

Akihabara & Around

AKIHABARA | KANDA

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Wandering the teeming streets of **Akihabara Electric Town** (p152). This is an experience in soaking up the *otaku* (geek) vibe – the blazing neon, the cafe maids, the ubiquitous electronics and anime (Japanese animation) and manga (Japanese comics) goods make a mighty cultural stew.

2 Marvelling at the vintage components stalls under the tracks at **Akihabara Radio Center** (p152) and the latest gadgets at **Yodobashi Akiba** (p155).

3 Browsing the wooden keyboards, guns and kaleidoscopes at eclectic arcade **2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan** (p154).

4 Taking the plunge and having a cuppa at a maid cafe like **@Home Café** (p154).

5 Chilling out at the quiet religious sanctuaries of **Kanda Myōjin shrine** and **Nikolai Cathedral** (p153).



For more detail of this area, see Map p298 →

Explore Akihabara & Around

Akihabara is synonymous with *otaku* (geeks) but you don't have to obsess about manga or anime (to enjoy this quirky neighbourhood that is at once sensory overload and cultural mindbender. From Akihabara Station, take in the old-school Akihabara Radio Center under the tracks, and figurine-filled Akihabara Radio Kaikan next door for a quick intro to what gets the *otaku* heart beating.

Along neon-lined Chūō-dōri, west of the station, you'll see touts hawking cheap goods, and perhaps a French maid enticing customers to a local cafe. Electric Town is across the street, and holds a huge concentration of electronics shops, DVD retailers and figurine sellers. You can expect squads of geeks on the lookout for the latest anime goods, but it also draws shoppers from across the world.

You can find respite in the recently opened 2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan arcade, with its serene atmosphere and eclectic, craft-oriented shops tucked beneath the tracks north of the station. From here walk north along the tracks toward Ueno-kōen (Ueno Park; p159) or go west along Kuramaebashi-dōri. You'll find the usually quiet Kanda Myōjin (Kanda shrine), home to Yushima Seidō, a rare Confucian shrine by the Kanda-gawa. If you want to stretch your legs further, Origami Kaikan has fine displays on the art of folding paper into exquisite shapes.

To the south, the Jimbōchō and Kanda quarters have a no-nonsense vibe and a plethora of shops selling used and antique books, sporting goods and musical instruments.

To the north of Kanda Station are some excellent traditional restaurants housed in vintage and traditional buildings. These are a great choice to cap an afternoon and early evening exploring this area.

Local Life

- ➔ **Shopping** Yodobashi Akiba (p155) is an excellent electronics shop on the east side of Akihabara station.
- ➔ **Wandering** The crowded streets of Akihabara Electric Town (p152) are great for exploring the maze of small electronics shops and maid cafes.
- ➔ **Eating** Kanda-sudachō (p153), south of Akihabara Station, is home to wonderful traditional restaurants.

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. The Shinjuku and Hanzōmon lines stop at Jimbōchō.

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 one shop can get a refund of the 5% consumption tax. Not all stores offer the refund, however, so ask first. For a list of duty-free shops, see www.akiba.or.jp.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Isegen (p153)
- ➔ Kanda Yabu Soba (p154)
- ➔ Botan (p153)

For reviews, see p153 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Milonga Nueva (p154)
- ➔ Boo (p154)
- ➔ @Home Café (p154)

For reviews, see p154 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Yodobashi Akiba (p155)
- ➔ 2k540 Aki-Oka Artisan (p154)
- ➔ Mandarake Complex (p154)

For reviews, see p154 ➔