

Shinjuku & Northwest Tokyo

NISHI-SHINJUKU | SHINJUKU | MEJIRO & IKEBUKURO | NISHI-SHINJUKU & SHINJUKU

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Shinjuku at Night (p131) Exploring the crackling neon canyons of Tokyo's biggest and most colourful nightlife district, where the vivacity and sheer volume of dining, drinking and entertainment options are something to behold.

2 Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building

(p127) Taking in the immensity of the metropolis, which extends to the horizon, from the (free!) observatories atop Tokyo's city hall.

3 Shinjuku-gyoen (p127) Lazing on the lawn with a *bentō* (boxed meal) while gazing up at the surrounding skyscrapers.

4 Golden Gai (p134) Getting cosy in the tiny, ramshackle bars of Shinjuku's literary and artistic hang-out spot.

5 Classic Izakaya (p132) Joining the after-work crowd at a Japanese-style pub, such as Donjaca, in Shinjuku-sanchōme.



For more detail of this area see Map p280 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Even Tokyoites get confused in Shinjuku Station. While it might seem natural to go with the flow, when it comes to reaching your intended destination, your battle begins on the platform: make sure you pick the right exit; otherwise you could wind up completely on the other side of the neighbourhood, having to circumnavigate the huge train station. Coin lockers abound inside the station, but use them at your peril: you might never find your stuff again.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Nagi (p130)
- ➔ Donjaca (p132)
- ➔ Kozue (p132)
- ➔ Nakajima (p130)

For reviews, see p130. ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ BenFiddich (p132)
- ➔ Zoetrope (p133)
- ➔ New York Bar (p133)
- ➔ Aiuro Cafe (p133)

For reviews, see p132. ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Isetan (p135)
- ➔ Beams (p135)
- ➔ Bingoya (p135)

For reviews, see p135. ➔

Explore Shinjuku & Northwest Tokyo

Shinjuku works neatly as a day-to-night destination. Start with the skyscrapers of Nishi-Shinjuku (west of the train station). Morning is usually the best time of day to see Mt Fuji from the observatories atop the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building (p127). For lunch, join the office workers at Shinjuku I-Land (p127), where cheap eateries surround an open courtyard, or hop on the subway for Shinjuku-gyoen (p127) – picking up a *bentō* (boxed meal) on the way – and have a picnic in the park.

Shinjuku has many department stores with fun and fashionable wares, which are a big draw for shoppers. You can also take this opportunity to visit a couple of the city's under-appreciated sights north of Shinjuku, such as the architectural masterpieces St Mary's Cathedral Tokyo (p130) and Myōnichikan (p130).

Shinjuku's east side really shines at night – quite literally, with myriad bars, *izakaya* (Japanese-style pubs), karaoke parlours, and jazz haunts that await. While Friday nights are the most crowded, Shinjuku buzzes every night of the week. Beware the crush of the last train – between midnight and 1am – when packed in like sardines is an understatement.

Local Life

➔ **Hang-outs** Tokyo's gay community comes together at Aiuro Cafe (p133) for happy hour; creative types hit the bars of Golden Gai (p134).

➔ **Noodles** Shinjuku, Takadanobaba and Ikebukuro are three oft-cited ramen 'battlegrounds', where cult favourites are born of fierce competition.

➔ **Arts** Place M (p127) is a hub for the city's photographers; gritty Shinjuku has long been a favourite subject of theirs.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Train** The JR Yamanote line connects Shinjuku, Shin-Ōkubo, Takadanobaba and Ikebukuro. The private Keiō New line stops at Hatsudai, west of Shinjuku.

➔ **Subway** The Marunouchi line runs east–west, stopping at Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku, Shinjuku-sanchōme and Shinjuku-gyoenmae. The Fukutoshin line runs north–south, stopping at Shinjuku, Higashi-Shinjuku, Zōshigaya and Ikebukuro. The circuitous Ōedo line stops at Tochōmae, Shinjuku and Higashi-Shinjuku.