

Harajuku & Aoyama

HARAJUKU | AOYAMA & GAJENMAE

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Meiji-jingū (p108)

Leaving the city behind as you pass through the towering cedar *torii* (gate), which marks the entrance to the abode of the gods, and following the wooded, gravel path to Tokyo's most impressive Shintō shrine.

2 Omote-sandō (p110)

Gawking at the contempo-

rary architecture, the work of Japan's leading architects, and the eyebrow-raising consumerism along this wide, tree-lined boulevard.

3 Yoyogi-kōen (p109)

Stretching out on the grassy lawn or catching a food festival at the city's most popular park, which buzzes with life on weekends.

4 Takeshita-dōri (p109)

Scouting new looks while strolling through Harajuku's famous teen fashion bazaar.

5 Nezu Museum (p111)

Retreating into the calm galleries and gardens of this excellent antiques museum.



For more detail of this area see Map p276 ➔

Explore Harajuku & Aoyama

Harajuku is a neighbourhood that rewards an early start: grab a coffee at Little Nap Coffee Stand (p113) and walk through Yoyogi-kōen (p109) to the shrine, Meiji-jingū (p108) – you'll beat the crowds this way. Then make your way up Omote-sandō (p110), before the shopping starts in earnest (the better to see the striking contemporary buildings that line this boulevard). For a retreat, step into the hushed environs of one of the excellent art museums here, like the Ukiyo-e Ōta Memorial Museum of Art (p109), for woodblock prints, or the Nezu Museum (p111), for antiquities.

Harajuku is Tokyo's real-life catwalk, a world-renowned shopping destination where the ultra-chic (and chic-in-training) come to browse and be seen – a sight in and of itself (and a must if shopping is on your itinerary). Work your way back through the snaking side alleys of Ura-Hara (the nickname for the side streets on either side of Omote-sandō, where the fashion is edgier than on the main drag), to Takeshita-dōri (p109). This trendy shopping strip, beloved by teens all over, should be heaving by now.

Once the shops close, Harajuku becomes eerily quiet. Aoyama too, though there are some swanky establishments here that fuel the well-heeled after hours. There are some excellent (and not unreasonable) dinner options here, if you've planned for a splurge night.

Local Life

➤ **Hang-outs** On sunny weekends, Yoyogi-kōen (p109) draws crowds of picnicking families, frisbee-tossing students and amateur musicians and dancers using the grassy lawn as free practice space.

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

➤ **Markets** On weekends the most popular lunch spot is the cluster of food trucks at Aoyama's farmers market (p109).

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 stops at Meiji-jingūmae and Kita-Sandō. The Ginza and Hanzōmon lines both stop at Omote-sandō Station.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Harajuku, and especially the boulevard Omote-sandō, can get extremely crowded – with foot traffic moving at a slow, platform-shoe shuffle. If you want to seriously shop or zip around to see the museums and architecture, then head over on a weekday. If you want to get caught up in it all, check out the markets and people-watch, then come on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

Best Places to Eat

- Maisen (p111)
- Harajuku Gyōza Rō (p111)
- Yanmo (p112)

For reviews, see p111. ➡

Best Places to Drink

- Two Rooms (p113)
- Oath (p113)
- Montoak (p113)

For reviews, see p113. ➡

Best Places to Shop

- Dog (p116)
- Sou-Sou (p116)
- Laforet (p116)
- Musubi (p116)
- Bedrock (p117)

For reviews, see p116. ➡