

Akihabara & Around

AKIHABARA | KANDA

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Experiencing blazing neon, the maid cafes, the latest electronic gadgets and *otaku* (geek) vibe of **Akihabara Electric Town** (p149).

2 Encountering dinosaurs made from old plastic toys amid the contemporary


art galleries at **3331 Arts Chiyoda** (p149).

3 Browsing the cream of Japanese crafts and cuisine at the beneath-train-tracks-malls **2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan** (p151), **Chabara** (p152) and **mAach ecute** (p152).

4 Learning the art of paper folding at the **Origami Kaikan** (p149).

5 Enjoying a moment of quiet contemplation at **Kanda Myōjin** (p149) and the nearby cafes **Imasa** (p151) and **Amanoya** (p150).



For more detail of this area, see Map p290 

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Check electronics prices in your home country online before buying big-ticket items in Akihabara; they may or may not be a good deal. If you do buy, have your passport handy since travellers spending more than ¥10,001 in a single day at selected shops can get a refund of the consumption tax (8%). For a list of duty-free shops offering this service, see www.akiba.or.jp.

Best Places to Eat

- Isegen (p150)
- Kanda Yabu Soba (p150)
- Botan (p150)

For reviews, see p150 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- Imasa (p151)
- N3331 (p151)
- Cafe Asan (p151)

For reviews, see p151 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- 2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan (p151)
- mAACH ecute (p152)
- Mandarake Complex (p152)

For reviews, see p151 ➔

Explore Akihabara & Around

Long a hub of Tokyo's electronics trade, Akihabara is today more synonymous with *otaku* (geeks) and their love of anime, manga and J-pop culture. Even if you haven't the faintest idea of who or what AKB48 or Gundam is, Akiba, as it's popularly known, is still well worth visiting for its buzzing, quirky atmosphere, shopping malls and the contemporary arts of 3331 Arts Chiyoda.

Along neon-lined Chūō-dōri, you're sure to encounter *cosplay* (costume play) maids enticing customers into maid cafes. Electric Town is across the street, and holds a dense concentration of electronics shops, comic and DVD retailers and figurine sellers. Respite is available in the 2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan arcade, with its serene atmosphere and eclectic, craft-oriented shops.

Head south across the Mansei-bashi to discover mAACH ecute, another sophisticated under-the-tracks shopping and dining complex. A short walk south is Kanda, a major transport hub that is undergoing an infrastructure upgrade. Here you'll find some of Tokyo's most traditional restaurants as well as come-as-you-are noodle bars and convivial *izakaya* (Japanese pub-eateries) packed with carousing salarymen.

West of Akihabara, in the vicinity of Ochanomizu, are an interesting trio of religious buildings: the Shintō shrine Kanda Myōjin, the Confucian shrine Yushima Seidō, and the Russian Orthodox Nicholai Cathedral. If you want to stretch your legs further, Origami Kaikan has fine displays on the art of folding paper into exquisite shapes. Paper in the form of books, magazines and poster art is the raison d'être of Jimbōchō, a dream destination for bibliophiles.

Local Life

- **Cosplay** Catch anime fans dressed as their favourite characters, particularly along Akihabara's Chūō-dōri on Sundays (1pm to 6pm April to September, to 5pm October to March) when it becomes a pedestrian zone.
- **Festivals** The area bursts with extra creativity during Trans Arts Tokyo (www.kanda-tat.com), a contemporary arts fest held between September and November.
- **Video games** Go old-school and join enthusiasts playing Pacman and Street Fighter at Super Potato Retro-kan.

Getting There & Away

- **Train** The JR Yamanote, Sōbu, and Keihin-Tōhoku lines stop at Akihabara. Ochanomizu on the JR Chūō and Sōbu lines is convenient for other sights.
- **Subway** The Hibiya line stops near Akihabara, while the Ginza line stops at Suehirochō and Kanda. The Shinjuku and Hanzōmon lines stop at Jimbōchō.