

Harajuku & Aoyama

HARAJUKU | AOYAMA

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Making a wish at **Meiji-jingū** (p116). 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** (p117) and around the back streets of Harajuku.
- 3 Stretching out on the lawn of **Yoyogi-kōen** (p117), one of Tokyo's largest parks.
- 4 Gawking at the architectural wonders (and eyebrow-raising consumerism) along **Omote-sandō** (p119).
- 5 Retreating into the calm galleries and gardens of **Nezu Museum** (p118).



For more detail of this area, see Map p293 →

Explore Harajuku & Aoyama

Harajuku's colourful teen culture hits you as soon as you exit the station. Strolling down Takeshita-dōri is a rite of passage for anyone who has ever felt themselves outside the mainstream. Further down Omote-sandō, the boulevard that connects Harajuku and Aoyama, crowds become increasingly refined; moneyed Aoyama is where Japan's leading designers have their flagship shops. Somewhere in between are the style mavens of Ura-Hara, Harajuku's backstreets, where street trends are born.

On weekends in particular, this is the city's living catwalk. Harajuku and Aoyama have a powerful allure that draws shoppers from all over Japan, and increasingly from around Asia, too. Saturdays and Sundays can be incredibly crowded.

There's a lot more to do than just shop. There's Meiji-jingū, one of the city's top attractions, and a handful of excellent museums, both traditional and modern. The weekend scene in Yoyogi-kōen is worth checking out, too. Broad Omote-sandō, once the official road leading to the shrine, is now adorned with luxury brand boutiques designed by leading Japanese architects; for fans of contemporary architecture, this is a must-see. There's a healthy cafe culture and some good restaurants, too.

Once the shops close, Harajuku becomes a much quieter place. Aoyama too, though there are some high-end establishments here that fuel the well-heeled after hours. This may be no place to bar-hop, but after a long day you could do worse than making yourself at home in one of the many cafes here that stay open late.

Local Life

- ➔ **Street Snaps** 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.
- ➔ **Festivals** On most weekends during summer, the plaza across the street from Yoyogi-kōen (p117) hosts festivals for Tokyo's ethnic communities.
- ➔ **Hangouts** Two Rooms (p122) is the place to see and be seen; Montoak (p123) is the place to escape to.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Train** The JR Yamanote Line stops at Harajuku Station.
- ➔ **Subway** The Chiyoda Line runs beneath Omote-sandō, stopping at Omote-sandō and Meiji-jingūmae Stations. The Fukutoshin Line also stops at Meiji-jingūmae Station. The Ginza and Hanzōmon Lines both stop at Omote-sandō Station.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The recent arrival of fast-fashion mega-chains (like H&M) hasn't pushed Harajuku fashion off the map; it's just pushed it further into the back streets. Ura-Hara (literally 'behind Harajuku') is the nickname for the maze of back streets behind Omote-sandō. Here you'll find the tiny, eccentric shops and secondhand 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 a few hours exploring these streets.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Agarū Sagarū Nishi Iru Higashi Iru (p118)
- ➔ Maisen (p122)
- ➔ Honoji (p118)
- ➔ Harajuku Gyōza Rō (p118)

For reviews, see p118 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Two Rooms (p122)
- ➔ Harajuku Taproom (p122)
- ➔ A to Z Café (p123)

For reviews, see p122 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Takeshita-dōri (p123)
- ➔ Laforet (p124)
- ➔ KiddyLand (p124)
- ➔ Pass the Baton (p125)
- ➔ Musubi (p124)

For reviews, see p123 ➔