

Kōrakuen & Northwest Tokyo

KŌRAKUEN | KUNDANSHITA | ICHIGAYA | HANZŌMON | MEJIRO | IKEBUKURO

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Soaking up the peaceful, contemplative atmosphere of a classic Japanese garden. **Rikugi-en** (p139) is considered the city's most beautiful. **Koishikawa Kōrakuen** (p140) is a close second.
- 2 Wandering the old-world alleys of **Kagurazaka** (p144), an old geisha quarter with enticing shops and cafes.
- 3 Cheering on Japan's number-one baseball team, the Yomiuri Giants, at **Tokyo Dome** (p146).
- 4 Bath-hopping at the over-the-top onsen complex **Spa La Qua** (p146).
- 5 Passing through the proud, bronze *torii* (gates) at **Yasukuni-jinja** (p140), a shrine with deep political resonance.



For more detail of this area, see Map p289 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

If you plan to explore several sights in Tokyo's northwest districts, try to work in a ride on Tokyo's last streetcar. The Toden Arakawa line (p141) passes near Chinzan-sō and Zōshigaya-reien through sleepy residential districts you wouldn't otherwise see.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Kururi (p141)
- ➔ Kado (p145)
- ➔ Le Bretagne (p145)

For reviews, see p141 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Beer Bar Bitter (p145)
- ➔ Mugimaru 2 (p144)
- ➔ Canal Cafe (p145)

For reviews, see p145 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Kukuli (p144)
- ➔ Puppet House (p146)
- ➔ Baikatei (p144)

For reviews, see p146 ➔

Explore Kōrakuen & Northwest Tokyo

The neighbourhoods northwest of the Imperial Palace are off the tourist trail, yet have some fascinating sights. If you're keen to see a traditional Japanese garden, there are some fantastic examples here. Rikugi-en is the city's most famous and well worth the detour. Koishikawa Kōrakuen, with a more convenient location, is beautiful as well. Next door to Koishikawa Kōrakuen is the entertainment complex Tokyo Dome City, which includes a baseball stadium, amusement park, spa complex and dozens of shops and restaurants. Nearby, the neighbourhood Kagurazaka, with its narrow cobblestone lanes, presents an alternative picture of Tokyo – that of a hundred years ago.

South of Kōrakuen, in Kudanshita, are two controversial attractions: Yasukuni-jinja and its adjacent museum Yūshū-kan, which covers Japan's warring past. Anyone with an interest in Japanese history (or Asian geopolitics) should make a stop here. On a lighter note, there are also some pleasant strolls nearby, along the Imperial Palace moats, Hanzo-bōri and Soto-bōri.

In the northwest corner of Tokyo, Ikebukuro is a big, brash transport hub, not dissimilar to Shinjuku, with department stores, and bar and restaurant strips. Nearby, however, are some wealthy residential districts that hide a handful of overlooked sights, such as the garden Chinzan-sō and the cemetery Zōshigaya-reien.

Kagurazaka is one of Tokyo's top dining destinations. There are many exclusive restaurants priced quite extravagantly, but there are some affordable options, too.

Local Life

➔ **Eating** Kagurazaka is said to have more French restaurants than anywhere outside France; the diverse neighbourhoods of northwest Tokyo have excellent ethnic restaurants.

➔ **Outdoors** On a sunny day there are few better places than the terrace at Canal Cafe (p145).

➔ **Drinking** The east side of Ikebukuro is crammed with bars and *izakaya* (Japanese pub-eateries).

Getting There & Away

➔ **Train** The JR Sōbu line stops at Iidabashi and Suidōbashi (rapid-service JR Chūō-line trains stop only at Suidōbashi). The JR Yamanote line stops at Mejiro and Ikebukuro.

➔ **Subway** Useful stations include Iidabashi (Nanboku, Yūrakuchō, Tōzai and Ōedo lines), Kōrakuen (Nanboku and Marunouchi lines), Kagurazaka (Tōzai line) and Kudanshita (Hanzōmon, Tōzai and Shinjuku lines). The Marunouchi, Yūrakuchō and Fukutoshin lines stop at Ikebukuro Station.