

# Guide Excerpt: Travel Tokyo

## **The World's Largest Metropolis at a Glance**

Tokyo is a city of dichotomies, a place rich in tradition, enhanced by technology and obsessed with fashion. The 23 wards, or neighborhoods, of Tokyo are distinct districts bound together by the city's pristine and punctual train systems. Tokyo's neighborhoods have something for every personality. Shibuya's all night karaoke bars, Ginza's giant haute couture flagship stores, Odaiba's futuristic architecture and fabulous views, the anime and manga mecca of Akihabara, and historic temples in Asakusa. Tokyo's love of technology touches on everyday details. Digital screen vending machines, musical toilets, and appliances that automatically fill a pint are just a few tech treats you'll experience around the city.

## **Tour Tokyo's Ancient and Futuristic Monuments**

A vibrant blend of traditional architecture and visionary design, Tokyo combines the best of classical Japan and ultramodern metropolis. Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple and Meiji Shrine, one of Japan's three great Shinto shrines, are venerable displays of Japan's past. The Imperial Palace, home to Japan's emperor, has extensive gardens featuring plants from every region of the country. Nearby Tokyo Station exhibits the grandeur of western architecture built during the Meiji era. The more modern Rainbow Bridge, white by day and illuminated with colorful solar powered lights by night, crosses Tokyo Bay to the eccentric architecture of Odaiba. The city's newest innovative icon, Tokyo Skytree, is the tallest tower in the world.

## **Enjoy Exceptional Japanese Cuisine**

Tokyo is home to more Michelin star restaurants than any other city and is quickly becoming the culinary capital of the world. Innovative Japanese chefs update classic dishes like misokatsu (breaded fried pork cutlet coated in red miso) and unagi (freshwater eel topped with a sweet soy sauce). For Tokyo's freshest sushi, the shops at Tsukiji Fish Market are unbeatable. And while the sushi is sublime, Japanese cuisine is as varied as the distinct regions of Japan. Shabu-shabu (thin sliced meat dipped in boiling water and served with a sesame seed sauce) and monja yaki (a pan fried batter with a mix of seafood, meat and veggies) are among the lesser known local favorites.

## **Honor and Beauty: Experiencing Japanese Culture**

While Tokyo embraces western culture, Japanese traditions still hold immense importance. Calligraphy, ikebana (flower arranging), and chado (tea ceremony) are just a few of the Japanese art forms still practiced today. The Japanese celebrate the seasons and Buddhist and Shinto holidays with festivals throughout the year. On Ganjitsu, New Year's Day, the locals head to temples and shrines to pray for the New Year. The Hanami (flower viewing) festivities last from late March to mid-April as the Japanese celebrate beneath the cherry blossoms with sake and singing. In mid-May Tokyoites and tourists pack Asakusa and march through the streets with portable shrines for Sanja Matsuri, one of Tokyo's liveliest and largest festivals.

## Find Style Inspiration in Tokyo

Tokyo is home to top fashion designers, unique shopping districts and strange fashion trends. From Shibuya to Harajuku, Meiji Dori showcases a mix of unique Japanese designer shops, like Takeo Kikuchi's men's shop, alongside international favorites Zara and Aesop. Meiji Dori will lead you directly to the heart of teen infested, fashion forward Harajuku, where Crepe cafes, funky boutiques, and Tokyo youth line the narrow backstreets. Past Harajuku is chic Omotesando Dori flush with high end fashion palaces designed by famous architects, like the Toyo Ito designed Italian shoe store Tod's. Directly east of Omotesando, is Tokyo's luxury shopping district, Ginza. Ginza's towering designer flagship stores make it *the* haute couture shopping destination in Tokyo.