

Iidabashi & Northwest Tokyo

IIDABASHI | IKEBUKURO | TAKADANOBABA | KAGURAZAKA | KÔRAKUEN

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Passing under the giant *torii* (gates) at the controversial **Yasukuni-jinja** (p141) and viewing the fascinating armaments at its war museum.
- 2 Wandering the old-world alleys of **Kagurazaka** (p142), an old geisha quarter with enticing shops and bars.
- 3 Relaxing in the splendour of a classic Japanese garden at **Koishikawa Kôrakuen** (p143).
- 4 Cheering on the Yomiuri Giants baseball team at **Tokyo Dome** (p143).
- 5 Slurping some of the best miso *râmen* in Tokyo at **Kururi** (p146).



For more detail of this area, see Map p299 ➡

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

In spring, the Sotobori Moat west of Iidabashi Station and the groves in Yasukuni-jinja explode with cherry blossoms. These are prime spots for *hanami* (blossom viewing), afternoon and evening picnic parties where revellers drink until they're pinker than the petals.



Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Kururi (p146)
- ➔ Kado (p147)
- ➔ Mucha-an (p148)
- ➔ Namco Namjatown (p143)

For reviews, see p146 ➔



Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Beer Bar Bitter (p148)
- ➔ Canal Café (p147)
- ➔ Jazz Spot Intro (p148)

For reviews, see p148 ➔



Best Gardens

- ➔ Koishikawa Kōrakuen (p143)
- ➔ Rikugi-en (p146)
- ➔ Chinzan-sō (p146)

For reviews, see p142 ➔

Explore Iidabashi & Northwest Tokyo

From gardens to spas, the mixed sights in this large swathe of Tokyo are scattered among smaller districts. Start at Kudanshita and walk through the grand *torii* of Yasukuni-jinja shrine, a controversial tribute to Japan's war dead. The history museum on the grounds is well worth an hour or two, especially for its vintage Mitsubishi Zero fighter planes and other armaments.

Next, make your way over the old outer moat for lunch in the Iidabashi and Kagurazaka area; Kururi is an excellent *rāmen* shop not too far away or you could try Canal Café on the moat itself. Kagurazaka makes for some atmospheric shopping and strolling, though the Koishikawa Kōrakuen gardens to the east are a better place to stretch your legs. You can relax at the grand La Qua spa near Tokyo Dome, or try to catch a baseball game if the Yomiuri Giants are playing.

From here, the subway can take you to the farther-flung sights in this chapter, such as the excellent Chinzan-sō and Rikugi-en gardens, the Takadanobaba student area with its myriad ethnic restaurants, or Ikebukuro's Namjatown, a theme park devoted in part to Chinese dumplings and ice cream. Don't bother counting those calories.

Local Life

➔ **Drinking** Beer Bar Bitter (p148) is one of many excellent watering holes off Kagurazaka hill where locals unwind with fine foreign brews.

➔ **Soaking** La Qua (p149) is a deluxe spa favoured by tired shoppers and others from all over Tokyo.

➔ **Eating** Takadanobaba (p148), near Waseda University, is a teeming student zone with new *izakaya* (Japanese version of a pub/eatery) and *yakitori* (chicken, meats or vegetables, cooked on skewers) joints opening all the time.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Train** The JR Sōbu Line stops at Iidabashi (rapid-service JR Chūō Line trains, which use the same track, skip it but stop at Suidōbashi). The Yamanote and other JR lines stops at Ikebukuro.

➔ **Subway** Useful stations include Iidabashi (Nanboku, Yū rakuchō, 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.