artist,’ says Miyajima. ‘I started thinking about creating an artwork to both embolden and repose people.’

He wasn’t alone — and the Reborn Art Festival is the result. Over the course of five days, from this July 22 to September 10, approximately 200,000 people are expected to descend upon the Odaka Peninsula, the closest landmark to the earthquake’s epicentre, for the Reborn Art Festival. The festival blends the works of world-class artists, including Miyajima, with master classes from Japan’s top chefs and local artisans, all soundtracked by performances from some of the country’s best live bands.

‘This is a festival with many elements,’ says spokesman Emiko Suzuki. ‘We want to cheer up the people who live here, but also have an economic effect.’

‘The damage was serious, but we thought we could support the revival of the area through the power of art and music,’ continues Suzuki. ‘The local people told us directly that they want people to come and visit.’

Reborn Art Festival draws on the theories of Shinichi Nakazawa, a director at Meiji University, who was the first to suggest that an art festival would have along-lasting impact on Tohoku. Nakazawa says the goal of the festival is to affect all aspects of life for Tohoku residents, including technology, economy and ecology.

‘Tohoku should not rebuild in the sense of returning to the original, but must advance to create something new,’ says Nakazawa. ‘Reborn [Art Festival] aims to help Tohoku open up potential possibilities and move forward.’

But the festival would not have happened if it hadn’t been for music producer and social activist Takeshi Kobayashi. Known for his work with Japanese pop-rock icons Mr. Children, in 2010 Kobayashi, along with others, provided the seed money for AP Bank, a money-lending mechanism for organisations dedicated to environmental causes. AP Bank was already conducting charity work in Ishinomaki, where the elevation was lowered 3.2 metres by the tsunami, so putting Nakazawa’s ideas into practice was a natural choice.

‘To complete the circle, Kobayashi’s AP Bank, founded by Mr. Children singer Karutoshi Ikari, will headline Reborn. The event will be a sprawling affair with the Odaka Peninsula serving as the main site, while other events will be held in Ishinomaki City and surrounding towns, including the fishing village of Onagawa, which lost 70 percent of its buildings under 15m waves in 2011.

Miyajima aims to reflect the region’s complicated relationship with the tide: its role in art installation, titled ‘Sea of Time’. The project, made with the assistance from Tohoku artists who were affected by the disaster, entails a series of LED lights installed at the bottom of a pool, displaying a continual countdown from 365.

‘The people of Tohoku had always lived together with the sea. And even when the sea took everything from them, they did not hold resentment towards it,’ says Miyajima. ‘We are helping them to create the future.’

TOFU

The Reborn Art Festival takes place at various locations in the Odaka Peninsula City and surrounding areas. finout.com/ tohokufest.

Nakazawa, Reborn Art Festival

Making a splash

How to get wet and wild in Tokyo this summer. By Ilia Saarinen

When the suffocating summer heat hits Tokyo, staying indoors and turning up the air conditioning to eleven is one option. Another — more environmentally friendly and less socially stigmatic — is one of Tokyo’s many watersports.

SUP

Originally from Hawaii, stand-up paddle boarding or SUP has become quite the trend in Japan. While simply riding and paddling is challenging enough for most beginners, some preternaturally talented practitioners even engage in ‘SUP yoga’ these days.

Anyway, you need to know how to stand up before pulling off a reverse warrior pose and that’s where the good folks at ZAC come in. Based out east in the peaceful, suburban surrounds of Higashi- disembark, you’ll find yourself surrounded by the peaceful, suburban surrounds of Higashi- Otama, they offer beginner-to-intermediate classes on the calm Kyu-Naka River. If you’re a complete newbie, opt for the ‘Tokyo SUP Experience’, a one-hour class that’ll see you practice all the basic manoeuvres.

The standing part in particular is more strenuous than it looks — we were stiff as well, a board the day after — and the jellyfish in the water practically rule falling out as an option, but the instructors are friendly and speak enough English to make you feel comfortable. All classes, including the tours to the Skytree that are available for more confident boarders, require you to wear shorts or tights.

Tokyo SUP Experience ¥4,500. zacsports.com/sup.

Rafting

If getting utterly soaked while paddling a wobbly boat through the rapids of a majestic mountain landscape sounds like your idea of an enjoyable summer day, then a rafting tour with Forest & Water will be just what the doctor ordered. These cherry, English-speaking locals will pick you up at Ome Station and drive you to their riverside headquarters near the Skytree, where you’ll be asked to change into a wetsuit, put on a life vest and helmet and jump back in the car for transport to the deceptively calm starting point. Once on board, you’ll be taught how to paddle and balance yourself, and then it’s off to the rapids. In addition to rafting, you’ll get to jump from cliffs, swim and splash in the crystal-clear river. It doesn’t get much more refreshing than this on a hot day, and tours take place even when it rains — you’re going to get wet anyway, so why worry? Tours range from a 1.5-hour deal to all-day experiences that can be combined with barbecue. Make sure to bring a swimsuit (to wear underneath the wetsuit) and a towel for the shower afterwards.

PHOTO: KEISUKE TANIGAWA

SCUBA DIVING

You can go deep-water diving in Tokyo, albeit only on a tech-free basis the Nangoku scuba school is based on Kozushima, part of the Izu island chain that’s over 100km away from but administratively part of the capital. Certified instructor Yusaku Suzuki offers all-inclusive, three-hour introductions to diving, no licence required. You can take a jet ferry (2.5 hours) or take a bus (two hours) from Chofu Airport) to Kozushima. www.nangoku.com.

SURFING

Although the Shonan coast down in Kanagawa is the capital region’s most famous surfing spot, Chiba’s beaches often boast better waves. Several Tokyo-based companies offer one-day tours to the Pacific coast for beginners; we like NikkorSurf, which will teach you the basics for ¥10,000 (rentals and transportation included). Tours depart from Maio Station in Edogawa at 8am and return to Tokyo early in the evening.

Basic class ¥10,000. nikkosurf.com
IT’S JUST AFTER 6AM and I share a sun-bathed room with 100 men and women who could slam me face first into the tatami-mat-covered floor without breaking a sweat. But luckily enough, that’s the last thing on their minds: this fearsome bunch, clad in loose white uniforms and black or dark blue hakama trousers, has assembled at the Aikido Honbu Dojo complex in Wakamatsuchō for asageiko (morning practice). Their pursuit is aikido, a Japanese martial art founded by Morihei Ueshiba in the 1930s, loosely translated as ‘the way of the harmonious spirit’, and headquartered in this quiet Shinjuku neighbourhood.

This morning’s group is even more international than usual, with enthusiasts from around the world having flown in for the annual All-Japan aikido demonstration that’s coming up in a few days. The founder’s great grandson, Mitsuteru Ueshiba, heads the session, performing the various waza (techniques) effortlessly with an opponent before calling for his disciples to repeat the move with their sparring partner, over and over. His students, some in their late teens, others well beyond retirement age, take turns throwing, twisting, pushing and falling over – all with admirable control and care for their partner’s safety. This process of ‘mental improvement and cultivation of inner strength’, says the 36-year-old Ueshiba, is at the core of aikido.

Now boasting around a million practitioners worldwide, aikido differs from other martial arts in one crucial way: it has no matches, meaning that there are never any winners or losers. This, says Ueshiba, is because his great grandfather believed ‘the true spirit of martial arts lies not in the testing of one’s strength against others, but in pursuing spiritual growth… It’s all about improving yourself – not impressing others.’

While aikido’s lack of a competitive element may keep it out of the Olympics, it still makes for a spectacular spectator experience. Take the annual ‘enbukai’ demonstration, a grand event held at the Nippon Budokan, an arena considered the spiritual centre of Japanese martial arts. During this all-day jamboree, performances range from the cautious and detail-oriented movement of casual aikido-ka representing their school, company or local dojo, to the spectacularly sharp and dynamic throws and suppression techniques of top-level sensei, including Ueshiba and his father, doshu (grand master) Moriteru Ueshiba.

With the 14,000-seat Budokan all but packed for the demonstration every year and the number of practitioners steadily growing around the world, it’s hardly surprising that Mitsuteru Ueshiba is happy about the state of his great grandfather’s legacy. But that, he says, is no reason for complacency: ‘Of course, my primary task is to uphold the heritage [of aikido] and pass it on to coming generations. I never stop thinking about what can be done to ensure that the future remains bright.’

Want to try aikido for yourself? Mitsuteru Ueshiba recommends contacting your local dojo directly – you can search for a training centre at aikikai.or.jp/search/index.html.

The All-Japan Aikido Demonstration takes place in late May every year.
Many gay people first start dealing with their sexuality through books, so the emotional element is very strong.

‘Many gay people first start dealing with their sexuality through books, so the emotional element is very strong,’ he says.

Although leaving a legacy with the archive is one of his owner’s most important aims for Okamalt, the store also functions as a place for digging up old memories and re-confirming one’s identity. Oga hopes it can be a safe place for anyone who’s ever relied on a book to get through a tough patch in life. ‘That’s the power of books for you right there,’ he smiles.

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Travel & Hotels

There’s no escaping the fact that Kyoto is Japan’s most touristy city, with the ancient capital’s dizzying selection of temples and treasures attracting travellers throughout the year. It’s also notoriously hard to navigate, so first-time visitors often stick to the beaten path and miss out on seeing something a little different. That’s where we can help: here’s our guide to the city’s quirkier side.

Your secret guide to Kyoto

Step away from the tourist trail and discover a whole new side of Japan’s cultural capital with Yukako Izumi.

L’ESCAMOTEUR BAR

Even seasoned barflies may do a double take upon opening the door to this wonderfully eclectic second-floor watering hole, set in the very retro Kawaramachi neighbourhood. An ex-magician, French owner Christophe modelled the interior on an early 20th-century herbal pharmacy. He’s also planted all sorts of funky contrivances around the space, so keep your wits about you when visiting. In addition to an eight-seat counter and a standing room, the bar has a swing by the window – best pace yourself with the drinks if you’re seated here. The magically punchy cocktails cost ¥1,200 or ¥1,500 and no cover charge is applied.

à 2F, 138-9 Saitocho, Saiseki-dori Shijo-sagaru, Shimogyo, Kyoto. 075 708 8511. 8pm-2am, closed Mon.

VERMILLION CAFE

Few tourists visit Kyoto without stopping by Fushimi Inari Taisha, the impressive shrine famed for its countless red torii gates and multifarious fox statues. After climbing all the way up through the torii tunnel and trying to snap a selfie that says ‘serene quiet time’ rather than ‘squeezed in among the hordes’, head for the more tranquil streets behind the shrine complex. Here you’ll find this homely café, which hides out near the shrine pond and boasts terrace seats pointed directly towards the calm water. Both the coffee beans and baked treats served here are ‘made in Kyoto’: the former come roasted by local favourite Weekenders Coffee. Don’t tell everyone – Vermillion is the kind of place you’ll want to keep a secret.

à 5-31 Fukakusa-Kaidoguchicho, Fushimi, Kyoto. www.vermillioncafe.com. 10am-5.30pm (Sat, Sun & hols from 9am).

MURAKAMI KAISHINDO

One of the city’s best sweet spots, Murakami Kaishindo was founded in 1907. This venerable dessert specialist was late to the café game though, only opening its own in March this year. You’ll find it in the back of the shop – take off your shoes and aim for one of the seats facing the garden. In addition to Murakami’s famed cookies, the menu includes cakes, coffee and black tea. When you’re all sugared up, explore the surrounding, once very quiet Teramachi-dori area, which is currently emerging as one of Kyoto’s most exciting neighbourhoods due to a slew of new, hip openings.

à Teramachi-dori Nijo-agaru Higashigawa, Nakagyo, Kyoto. 075 231 1058. www.murakami-kaishindo.jp. 10am-5pm, closed Sun & hols, 3rd Mon of the month.

KINSE RYOKAN

This 250-year-old building – which was originally constructed as an upscale brothel and later turned into a ryokan (traditional inn) – now houses this retro café and bar. With the interior having been renovated in the late 1920s, everything about Kinse brings to mind the Western-style buildings of Japan’s Taisho-era (1912-1926) – including the atmosphere and music. If you’re looking for truly unusual accommodation, try booking the second-floor room, which is still rented out to one group per night.

à 79 Nishi-Shinyashiki Tayucho, Shimogyo, Kyoto. 075 351 4781. www.kinse-kyoto.com. 3pm-10pm, closed Tue.

KYOTO BREWING

Run by a trio of expats from the US, Canada and Wales, this microbrewery has been the talk of its traditional neighbourhood since opening in April 2015 and its fame is spreading – Kyoto Brewing beers can now be found in hip Tokyo restaurants and beer bars. Aiming to craft beers that clearly deviate from current domestic trends while drawing on time-honoured, mainly American and Belgian, methods, the founders chose Kyoto as a base because of the city’s rich culinary culture and penchant for fusing the traditional with the cutting-edge. Make sure to go on a weekend, when the taproom – complete with a bare-bones terrace – is opened to the public. The presence of the occasional tourist deep in this residential neighbourhood, a ten-minute taxi ride from Kyoto Station, is also explained by the brewery’s efficient branding: it turns up at the very top of a Google search page for ‘Kyoto brewery’. The wonders of online marketing.

à 25-1 Nishikyujo-Takahatacho, Minami, Kyoto. 075 574 7820. kyotobrewing.com. Sat, Sun only 12noon-6pm.
Travel & Hotels

The best new hotels and hostels in Tokyo

Make the most of your budget trip at these hot hostels and affordable hotels. By Mari Hiratsuka

**SHIBAMATA FU-TEN BED AND LOCAL**
If you don’t mind staying at the very eastern edge of Tokyo and are looking for a real shibamachi (traditional downtown) experience, then this is the hostel for you. Fu-Ten is set in a traditional Shibaamata, famed for its majestic Taishakuten temple, and occupies an old apartment building. Fully renovated, it now houses both Japanese-style tatami rooms and modern lodgings – some of the Western-style rooms also have their own showers. Rates start at an affordable ¥3,000 per head for a spot in a two-person room.

-97-12-15 Shibamata, Katsushika (Shibamata Station). tinyurl.com/TOTfu-ten.

**LYURO TOKYO KIYOSUMI THE SHARE HOTELS**
Set along the banks of the Sumida River in a renovated office building, this somewhat chunkily named newcomer is a welcome alternative to the area’s clutch of overpriced hipster hostels. The nautically themed décor – think water-inspired graphics on the wallpaper and room signs – create an illusion of strolling around on a very big ship that has washed up on the river bank. The sleeping quarters are a mix of private rooms, bunk beds, aluminium ladders and dark curtains – made entirely with materials from the Hokutosei carriages. In addition to the usual dorms, they offer semi-private rooms roughly the size of a regular sleeper train cabin. Prices start from ¥2,500 – a bargain compared to the moving Hokutosei’s minimum rate of ¥6,300 OK, you’ll still wake up in Tokyo after a night here, but at least the ride is unlikely to be as bumpy.

This unique hostel, which opened in December last year and is accessible directly from JR Bakurocho Station, is a must for railway lovers. Named after the Hokutosei sleeper train, which operated between Tokyo and Sapporo for 27 years before being retired in 2015, it boasts an interior that faithfully recreates the train’s cabins – all bunk beds, aluminium ladders and dark curtains – made entirely with materials from the Hokutosei carriages. In addition to the usual dorms, they offer semi-private rooms roughly the size of a regular sleeper train cabin. Prices start from ¥2,500 – a bargain compared to the moving Hokutosei’s minimum rate of ¥6,300 OK, you’ll still wake up in Tokyo after a night here, but at least the ride is unlikely to be as bumpy.

-1-10-12 Nihonbashi-Bakurocho, Chuo (Bakurocho Station). tinyurl.com/TOThokutosei.

**TRUNK HOTEL**
Opened in between Shibuya and Harajuku in May, the boutique-style Trunk Hotel is run by a local wedding planning giant and aims to really let guests experience the best of the surrounding area during their stay. The hotel lounge hosts parties every Friday night, while other community-oriented happenings are planned for the coming months. As for the art-filled rooms, you get to choose from seven types, including singles (from ¥72,000), a ‘junior suite’ (¥92,000) with beds for six, and a ‘terrace suite’ that can accommodate a cool ¥103,000 per night. The terrace suite is equipped with a spacious balcony: a gadget-packed kitchen and even an outdoor bath. All rooms are stocked with made-in-Japan, environmentally friendly bathroom amenities, which can also be bought at the shop on the ground floor.


**OMFGCO**
Conjured up by the folks behind Tokyo’s ubiquitous Wired Café chain together with Portland-based creative agency OMFGCO, known for their Ace Hotels in London and across the US, this stylish hotel opened just off Asakusa’s Hase- dori in April. On the ground floor you’ll find Zakbaran, a café-bar that non-guests are welcome to use too. Sweets and snacks made from soy milk and tofu staff the menu, alongside a strictly curated sake lineup. Rooms range from dormitories, bright singles and doubles to a luxurious penthouse, and cater to a range of travellers. At ¥10,000 a night, the regular singles probably offer the best value: their bathrooms resemble those found in your average business hotel, but the rest of the décor is just as sleek as in Wired’s fancier rooms – some of which happen to be renting an expensive New York City flat.


**WIRED HOTEL ASAKUSA**
Located just down the road from the majestic Taishakuten temple, and occupies an old apartment building. Fully renovated, it now houses both Japanese-style tatami rooms and modern lodgings – some of the Western-style rooms also have their own showers. Rates start at an affordable ¥3,000 per head for a spot in a two-person room.

-2-16-2 Asakusa, Taito (Asakusa Station). tinyurl.com/TOTwired.

**TRAIN HOSTEL HOKUTOSEI**
Set along the banks of the Sumida River in a renovated office building, this somewhat chunkily named newcomer is a welcome alternative to the area’s clutch of overpriced hipster hostels. The nautically themed décor – think water-inspired graphics on the wallpaper and room signs – create an illusion of strolling around on a very big ship that has washed up on the river bank. The sleeping quarters are a mix of private rooms, bunk beds, aluminium ladders and dark curtains – made entirely with materials from the Hokutosei carriages. In addition to the usual dorms, they offer semi-private rooms roughly the size of a regular sleeper train cabin. Prices start from ¥2,500 – a bargain compared to the moving Hokutosei’s minimum rate of ¥6,300 OK, you’ll still wake up in Tokyo after a night here, but at least the ride is unlikely to be as bumpy.

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Going underground?

Welcome to the world’s most efficient transport system

SURE, TOKYO PUBLIC transport is very convenient, but nothing beats having your own two wheels and the flexibility to explore the city at your own pace and without the constraints of the train timetable. Get in on the whole mamachari (mom’s bicycle) lifestyle, so to speak. Whether you’re looking to rent a bicycle for a few hours, days or a month, we’ve got you covered.

COMMUNITYCYCLE
This is essentially Tokyo’s lesser-known and electrified answer to Paris’s Velibs and London’s Boris Bikes: the Docomo-sponsored e-bikes (yes, they have a little motor to help you out when climbing hills or when you’re just plain lazy) are scattered throughout the city and only require a code to unlock. Register online, choose between 30-minute, daily or monthly hires, hop on and then return it at one of the docking stations located in well over 200 spots across town.

À Docking stations around Bunkyo, Chiyoda, Chuo, Kanto, Minato and Shinjuku wards. Prices and payment options differ per plan and rental time. Check docomo-cycle.jp/chiyoda/en for details.

COGICOGI
Another e-bike sharing plan, this new kid on the block mainly operates in and around the Shibuya area, but is expanding with docking ports in convenient places across the city, including near centrally located hotels. Currently, they offer 12, 24 and 48-hour all-you-can-ride plans: use their bikes for as long and as many times as you like within that time period for a set price. Payments and reservations are made through their app, which is currently only in Japanese – although an English one was in the works at the time of writing. Turn on bluetooth on your phone when you’re near one of the ports, open the app and you’ll be able to unlock a bike. High-tech meets pedal power.

À Docking ports around Shibuya, and a few in Chiyoda, Sumida and Taito wards. ¥2,100/12h, ¥2,400/24h, ¥3,600/48h (plus tax). cogicogi.jp.

MUURUSHI RYOHIN
To explore the Marunouchi district or otaku mecca Akihabara – both a short ride away from the Imperial Palace – rent a bicycle from Muji’s Yurakucho store. As you’d expect from Muji, they’re sturdy, well-designed bikes, not your average mamachari.

À 3-8-3 Yurakucho, Chiyoda, 10am-8pm. Bike hire (bike pickup and return) ¥1,300/day (a deposit of ¥3,000 is required to bring enough cash). Reservations 03 5208 8241 or in person. tinyurl.com/totmujiyurakucho.

TAITO-KU RENT A BICYCLE
The cheapest option we’ve found in Tokyo and popular with backpackers staying in the area, this ward-sponsored rental programme only charges you ¥200 for four hours of pedalling or ¥300 for a full day. The only downside is that you’re technically not supposed to stray too far from the Taito area with your mamachari wheels, and if your hostel or apartment doesn’t have secure bike parking, they may refuse to rent a bicycle to you for more than a day. Bring a passport or ID, as they’ll require a photocopy of this.

À Four pick-up locations inside Taito ward, including near Azumabashi Bridge. Note that all of them are below ground. Find their addresses on Japanese site Taito City, transport.taito.metro.tokyo.jp (France office until 8.30pm), Taito Everyday. 6am-8pm/day (48h/day, ¥600/day, ¥2100/3 days, ¥3500/7 days).

TOKYOBIKE RENTALS YANAKA
Your rental bike has never looked as cool: TokyoBike offers some seriously hipster-fabulous rides a short cycle away from Ueno. That minimalist coolness comes at a price, however, with their one-day rentals starting at a somewhat steep ¥2,500. Book ahead through their website and remember to bring some form of ID with you on the day.

À 4-2-39 Yanaka, Taito. 10am-6.30pm, closed Wed. One-day rental ¥2,500, each additional day ¥1,500. Reservation required through their website tinyurl.com/tottokyobikerental.

PHOTO: KEISUKE TANIGAWA
There’s something strange in these neighbourhoods…

By Kirsty Bouwers

1. **OIWA SHRINE: YOTSUYA KAI DAN**

Arguably Japan’s most celebrated spooky story, ‘Yotsuya Kaidan’ is loosely based on two historical characters. It sees a woman, Oiwa Iemon, gradually poisoned by her husband Tamiya, who is having an affair. After her death, she comes back to haunt him by impersonating his newly betrothed, upon which he kills the new wifey by accident. Oops.

Although Oiwa’s grave is actually at a temple in Sugamo, the story is more commonly associated with Oiwa Inari Tamiya Shrine in Yotsuya, said to have been built to appease her tormented soul. To this day, film crews and theatre troupes staging adaptations of the story head to Oiwa’s grave before shooting to ‘ask for permission’ – so she doesn’t come back to haunt them.

2. **KII NO KUNI-ZAKA: THE ‘MUJINA’ OF AKASAKA ROAD**

A 15-minute walk from Oiwa Shrine, Kii no Kuni-zaka is the hill running past Akasaka Palace towards Akasaka Station. In the legend of ‘Mujina’, a man walking down the slope encounters an upper-class girl who is crying on the banks of the moat with her face in her hands. He tries to console her while she keeps weeping, hiding her face. Eventually, she faces him and lowers her kimono sleeves – and it turns out she lacks all facial features.

The man is terrified and sprints away. Spotting light at the top of the hill, he runs towards a lonely noodle seller, in front of whom he drops to the floor and starts stammering about what he just saw. Rather unsympathetically, the seller replies ‘Was it something like this?’ and waves a hand across his face, after which all of his features disappear...

3. **OTEMACHI: TAIRA NO MASAKADO**

Wander around the high-rise buildings of Otemachi long enough and you will spot a small stone shrine. This is the grave of decapitated 10th-century samurai Taira no Masakado. After his unfortunate demise in Kyoto, the fable goes that his bodiless head flew to Tokyo and eventually settled in Otemachi.

Removing or relocating Masakado’s grave has proved difficult, as any attempts to do so have supposedly been plagued by misfortune. When the nearby Ministry of Finance tried to level the hill after the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake, 34 workers related to the project dropped dead in a series of bizarre incidents.

The 1,000-year curse holds to this day, with multiple tales of people falling ill or dying after the shrine had been tampered with in any way. It’s even said that desks inside the buildings clustered around the shrine are placed so as not to make anyone sit with their back to old Masakado – lest he take offence.

4. **SUNSHINE 60: WAR CRIMINAL EXECUTION SITE**

Some bright spark decided it would be a good idea to put up one of the then tallest buildings in Japan on the spot of the old Sugamo prison. At least seven war criminals were executed here after World War II, while many other unsavoury characters were stuck between its walls. Consequently, believers say, the construction of Sunshine 60 had its share of accidents and apparently apparitions still haunt the place – residents have reported seeing fireballs floating around since.

5. **ROPPONGI HILLS: GRAVES OF THE 47 RONIN**

Apparently learning nothing from Sunshine 60, bright spark number two chose to build a massive shopping complex on top of what is apparently the gravesite of some of the legendary 47 Ronin (masterless samurai). To be fair, the history of the ronin is so vague that no one seems to be sure about when and where they actually died, but some people believe that Roppongi Hills and its businesses have been cursed since the 2002 opening, with multiple tales of grisly fatal accidents, business scandals and residents suffering spectacular social falls from grace. Don’t mess with the ronin.

IN JAPAN, as soon as the temperatures soar and firework festivals start lighting up the night sky, thoughts turn to the yurei (spirits or spectres), while peak supernatural time is reached in August, when the Buddhist Obon festival for the dead takes place. Here are the settings for the city’s most famous ghost stories…
You know you’re in Tokyo when...

‘UFO CATCHER’ CRANE GAMES
Now far be it for us to cast aspersions on arcade owners in faraway lands, but there are rumours that crane games in the West are, well, rigged. We’ve had reports that the claw is programmed to only complete a full grab up to one in 50 times and even then is ordered to release its bounty just before the official dropzone. Not so here in Tokyo. It’s all skill, all the way. For some that means a huge collection of stuffed animals, giant chocolate bars and anime tat – the rest of us just lost our excuse for another of life’s failures.

THE SUMO
Arcade games allow us all to live our fantasy life for a few short minutes, and for some that means being a yokozuna (sumo grand master). Enter The Sumo and its short but sturdy plastic foe who you must push out of the ring. Best do the groundwork ahead of time and bulk up massively – six months on 10,000 calories a day, including endless bowlfuls of chanko nabe (the high-protein sumo stew) should do the job. If you fail to prepare properly you might get lucky in the early rounds – the fake wrestler is easily pushed backwards on its tracks – but you’ll never become a grand champion.

WANI WANI PANIC
In a city where most workplaces expect you to keep your personality bottled up like an agoraphobic genie, it’s important to let off steam once in awhile. Enter Wani Wani Panic, a local take on Whack-a-Mole, and the unexpected catharsis of bopping a crocodile full on the nose with all your might. It’s the crocs or your co-workers, right?

TAIKO NO TATSUJIN
Think banging a giant taiko drum is purely the preserve of the muscled and the rhythmically gifted? Think again. Taiko no Tatsujin lets you beat away to your heart’s content. A screen screams at you to hit, roll and pound in time with the music and often flashes a demoralising percentage at the end of the tune – how is it possible to have minus rhythm?

CHABUDAI GAESHI
If films from the fifties are to be believed, the only way a frustrated Japanese office worker could release their anger was by upending the household dinner table, expressing their rage by propelling bits of miso soup, steamed egg and sukiyaki onto their walls and family members. If this sounds like an experience you’d like to undertake but without the resulting cleaning, counselling and divorce bill, you’re in luck because there’s an arcade game for that. It even has a plot of sorts, which hints at the troubled mind of its creator, with the characters of the ‘nagging wife’ and ‘ungrateful children’ flung to the floor and covered in virtual supper.

VIRTUAL HORSE RACING
If you believe games are not about winning but taking part, you’ll love Virtual Horse Racing. Usually at the back of the arcade, hidden from the entrance, you’ll find mechanical horses the size of large hamsters prancing around the world’s smallest racetrack. Pick one and then watch as the race comes to its predetermined finish. The bookies hit; even if your horse wins, you can’t keep the medals ‘awarded’ to you. You know what they say – the house always wins.

In the next issue of Time Out Tokyo...

Food frenzy
We round up autumn’s tastiest eats

Available across Tokyo from September 2017

BEYOND THE NEXT LEVEL

The best, most cutting-edge 70-minute show
Traditional and modern Japan meet like never before