



TOKYO

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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Welcome to Tokyo

Yoking past and future, Tokyo dazzles with its traditional culture and passion for everything new.

Tokyo's neon-bright streets still look like a sci-fi film set – and that's a vision of the city from the 1980s. Tokyo has been building ever since, pushing the boundaries of what's possible on densely populated, earthquake-prone land, adding ever-taller, sleeker structures. Stand atop one of the city's skyscrapers and look out over the city at night to see it blinking like the control panel of a starship, stretching all the way to the horizon. Tokyo is a modern city built on old patterns, and in the shadows of those skyscrapers you can find quiet alleys, raucous traditional festivals and lantern-lit *yakitori* (grilled chicken) stands.

Speaking of food, Tokyo is one of the world's top dining destinations. Here you can splash out on the best sushi of your life, made by one of the city's legendary chefs using the freshest seasonal market ingredients. Or you can spend ¥800 on a bowl of noodles made with the same care and exacting attention to detail, from a recipe honed through decades of experience. Tokyo is also Japan's pop-culture laboratory, where new trends grow legs. See the newest anime and manga flying off the shelves in Akihabara, shop for your favourite character goods, or just pick up some style inspiration walking down the streets of Harajuku.

“Tokyo is a modern city built on old patterns”



Shinjuku & Ikebukuro
Shinjuku has the world's busiest train station, city hall and nightlife galore; grittier Ikebukuro is a student haunt. (Map p253)



Kagurazaka, Kanda & Akihabara
Swathe of central Tokyo that includes a former geisha district and a pop-culture hub. (Map p254)



Ueno & Yanesen
Tokyo's most famous museum, a sprawling park and well-preserved historic neighbourhoods. (Map p254)



Asakusa & Ryōgoku
Riverside district of ancient temples, old merchants' quarters and Tokyo's sumo stadium. (Map p254)



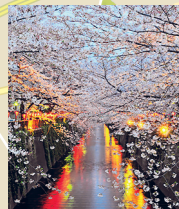
Kōenji, Kichijōji & West Tokyo
Neighbourhoods loved by locals, who appreciate the vintage mid-20th-century look and bohemian spirit.



Shibuya & Shimo-Kitazawa
Shibuya is the heart of Tokyo's youth culture; Shimo-Kitazawa is a beloved, bohemian haunt. (Map p246)



Harajuku & Aoyama
Nexus of tradition and trends with Tokyo's grandest Shintō shrine, shoppers architecture. (Map p246)



Ebisu & Meguro
Broad collection of hip neighbourhoods with fashionable boutiques, (relatively) quiet streets and great dining. (Map p246)



Roppongi & Akasaka
Legendary for its nightlife, this area is also the place for cutting-edge art and design. (Map p252)



Ginza & Tsukiji
Ginza is Tokyo's most polished neighbourhood; Tsukiji is synonymous with its famous food market. (Map p250)



Odaiba & Tokyo Bay
Waterside museums, amusement parks and shopping malls plus pleasure-boat cruises.



Marunouchi & Nihombashi
History meets modernity where the grounds of the Imperial Palace meet the skyscrapers of downtown. (Map p250)



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Plan Your Trip This Year in Tokyo

2018



Tokyo

From contemporary arts events to festivals that have been taking place for centuries, there is always something going on in Tokyo. Like elsewhere in Japan, the seasons have special meaning, with every new bloom a reason for celebration.



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★ Top Festivals & Events

Hatsu-mōde January (p6)

Cherry Blossoms April (p9)

Sanja Matsuri May (p10)

Sumida-gawa Fireworks July (p12)

Kōenji Awa Odori August (p13)



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April

04

Warmer weather and blooming cherry trees make this quite simply the best month to be in Tokyo.

🌸 **Buddha's Birthday** 8 Apr

In honour of the Buddha's birthday, Hana Matsuri (flower festival) celebrations take place at temples. Look for the parade of children in Asakusa, pulling a white papier-mâché elephant. Pictured above: Wooden and metal ladles used to sprinkle baby Buddha figurines.

🌸 **Kannon-ura Ichiyo Sakura-matsuri Festival** mid-Apr

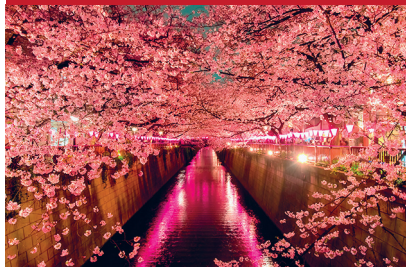
The highlight of this annual spring event that takes place in the backstreets behind Sensō-ji is the Edo Yoshiwara Oiran-dōchū – a procession of women dressed in the finery of Edo-era (1603–1868) courtesans. There's also a flea market.

🌸 **Earth Day** 21–22 Apr

Tokyo celebrates this international event with a weekend-long festival at Yoyogi-kōen with organic food stalls, live music and workshops for kids.

🌸 **Cherry Blossoms** early Apr

From the end of March through the beginning of April, the city's parks and riversides turn pink and Tokyoites toast spring in spirited parties, called *hanami*, beneath the blossoms.



🌸 **Naki-zumo** 29 Apr

In Japan it's believed that crying babies grow big and strong. At this amusing festival, held at Sensō-ji, sumo wrestlers are brought in to pull faces at babies (in cute mini sumo outfits) to make them cry. The one who cries first, or loudest, is crowned the winner.

Plan Your Trip

This Year in Tokyo



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September

Days are still warm – hot even – though the odd typhoon rolls through this time of year.

☆ **Tokyo Jazz Festival** *early Sep*
Enjoy three days of shows by international and local stars at Tokyo's biggest jazz festival (www.tokyo-jazz.com).

☆ **Japan Media Arts Festival** *mid-Sep*
The year's top animation, manga and digital installations go on display at the Japan Media Arts Festival (www.j-mediaarts.jp).

☆ **Tokyo Game Show** *late Sep*
Get your geek on when the Computer Entertainment Suppliers Association hosts Tokyo Game Show (<http://tgs.cesa.or.jp>; pictured above), a massive expo at Maku-hari Messe in late September.

09

👁 Moon Viewing

25 Sep & 25 Oct

Full moons in September and October call for *tsukimi*, moon-viewing gatherings. People eat *tsukimi dango* – *mochi* (pounded-rice dumplings) that are round like the moon.



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Plan Your Trip

Need to Know

Daily Costs

Budget:

less than ¥8000

- Dorm bed: ¥3000
- Free sights such as temples and markets
- Bowl of noodles: ¥750
- Happy-hour drink: ¥500
- 24-hour subway pass: ¥600

Midrange:

¥8000–20,000

- Double room at a business hotel: ¥14,000
- Museum entry: ¥1000
- Dinner for two at an *izakaya* (Japanese pub-eatery): ¥6000
- Live music show: ¥3000

Top End:

more than ¥20,000

- Double room in a four-star hotel: ¥35,000
- Sushi-tasting menu: ¥15,000
- Box seat for kabuki: ¥21,000
- Taxi ride back to the hotel: ¥3000

Advance Planning

Three months before

Purchase tickets for the Ghibli Museum; book a table at your top splurge restaurant.

One month before Book any tickets for sumo, kabuki and Giants games online, and a spot on the Imperial Palace tour; scan web listings for festivals, events and exhibitions.

On arrival Look for free copies of *Time Out Tokyo* and *Metropolis* magazines at airports and hotels.

Useful Websites

- **Go Tokyo** (www.gotokyo.org) The city's official website includes information on sights, events and suggested itineraries.
- **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/tokyo) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.
- **Time Out Tokyo** (www.timeout.jp) Arts and entertainment listings.
- **Tokyo Food Page** (www.bento.com) City-wide restaurant coverage.
- **Tokyo Cheapo** (www.tokyocheapo.com) Hints on how to do Tokyo on the cheap.

Currency

Japanese yen (¥)

Language

Japanese

Visas

Visas are generally not required for stays of up to 90 days.

Money

Post offices and most convenience stores have international ATMs. Credit cards are accepted at major establishments, though it's best to keep cash on hand.

Mobile Phones

Purchase prepaid data-only SIM cards (for unlocked smartphones only) online or at airport kiosks or electronics stores. For voice calls, rent a pay-as-you-go mobile.

Time

Japan Standard Time (GMT/UTC plus nine hours)

Tourist Information

Tokyo Tourist Information Center (p233) Has English-language information and publications.

For more, see the **Survival Guide** (p228)