

- Sights
- Dining
- Entertainment
- Hotels
- Fast facts
- LUXE City Guides recommend

# Tokyo

Tokyo is huge - a combination of cities within a city with no real centre - but it is navigable. For visitors, almost everything of interest lies either along or close to the Japan Railway (JR) Yamanote line, the rail loop that circles central Tokyo. At the centre of this circle is the Imperial Palace, with exclusive Ginza and the commercial Marunouchi to the east. Heading west you'll find food-capital Akasaka next door to clubbers' delight Roppongi, and then 'modern West versus chaotic East' Shinjuku. Ikebukuro is in the northwest, and the cultural centre of Ueno and traditional Asakusa is to the northeast.

In Tokyo, as in the rest of Japan, finding a place from its address can be a near impossibility, even for the Japanese. Few streets have names, so be prepared to ask

for directions - don't worry, even taxi drivers do! Addresses work by narrowing down the location of a building to a number within an area of a few blocks; unlike European addresses, they work from top to bottom. So, Tokyo would be indicated first, followed by the ku (ward), then the Chō or machi (loosely, suburb) and then the chōme, which is an area of just a couple of blocks: eg, Chiyoda-ku, Nagatachō 2-10-3, Capitol Hotel, 3F. The ground floor is always counted as the first.

## SIGHTS

### Imperial Palace

Constructed in 1968 following its devastating destruction during WWII, the Imperial Palace is the geographical and spiritual heart of Tokyo and Japan and remains the home of the Japanese imperial family. The palace itself is closed to the public for all but two days a year: 2 January (New Year's holiday) and 23 December (the Emperor's birthday). But it is possible to wander around its outskirts and to visit the gardens, from where you can catch a glimpse of the palace's most famous landmark, the double-barrelled bridge (Nijū-bashi).  
*Gardens 9am-4.30pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, closed for imperial functions & from 4pm Nov-Feb*

### Shibuya Crossing

Across from Hachikō plaza is arguably one of the coolest – and largest – intersections you will ever see in your life. Made famous in the West following Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* Shibuya Crossing is remarkable for its throngs of people, blazing neon lights and enormous video screens, which sometimes display live videos of the street scene below. Much like New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus, Tokyo's Shibuya Crossing is visual and aural candy at its best. The sheer energy of the place is enough to stop you dead in your tracks while you loudly proclaim to yourself, 'Wow – I'm in Tokyo!' This is perhaps the best neighbourhood in Tokyo to take in the beating pulse of modern Japan by simply browsing, shopping, dining and watching the outrageous get-ups that have most recently come off the runways at Tokyo's fashion shows.

*across from Hachikō plaza*

*Shibuya*

*underground rail: JR Yamanote Line or subway Ginza Line to Shibuya (Hachikō exit)/JR Yamanote Line or Ginza Line to Shibuya (Hachikō exit)*

### Roppongi Hills

Opened in 2003 to an incredible amount of fanfare, Roppongi Hills was the dream of real-estate developer Mori Minoru, who long envisioned a transformation of Roppongi. Since then, an incredible amount of lofty praise has been vaulted at the complex, which is arguably the

most architecturally arresting sight in Tokyo.

*Minato-ku*

*Roppongi 6-chōme*

*tel: 6406 6000*

*www.roppongihills.com/en*

*underground rail: Hibiya or Toei Ōedo Line to Roppongi (exit 1c)*

*09:00 - 18:00*



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### Tsukiji Central Fish Market

Although you'll have to wake up early (or stay out late) to catch the tuna auction, the world's largest fish market is simply not to be missed. If it lives in the sea, it's probably for sale in the Central Fish Market, where acres and acres of fish and fish products pass hands in a lively, almost chaotic atmosphere. Everything is allotted its own area, and a quick scan of the loading docks will reveal mountains of octopus, rows of giant tuna, endless varieties of shellfish and tanks upon tanks of live exotic fish.

About 2246 tonnes of fish, worth over 1.8 billion yen (US\$15.5 million), are sold here daily; that's 615,409 tonnes of fish worth some US\$4.25 billion a year. It's not unheard of for a single tuna to fetch an incredible ¥20 million! The auctions are not officially open to the general public, but if you are of a mind to go (trust us – it's worth it!), you have to be there around 5am to see the action. Afterwards, you are free to visit the wholesalers market, and wander around the seemingly endless rows of fishmongers.



# Tokyo

Tradition has it that you should finish your visit here with a sushi breakfast. Daiwa Sushi (Bldg 6, 5-2-1 Tsukiji, Chūō-ku; 5pm-1.30am Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Wed of the month) is within the market itself and gathers long, long lines.

5-2 Tsukiji

Chūō-ku

tel: 3541 2640

[www.tsukiji-market.or.jp](http://www.tsukiji-market.or.jp)

underground rail: Toei Ōedo Line to Tsukijishijō (exit A1) or Hibiya Line to Tsukiji (exit 1 or 2)

early morning, closed 2nd & 4th Wed of most months, Sun & public holidays

## Sensō-Ji (Senso Temple)

One of the few historic temples to survive the Allied WWII bombing campaign, Sensō-ji is the most sacred spot in Tokyo. Asakusa's raison d'être, Sensō-ji enshrines a golden statue of Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy, which was miraculously fished out of the nearby Sumida-gawa (Sumida River) by two fishermen in AD 628. In time, a structure was built to house the image. The temple grounds buzz and click with cameras and voices with accents from across the country and around the world. The Kannon image (a tiny 6cm) is cloistered within, but despite its seclusion, a steady stream of worshippers makes its way up the stairs to the temple, where they cast coins, pray and bow in a gesture of respect. In front of the temple, smoke winds its way up from a huge incense cauldron around which supplicants stand wafting the smoke and its scent to their bodies and over their heads to ensure good health.

Taitō-ku

2-3-1 Asakusa

tel: 3842 0181

underground rail: Ginza Line to Asakusa (exit 1) or Toei Asakusa Line to Asakusa (exit A5)

24hr

## Meiji-Jingū (Meiji Shrine)

Tokyo's grandest Shintō shrine, this 1920 edifice enshrines the Emperor Meiji and Empress Shōken, under whose rule Japan ended its isolation from the outside world. Destroyed in WWII bombings and

reconstructed in 1958, the shrine buildings occupy just a corner of the precinct's 70 forested hectares (175 acres). In fact, its 100,000 trees are said to have been donated by 100,000 visitors from all over Japan. Meiji-jingū might be a reconstruction of the original but, unlike so many of Japan's postwar reconstructions, it is altogether authentic. The main structure was built with prized *hinoki* cypress from the Kiso region of Nagano prefecture, while the cypress for the huge *torii* (gate) was imported from Alishan in Taiwan. If you're there when a wedding is in progress, the procession is pure photographic gold. The grounds are also home to the Meiji-jingū Gyōden (9am-4.30pm), a lovely strolling garden. There are peaceful walks to the pond and teahouse and a good dose of privacy on weekdays, and spectacular irises and satsuki azaleas in season.

Shibuya-ku

Kamizono-chō, Yoyogi

tel: 3379 5511

[www.meijijingu.or.jp](http://www.meijijingu.or.jp)

underground rail: JR Yamanote Line to Harajuku

(*Omote-sandō* exit) or Chiyoda Line to Meiji-Jingūmae (exit 3)

dawn-dusk

## DINING

### Kyūbei

Established in 1936, the unbelievable quality and flawless presentation of Kyūbei's sushi and sashimi spreads is still revered in restaurant-rich Ginza. If you request it beforehand – and reservations are highly recommended – the owner will arrange for your meal to be served on fine pottery thrown by Rosanjin Kitaoji. In a city reluctant to apply sushi superlatives, this spot is truly considered by Tokyoites to be one of the best.

8-7-6 Ginza

Chūō-ku

tel: 3571 6523

underground rail: Ginza line to Shimbashi (exits 1 & 2)

train: JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi (Ginza exit)

11:30 - 14:00 & 17:00 - 22:00 Mon-Sat

### L'Osier

In Tokyo, French restaurants are at the top of the culinary ladder, which is why it's no small feat that local gourmets consider L'Osier to be the best around. But if you wish to analyse the foie gras yourself, you'll need to book as far as possible in advance since a table at L'Osier is a highly coveted commodity. However, once the wine hits your head and the food hits your lips, you'll key into the Art Deco-inspired surroundings and realise that Paris isn't that far away after all.

7-5-5 Ginza

Chūō-ku

tel: 3571 6050

[www.shiseido.co.jp/e/losier/top.htm](http://www.shiseido.co.jp/e/losier/top.htm)

underground rail: Ginza, Hibiya or Marunouchi Line to Ginza (exit B6)

12:00 - 14:00 & 18:00 - 21:30

### Botan

Botan has been making a single, perfect dish in the same button-maker's house since before the turn of the last century. Sit cross-legged on bamboo mats as chicken nabe (鍋; meat cooked in broth in an iron pan with vegetables) simmers over a charcoal brazier, allowing you to take in the scent of prewar Tokyo.

1-15 Kanda-Sudacho

Chiyoda-ku

tel: 3251 0577

underground rail: Marunouchi Line to Awajichō

(exits A3 & A5) or Toei Shinjuku Line to Ogawamachi (exits A3 & A5)

11:30 - 20:30 Mon-Sat

### Canal Café

When summer evenings in the capital hang heavy with humidity, you may long for a cold glass of white wine and a light meal by the riverside. Sadly, Tokyo has a regrettable dearth of alfresco restaurants with breathing room, though rare canal-side spots like this lidabashi institution do exist. The speciality here is wood-fired thin crust pizzas and Italian pastas such as scallop and shrimp in a light cream sauce, though the real reason you're here is to savour a cocktail while

soaking up the European atmosphere.

1-9 Kagurazaka

Shinjuku-ku

tel: 3260 8068

underground rail: Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō or Toei Ōedo Line to lidabashi (exit B3)

17:30 - 23:30 Tue-Sun



© Ali Bullock

### Rakutei

If the Japanese have elevated the deep-fried to an art form, then the chefs at Rakutei create masterpieces nightly. The freshest seafood and the lightest tempura batter are prepared to order, resulting in tender prawn and sweet potato that actually does melt in your mouth. Although there isn't an English menu, you can easily choose a set meal depending on how much yen you're willing to part with.

Minato-ku

6-8-1 Akasaka

tel: 3585 3743

underground rail: Chiyoda Line to Akasaka (exit 5)

18:00 - 22:00

### Kabuki-Za (Kabuki Theatre)

This lovely building, whose façade is reminiscent of Himeji Castle, is the best kabuki venue in the world. Performances and times vary from month to month so



# Tokyo

check with the theatre for programme information. Be sure to rent a headset for blow-by-blow explanations in English, and pick up a *ben-tō* downstairs. A full kabuki performance comprises three or four acts (usually from different plays) over an afternoon or an evening (typically 11.00am to 3.30pm or 4.30pm to 9pm), with long intervals between the acts. If four-plus hours sounds too long, you can purchase last-minute tickets for a single act, although seats are only on the highest balcony. Since some acts tend to be more popular than others, inquire ahead as to which to catch and arrive well in advance.

near Higashi Ginza subway station (exit 3)  
Chūō-ku  
4-12-5 Ginza  
tel: 5565 6000  
[www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater/index.html](http://www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater/index.html)  
underground rail: Hibiya or Toei Asakusa Line to Higashi-Ginza (exit 3)  
11:00 - 21:00

## ENTERTAINMENT

### New York Grill And Bar

You may not be lodging at the Park Hyatt, but that doesn't mean you can't ascend to the 52nd floor and swoon over stunning views of Mt Fuji and the city. There's a cover charge of ¥2000 after 8pm. And yes, in case everything looks a bit familiar, the bar was where Bill Murray drank glass upon glass of Suntory whiskey in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*.

Shinjuku-ku  
3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku  
G52  
tel: 5322 1234  
underground rail: Toei Ōedo Line to Tochōmae, (exit A4)  
17:00 - 24:00 Sun-Wed, 17:00 - 01:00 Thu-Sat

### New National Theatre

This is a main venue for opera in Tokyo, with Fujiwara Opera, Nihon Opera Kyokai and Nikkai Opera performing here. Part of the New National Theatre's arts complex, the Playhouse and the Pit are

performance venues for modern dance, with the latter hosting just about every international dance luminary who passes through. A web resource is [www.operajaponica.org](http://www.operajaponica.org).

Shibuya-ku  
1-1-1 Honmachi  
tel: 5351 3011  
[www.nntt.jac.go.jp/english/index.html](http://www.nntt.jac.go.jp/english/index.html)  
underground rail: Toei Shinjuku Line to Hatsudai (Theatre exit)

### Blue Note

Serious cognoscenti roll up to Tokyo's prime jazz spot in Aoyama to take in the likes of Maceo Parker, Herbie Hancock and Doctor John. Like its sister acts in New York and Milan, the digs here are classily decorated with dark wood and deep velvet, making this a good spot for a slow night of cool sounds.

6-3-16 Minami-Aoyama  
Minato-ku  
Raika Bldg  
tel: 5485 0088  
[www.bluenote.co.jp](http://www.bluenote.co.jp)  
underground rail: Chiyoda, Ginza or Hanz mon Line to Omote-sand (exit B3)  
17:30 - 01:00 Mon-Sat, 17:00 - 00:30 Sun



© Ali Bullock

### Session House

Most dance aficionados consider Session House one of the best traditional, folk and modern dance spaces in the city. The small theatre seats only 100 people, which means that all performances have an intimate feel to them.

Shinjuku-ku  
158 Yaraichō  
tel: 3266 0461  
[www.session-house.net](http://www.session-house.net)  
underground rail: Tōzai line to Kagurazaka (exit 1)  
performances 19:00

## HOTELS

### Asakusa View Hotel

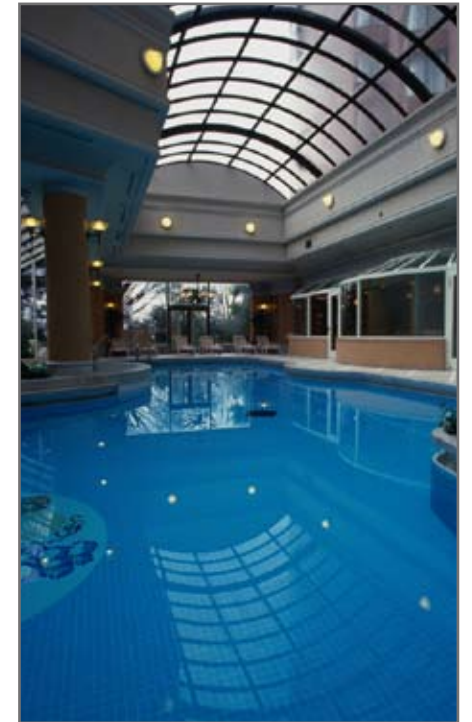
If you're not into ryokan, the Asakusa View is the ritziest Western-style hotel in this neighbourhood. From the lacquer-patterned elevator walls to the cypress and granite baths, the hotel is lavishly designed. While the spacious rooms aren't striking, large windows overlook Sensō-ji.

3-17-1 Nishiasakusa  
Taito-ku  
from Tawaramachi station (exit 3) walk N on Kokusai-dōri for 7min; hotel is on left  
tel: 3847 1111  
[www.viewhotels.co.jp/asakusa/english](http://www.viewhotels.co.jp/asakusa/english)  
underground rail: Tawaramachi

### Sukeroku no Yado Sadachiyo

This stunning ryokan virtually transports its guests to old Edo. Gorgeously maintained tatami rooms are spacious for two people, and all come with modern, Western-style bathrooms. Splurge on an exquisite meal here, and make time for the *o-furo* (traditional baths), one made of fragrant Japanese cypress and the other of black marble. Look for the rickshaw parked outside..

2-20-1 Asakusa  
Taito-ku  
from Asakusa station (exit 1); hotel is an 8min walk  
tel: 3842 6431  
[www.sadachiyo.co.jp](http://www.sadachiyo.co.jp)  
underground rail: Asakusa



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### Westin Hotel Tokyo

The remodelled Westin is one of the finest hotels in Japan, and plays host to royals, celebs and business moguls from around the world. Rooms are opulent but tasteful, with a lovely, laid-back European panache, and the clientele is grown-up but hip. The hotel's Spa Parisien is a large, sumptuous sanctuary that can quickly melt all your stress.

1-4-1 Mita  
Meguro-ku  
from Ebisu station, take the Skywalk to Ebisu Garden Place, walk through the open mall and head towards the road round back  
tel: 5423 7000  
[www.westin-tokyo.co.jp/en](http://www.westin-tokyo.co.jp/en)  
train: Ebisu



# Tokyo

## Hotel Ōkura

The Ōkura is an old-fashioned, elegant standby, and the meeting place for Japan's political and business elite. Lovely and lived-in, the 1960s décor and low-lying architecture are matched by personable staff. The beautiful Japanese garden and top-notch restaurants complete the picture.

*2-10-4 Toranomom*

*Minato-ku*

*from Toranomom station (exit 3), hotel is a 5min walk heading SW toward the US Embassy*

*tel: 3582 0111*

*www.tokyo.okura.com*

*underground rail: Toranomom*

## Park Hyatt Tokyo

The setting will look familiar, as it was the backdrop for the film *Lost in Translation*. Views are stunning, day and night, and appear to be part of another world from these serene heights. Dignified but relaxed, the stylishly understated rooms are done in naturally finished wood, fabric and marble. Staff are gracefully, discretely attentive and the restaurants are some of Tokyo's best – check out the stunning views from the top-level New York Grill.

*3-7-1-2 Nishi Shinjuku*

*Shinjuku-ku*

*from Tochōmae station (exit A4) walk down Kōen-dōri alongside park, turn left at next major intersection onto One Day's St - you'll see towers to your left*

*tel: 5322 1234*

*www.parkhyatttokyo.com*

*underground rail: Tochōmae*

## FAST FACTS

### Population

12000000

### Language

Japanese

### Currency

Yen

JPY

¥

### Money & cost

Japan is one the most expensive countries in Asia.

There is little tipping or bargaining: if you want to show your gratitude, give a gift rather than a tip.

### When to go

Blooming cherry blossoms are reason enough to visit Tokyo in spring. The muggy summer is uncomfortable; the Golden Week national holiday, starting 29 April, attracts even more crowds than usual.

### Electricity

100V

50Hz

### Phone

country dialling code: 81

mobile network: PDC

### Local Cathay Pacific contact information

Reservation numbers: 81 (03) 5159-1700

Check-in counters: Narita Airport, Passenger Terminal

Buliding 2, Zone C and D, 3rd Floor



DRAGONAIR



CATHAY PACIFIC

# Tokyo

## LUXE CITY GUIDES RECOMMEND

The following suggestions are selected exclusively for Cathay Pacific by LUXE City Guides, the consummately stylish pocket travel guide, packed with astute, opinionated information for the busy and sophisticated visitor.

### Accommodation

**The Claska.** Incredibly, about the only option in Tokyo for design aficionados. Choose from suave, Zen-modernist rooms or calm, tatami-esque Nippon style. They may be a tad out of the way, but these hip style-for-dollar digs with gallery and studio are very popular, so book way ahead.

1-3-18 Chuo-cho / Meguro-ku / 3719 8121 / [claska.com](http://claska.com)

### Restaurants

**Aronia de Takazawa.** This steel and teak ten-seater serves up astounding, ingenious contemporary Japanese palate thrillers.

2/F Sanyo Bldg / 3-5-2 Akasaka / Minato-ku / 3505 5052 / [bookings essential / set menus only / aronidetakazawa.com](#)

**Nabura.** Sleek blond wood hideaway loved by seafood connoisseurs for sensational, highly seasonal raw cuts. Sit at the counter to watch the chefs in action or tatami rooms for more privacy.

B1/F Roppongi Shimada Bldg / 4-8-7 Roppongi / Minato-ku / 5411 3333

**Tofuya Ukai.** Superb tofu temple with classical Japanese lacquered pillars, tatami floors and pretty rock garden, right under Tokyo Tower.  
4-4-13 Shiba-koen / Minato-ku / 3436 1028 / [ukai.co.jp](http://ukai.co.jp)

### Club

**Le Baron.** Shake your petites fesses and get in a mess at this fabette babette where the sounds are saucy and the crowd sont fous! Be sure to call or email in advance for entry.

B1/F Aoyama Center Bldg / 3-8-40 Minami Aoyama / Minato-ku / 3408 3665 / [lebaron.jp](http://lebaron.jp)

### Spa

**Armani Spa.** Drop your Armani duds and let Giorgio's prods caress you instead at his three private, commodious, golden timber suites with huge black leather beds to spread out in style.

Ginza Tower / 5-5-4 Ginza / Chuo-ku / 6274 7004 / [armaniginzatower.com](http://armaniginzatower.com)

### Shop

**Tokyu Hands.** This general store stocks every gadget and lifestyle goody you could ever need or think of. We asked for Daniel Craig, nude, on a bed of arugula, but were met with mystified looks. Also check out their glitzier concept store Ginza Hands, though we doubt you'd find Danny boy there either.

Tokyu Hands / 12-18 Udagawacho / Shibuya-ku / 5489 5111 / [tokyu-hands.co.jp](http://tokyu-hands.co.jp)  
Ginza Hands / 5-9/F Maronnier Gate / 2-2-14 Ginza / Chuo-ku / 3538 0109

### Activities

**Roppongi Art Triangle.** This former seed zone is in the process of a good scrub up and now sports a spiffy trio of arty delights.

**The Mori Art Museum** shows novel exhibits in a dramatic space; the **National Art Center's** staggering architecture makes up for the hit or miss travelling collectons, plus the on-site Brasserie Paul Bocuse does a great value lunch. Finish off at **21\_21**, Issey Miyake and Tadao Ando's striking design and exhibition bunker.  
Mori Art Museum / 53/F Mori Tower / 6-10-1 Roppongi / Minato-ku / 6406 6100 / 10am-10pm daily, except Tue 10am-5pm / [mori.art.museum](http://mori.art.museum)

National Art Center / 7-22-2 Roppongi / Minato-ku / 5777 8600 / 10am-6pm daily, 10am-8pm Fri / closed Tue / [nact.jp](http://nact.jp) / Brasserie Paul Bocuse / 5770 8161 21\_21 / Tokyo Midtown / 9-7-6 Akasaka / Minato-ku / 3475 2121 / closed Tue

**Sumo Stable.** Well, they sure ain't on the Atkins. Sumo fights are exciting, but seasonal (Jan, May & Sep). More interesting is to go to a sumo-beya where the chubbers train. Remember, Sumo is very serious, so no giggling at their gigantic bums. You'll definitely think twice before wearing a thong again, Thora...  
Tokitsukaze-beya / 3-15-4 Ryogoku / 5600 2561 / 7am-10am / phone ahead to check it is convenient to visit / your concierge can make all arrangements if there is a bout

**Heli-cruising.** Breathtaking and romantic, hop on a helicopter for a goggle down at the stunning, spangly metropolis. It's a bit of a schlep to the helipad in Urayasu, but she's a topper chopper.

14 Chidori / Urayasu-shi / Chiba / 047 380 5555 / [excel-air.com](http://excel-air.com)

