

Harajuku & Aoyama

HARAJUKU | AOYAMA | GAJENMAE

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Making a wish at **Meiji-jingū** (p115). Leave the city behind as you pass through the towering *torii* (gate) and follow the wooded, gravel path to Tokyo's most famous Shintō shrine.
- 2 Scouting new looks on **Takeshita-dōri** (p116) and around the backstreets of Harajuku.
- 3 Stretching out on the lawn of **Yoyogi-kōen** (p116), one of Tokyo's largest parks.
- 4 Gawking at the architectural wonders (and eyebrow-raising consumerism) along **Omote-sandō** (p116).
- 5 Retreating into the calm galleries and gardens of **Nezu Museum** (p116).



For more detail of this area, see Map p288 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The recent arrival of fast-fashion megachains (such as H&M) hasn't pushed Harajuku fashion off the map; it's just pushed it further into the backstreets. Ura-Hara (literally 'behind Harajuku') is the nickname for the maze of backstreets behind Omote-sandō. Here you'll find the tiny, eccentric shops and second-hand stores from which Harajuku hipsters cobble together their head-turning looks. Whether your aim is acquisitive or more of the anthropological sort, it's worth spending some time exploring these streets.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Yanmo (p119)
- ➔ Maisen (p119)
- ➔ Harajuku Gyōza-Rō (p117)

For reviews, see p117 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Two Rooms (p119)
- ➔ Omotesando Koffee (p122)
- ➔ Harajuku Taproom (p122)

For reviews, see p119 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Laforet (p123)
- ➔ Sou-Sou (p124)
- ➔ KiddyLand (p123)
- ➔ Musubi (p123)
- ➔ RagTag (p123)

For reviews, see p123 ➔

Explore Harajuku & Aoyama

The twin neighbourhoods of Harajuku and Aoyama, linked by the boulevard Omote-sandō, are primarily shopping districts. On weekends, Harajuku in particular gets very crowded, with seas of people moving at the pace of a languid shuffle. This is great for people-watching: park yourself at a cafe on Omote-sandō and watch the city's living catwalk unfurl in real time. However, if you're more interested in the sights, or simply covering a lot of ground in one day, it is better to visit on a weekday.

For sightseeing, the best route is to start the morning with a visit to Meiji-jingū. If it's a weekend and the weather's nice, pop over to Yoyogi-kōen after visiting the shrine. Then work your way down Takeshita-dōri and Omote-sandō (p118); the latter known for its contemporary architecture. There are a handful of other small museums and art spaces along the way, too.

Of course, one of the primary reasons to come here is to shop, and you can easily spend a whole day (or three) doing just that. In Harajuku you'll find mostly trendy, youthful duds; in moneyed Aoyama it's sophisticated high fashion. (Somewhere in between is Ura-Hara, Harajuku's backstreets, where Tokyo's street trends are born). As befitting any shopping neighbourhood, both Harajuku and Aoyama have excellent lunch options and cafes.

Once the shops close, Harajuku becomes much quieter. Aoyama too, though there are some swank establishments here that fuel the well-heeled after hours.

Local Life

➔ **Festivals & Markets** During the warmer months, festivals take place most weekends at the plaza across from Yoyogi-kōen (p116). Year-round, there's a farmers' market (p119) in Aoyama.

➔ **Street Fashion** Photographers for street-fashion magazines line Omote-sandō (p116) looking for the next big thing. Teens and 20-somethings know it and dress for a shot at their 15 minutes of fame.

➔ **Hang-outs** Two Rooms (p119) is the place to see and be seen; Oath (p122) is the where after-hours parties happen. During the summer it's all about the outdoor beer gardens (p122).

Getting There & Away

➔ **Train** The JR Yamanote line stops at Harajuku Station.

➔ **Subway** The Chiyoda line runs beneath Omote-sandō, stopping at Meiji-jingūmae (for Harajuku) and Omote-sandō (for Aoyama). The Fukutoshin line also stops at Meiji-jingūmae. The Ginza and Hanzōmon lines both stop at Omote-sandō Station.