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Ian Muttoo

# Ramen Walk: Kannana Dori

**Tokyo, 1 Day**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Kannana Dori (環状七号線; also known as Route #7) is a ring road encircling the core of the Tokyo metropolis. It's also become known as a famous street for ramen - for unknown reasons. As the street encompasses the entire city, it's host to many ramen hot spots around town. None are hotter, however, than at the intersection of Kannana and Route 246. Fueled by a loyal base of customers from nearby Komazawa University, it's been a place that for decades has fostered Tokyo's growing ramen culture.

Tucked into sleepy Setagaya Ward, this area is best reached by the Tokyu Den-En-Toshi line's Komazawa Daigaku station (only two stops from Shibuya). Once there, simply follow your nose (and the crowds) to find this strip of great ramen joints. The layout of the place makes it easy to do some window shopping (and salivating) before choosing the bowl that's right for you.

Below are highlighted five of the best shops in the area. This is by no means an exhaustive list, however, so go with your instincts to find the noodles that you find most slurpable.

# My List

**contact:**

tel: 03-3478-4110

<http://www.akasakaramen.com/>

**location:**

4-21-13 Nozawa Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo 154-0003

**hours:**

11:00am-4pm

## 1 Akasaka Ramen

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Leave your health concerns at home and just point to the picture to enjoy a mountain of incredibly rich chashu (braised pork).

**DESCRIPTION:** Akasaka (□□) ramen is another one of Tokyo's famous ramen chains. The main shop is in - you guessed it - Akasaka, but they've opened up a location on Setagaya's notorious Kan-nana dori. Specializing mainly in shoyu (soy sauce) based soups, but offering a large menu by ramen shop standards, Akasaka's main draw is its chashu (pork). When you approach the storefront, you'll see pictures advertising the restaurant's most infamous dish: a bowl of ramen topped with several incredibly thick slabs of bacon-like braised pork. They're marinated in miso and other sweet and spicy condiments, and basically cover the whole bowl. This is the dish to order for the true Akasaka experience.

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editor

**contact:**

tel: 03-3410-0081

<http://www.setaga-ya.com/shop/fukumori.html>

**location:**

4-9-18 Nozawa, Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo

**hours:**

11:30am-3:00pm;  
6:00pm-12:00am

## 2 Fukumori

**DESCRIPTION:** The prestigious Ramen Database ramen ranking website (/) has great things to say about Ramen Fukumori (□□□□□□□□): 30th in Tokyo for tsukemen (ramen noodles and soup served separately) and 26th for its shoyu (soy sauce) based soup. It's one of the definite jewels of the Kan-nana Dori ramen drag, and is not to be missed by anybody wishing to try Tokyo-style noodles.

The interior is pleasant and downright spacious by ramen joint standards, with a tatami room to boot. The staff is friendly and helpful, although you should order from the ticket vending machines at the entrance. Unfortunately, there are no pictures, so you'll have either have to brush up on your kanji reading abilities or ask the staff for help. It could be as easy as asking for tsukemen or shoyu ("tsukebuto" or "chukasoba," on the menu).

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**contact:**

tel: 03-3795-2789

<http://www.maru-kin.co.jp/>

**location:**

2-30-6 Nozawa, Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo

**hours:**

11:00am-3pm

## 3 Maru-kin

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Ask for "kata-men" (hard noodles) and save some of the soup for a "kaedama" (extra noodle serving).

**DESCRIPTION:** Maru-kin (□□) has locations all over Tokyo, bringing standard "Hakata tonkotsu" - Fukuoka-style ramen



editor

made from pork bones - to eager locals. Although the bowls are smaller here than at other ramen places, it's because of the incredible richness of the soup produced by boiling pork bones for days. Hold on to your soup and finish the noodles first, then ask for a "kaedama" (extra helping of noodles) for the genuine experience. © NileGuide

**contact:**  
tel: 03-3413-7100

**location:**  
4-5-15 Nozawa, Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo 154-0003

**hours:**  
11:30am-3:00pm;  
6:00pm-12:00am

## 4 Men-Kurai

**DESCRIPTION:** Men-Kurai (□□□□) is a definitive local neighborhood ramen joint. Most times you go in there, you'll see the same middle-aged guy working behind the small, 7-person counter. He'll be making soy-, miso-, or salt-based soups from scratch in the large woks on the two burners in the kitchen. Make your choice, and he'll dump a portion of noodles into a specially designed noodle pot and ask you to wait. When the noodles are ready, he'll gingerly place everything into a bowl and top it off with some of the best chashu (braised pork loin) you'll ever taste. He makes it himself in the shop, and will give precious little information on how he does it. Just understand that this man knows what he's doing, and respect the bowl he lays in front of you.  
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editor

**contact:**  
tel: 03-5712-3557

**location:**  
2-34-2 Nozawa, Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo

## 5 Tsukemen-ya Jou

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**  
Don't order more noodles than you can handle; leaving a plate with food on it is simply bad etiquette. Come on a hot day and order the refreshing yuzu tsukemen.

**DESCRIPTION:** The "jou" in Tsukemen-ya Jou (□□□□□) means 10 to the 28th power. As surprising as it may be that there is actually a Japanese character for this number, even more surprising is the amount of noodles they serve up on plates alongside bowls of savory dipping soup. Actually, there are three sizes to choose from, and the small is something anybody can handle. Order the large size (□□□) from the ticket vending machine, however, and you're looking at around 600 grams of delicious, thick and curly noodles. All sizes are the same price, but beware: it's simply bad etiquette to order more than you can handle.

The dipping soups are some of the best that Tokyo's tsukemen (ramen with noodles and soup served separately) scene has to offer. They proudly advertise their tuna-based seafood soup on the storefront, but just as delicious - and oh-so-refreshing on a hot summer day - is their special yuzu (□□; lemon-like citrus fruit) soup.

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editor

# Tokyo Snapshot

## Local Info

A blinking, blaring string of neon signs and jumbo-trons coats the thick night crowd beneath in pale light. The human mass collides and weaves through itself, finally clustering at the turnstiles of Shinjuku station. A girl dressed as a French maid hands fliers to gawking, photo-snapping Akihabara geeks. Tucked away in a winding web of tumble-down back alleys, a tiny, bustling bar serves up salted grilled fish and overflowing cups of cold sake to smoking patrons with ties loosened and voices raised. The click of high heels precedes a smartly dressed woman toting bags concealing immaculately packaged purchases down tree-lined Omotesando, her profile reflected sharply in the dark glass behind.

A buttoned-down business man on his lunch break tosses a coin, claps his hands together, bows, and prays at a shrine just off the congested road. He sits at a nearby bench and unwraps an ingeniously wrapped onigiri, quietly enjoying his lunch and periodically checking his cell phone. A lone soft drink vending machine stands sentinel at the head of a rice field on the edge of town, its flickering light illuminating the greenery beneath. A narrow neighborhood marketplace hosts a chorus of welcoming shouts, as vendors hawk fresh produce, seafood, pickles, and other specialties. Large, brilliant, sumptuously red apples fetch a price of around \$5 each, while squids still wriggling go for next to nothing.

In a metropolis of nearly 13 million, these are just a handful of images to be found among a nearly indefinable network of loosely connected neighborhoods and cities. A train ride in any direction through Tokyo reveals one crowded urban center after another, each offering a different take on the city's unique culture and indomitable spirit.

### Akihabara

The "Electric City," Akihabara appeals to the otaku (geek) crowd with its gigantic electronics outlets, manga and toy stores, and maid cafes. Akihabara is a necessary stop for anybody hoping to catch a glimpse of high nerd culture. Head down the narrow alley under the JR train line tracks and you'll be in an uber-otaku paradise: piles

upon piles of switches, transistors, tubes, LEDs, and anything else the electronics enthusiast needs for his tinkering.

### Asakusa

Tokyo's historic heart, Asakusa is home to the impressive Senso-ji temple, among many other cultural sites. The whole place feels a little bit like Disneyland, with everything done up to preserve an overall historic feel. Asakusa is the place in Tokyo to stock up on all those traditional trinkets and crafts you'll want to bring home. A day in Asakusa should be spent perusing street stalls while nibbling on traditional snacks made fresh in front of you.

### Central Tokyo

The area within and right around the JR Yamanote train loop is a mish-mash of government and corporate offices, landmarks (like Tokyo Tower and the Imperial Palace), and shopping districts (like Tokyo Mid-Town) that can be best described as Central Tokyo. It's the heart of Tokyo, hosting some of the city's most important sights, even if it's difficult to pin a single characteristic on this urban core.

### East Tokyo

Across the Sumida River, the eastern swath of Tokyo is largely a residential area. But, that doesn't mean there aren't plenty of important sights to take in. Tokyo evolved and grew from east to west, meaning that this is one of the best places to experience the everyday life of old Edo. Fittingly, Ryogoku – the country's most important sumo stadium – is here, as well as an abundance of traditional shops and restaurants.

### Ebisu and Daikanyama

Although they run right into each other around Ebisu station, these two hip neighborhoods present two decidedly different takes on cool. Sophisticated Ebisu goes modern, with the Sky Walk leading from the station to pristine Yebisu Garden Place, where the Yebisu beer museum – and its excellent tasting room – is not to be missed. It's also the location of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography. Many of Tokyo's finest restaurants call Ebisu home, and there are plenty of gourmet options that won't break the bank.

### Harajuku and Aoyama

Does your mental picture of Tokyo include gothic lolitas and cosplay kids? Then Harajuku on a Sunday is probably the place for you. It's the mecca for Tokyo's vibrant youth culture. The Jingu Bashi bridge connecting Harajuku with adjacent Yoyogi Park (Tokyo's largest) is the main gathering point for all those alternative kids with a mainstream cause. Yoyogi Park is also a wonderful patch of green in a notoriously brown and grey city, and is a kind of magnet for congregations of every alternative subculture known to man, from visual kei to rockabilly.

### Ikebukuro

Ikebukuro is one of Tokyo's Big 3 centers, along with Shinjuku and Shibuya. Compared with the other two, however, Ikebukuro is best described as "homey," lacking some of the sheen and veneer of Shinjuku. However, Ikebukuro station is the second-busiest in Japan and there are several excellent shopping areas – like Sunshine City – that provide plenty of entertainment for people just arriving from the outskirts of town.

### Odaiba and Ariake

The island of Odaiba was originally built as a defense against General Perry's Black Ships in 1853, but now serves as an ultra-modern playground for the city's residents and tourists alike. Huge shopping complexes, convention centers, and excellent museums (like the Miraikan) draw big crowds here on the weekends. The Fuji Television studios are here, as well as the Tokyo Big Sight convention center. It's worth the trip for the view from the monorail across Rainbow Bridge alone.

### Roppongi

Roppongi's line-up of bars and nightclubs is the main reason to come here. It offers a surprisingly western take on night life, and foreigner-friendly establishments abound. This also means that it's the only place in Tokyo where you're likely to get hassled by club employees trying to get you into their place. But, Roppongi is an unmatched mecca for all-night festivities in a city that can hit the sack surprisingly early.

### Setagaya

Setagaya is the most populous of Tokyo's 23 special wards, and the large area is home to some fun, unique neighborhoods,

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

like Sanganjaya and Shimo-Kitazawa. Setagaya is known mainly as an upscale residential district, and it's a good place to take in everyday Tokyo life. Hop on the Setagaya Line streetcar – one of only two left in the city – for a trip back in time to a more peaceful, laid back Tokyo. Expansive Komazawa Park, built for the 1964 Olympics, is also here.

### Shibuya

Shibuya buzzes with energy from the famous crowds of people swarming Hachiko crossing. Center Gai – the neighborhood's dominant shopping street – showcases Shibuya's funky feel, with shops like Condomania and Tokyu Hands catering to hip patrons. Get lost on the streets radiating from the station and find a bar or club that suits your taste; you're sure to find it in Shibuya's eclectic mix.

### Shinjuku

Although it straddles Tokyo's western fringes, Shinjuku can in many ways be considered the city's center. The busiest train station in the world is here, as is a plethora of the finest restaurants, hotels, and bars to be found. Shinjuku gyoen(garden) is arguably the most beautiful in Tokyo, as are the neighborhood's men and women dressed for a night on the town. Nightlife is plentiful here, and done in a decidedly Japanese style, especially if you head to the more traditional Kabukicho and Golden Gai areas.

### Ueno

Ueno is Tokyo's eastern hub, offering dining, drinking, and entertainment with a slightly more traditional tilt. Ueno Park is here, home to a complex of museums and natural attractions that can't be beat in Tokyo. Stick to the side alleys and back streets, and you'll get a taste of the old Tokyo, complete with yakitori stalls, rickety izakayas, and discount shops.

### West Tokyo

West Tokyo, like East Tokyo, is very much a residential district – perfect if you want to get a look at how Tokyoites live and play every day. You'll find acres of pedestrian arcades, jam-packed with tiny boutiques, traditional markets, and casual eateries, to explore. The homes here are decidedly more trendy than those in the east, and neighborhoods like Kichijoji play host to shopping streets that let you take a glance

at the everyday lives of Tokyo's twenty-something residents.

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## History

Though archaeological studies have concluded that the islands of Japan were already inhabited several millennia before Christ, the history of Tokyo is relatively recent. It does not start until 1603 AD, when Tokugawa Ieyasu proclaimed himself shogun and moved the seat of government from Kyoto, home of the imperial court for nearly 1,000 years. Edo(the name of old Tokyo) began as nothing much more than a scattering of villages around Ieyasu's castle, site of the present Imperial Palace. It was only in the latter half of the 19th century that it took on the name Tokyo, meaning"Eastern Capital," to distinguish it from Kyoto in the west. Under Ieyasu's rule, Japan was unified for the first time, putting an end to bloody wars between rival factions. In 1615, Ieyasu's armies annihilated the Toyotomi clan, the last opposition to his absolute power. Ieyasu's successors kept a tight grip on the government, enacting the closed-door policy in 1639, which imposed a total ban on contact with the outside world. From then on, until the advent of Commodore Perry in 1853, Japan remained isolated, save for closely monitored transactions with Chinese and Dutch traders.

Ironically, the Tokugawas' one-party rule led to political stability. Following its turbulent past, the country settled down to a welcome period of peace and prosperity. Edo grew and flourished in what is known as the Edo Period(1603-1867), and by the mid-18th century it was inhabited by over a million people, topping both London and Paris. Though the imperial court continued to reside in Kyoto, Edo gradually evolved into a bustling center of commerce and industry.

Ieyasu introduced a four-tiered class system, topped by the samurai or warrior class, which greatly reduced the influence of the old nobility. Nurtured by the patronage of the rich merchant class, new popular art forms emerged, such as kabuki

andukiyo-e. Comparable to the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe, this shift from the court and aristocracy enabled the citizens to express themselves in art. It is said that popular Japanese culture has its roots in the Edo Period.

It is amazing that the Tokugawa shogunate retained the reigns of government virtually unopposed over such a long period of time, but corruption and incompetence finally led to its disintegration. Also, in the latter half of the 19th century, Western powers were increasingly calling on Japan to open its doors to trade. By the time the"black ships" of Commodore Mathew Perry steamed into Uraga in 1853, the greatly weakened Tokugawa shogunate could muster very little resistance.

This marked a crucial turning point in Japanese history. Not only did it open Japan to external trade, but it also ushered in the country's rapid Westernization. Following the resignation of the last Tokugawa shogun, the whole country, headed by Emperor Meiji, plunged into a frantic drive to catch up with the West. With full powers restored to the emperor, the court was moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, making it the official capital of the country.

Even today vestiges of the Meiji Restoration(1868-1912) can still be found in Tokyo. The present education system is based on reforms introduced during this period, and today many school children still wear uniforms patterned after European models from the late 19th century. Both the Diet(Parliament) and Bank of Japan were established during this period, and today these two institutions continue to dictate the political and financial affairs of the country. Even baseball, the most popular sport in Japan today, was introduced during this time.

Though greatly devastated by fires following the Great Kanto Earthquake(1923) and again during the Second World War(1939-1945), Tokyo was soon on its feet again, spearheading what has been called Japan's postwar economic miracle. Under the occupation forces commanded by General Douglas

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

MacArthur, the city witnessed the writing of a new constitution that introduced the separation of religion and state, universal suffrage, human rights and the renouncement of war. With this new political and social order, Tokyoites, and the Japanese as a whole, focused all their energies on economic recovery and development. The result is the Tokyo of today: a cosmopolitan city that is truly the country's political, economic and cultural center, and which plays a leading role in global affairs. No small feat for a place that was once just a scattering of small feudal villages!

©

### Hotel Insights

Most major four-star and five-star hotels are located conveniently within walking distance of Tokyo's major commercial and business centers, as well as most other places of interest around the city, such as the Ginza, Akasaka-mitsuke, Shinagawa, Ebisu, Shinjuku, Ikebukuro and Roppongi. Some of these hotels are locally-owned, others belong to global hotel chains, but all provide the highest standards of international hotel service. Rooms are usually smaller than in other cities, since space is at a premium in Tokyo, but you can be sure your stay will be a very comfortable and pleasant one. Most of the staff speak English and provide service with that unique Japanese attention to detail.

#### Ginza

Take in some serious 70s kitsch at the Hotel Alcyone, a reasonably priced and comfortable hotel that has preserved all of its gaudy décor from this era. Check out the nearby Kabuki-za theater for some interesting entertainment. For the traveler on a budget, one hotel that won't cost you much is the Tokyo Hotel Urashima, and since it's located right in the middle of the Ginza shopping oasis, you'll have plenty of places to spend the money you saved on your bill. Also close to many shops and restaurants is the Ginza Nikko Hotel, which is slightly more expensive but definitely doable if you're on a budget.

#### Roppongi

It's good to be based in this district if you have partying in mind; you'll find a ton of trouble in Roppongi. Hotel Okura ranks among the top ten hotels in the world. You certainly get the best here: a choice of deluxe rooms, a salon, spa, photo studio, and even a dentist, while the Roppongi Prince Hotel, with its iconic wishbone-shaped pool offers a quiet place to escape the hustle and bustle right in the heart of this fast-paced district. Another option, the Hotel Ibis, is a more reasonably-priced place to stay, and just as relaxing as its more upscale counterparts.

#### Akasaka-mitsuke

The modern and very plush Hotel New Otani has a rooftop rose garden and a museum that is free to all guests, but for those who don't quite have the budget for such luxuries, not to worry; budget hotels do exist in Tokyo. Try the Asia Center of Japan. Rooms come with a bath or without, and there is an in-house cafeteria dining hall that serves up cheap, tasty eats. Another less expensive option, the Toshi Center Hotel, is set up to accommodate business travelers, offering conference rooms and banquet halls, but the rooms are comfortable as well, and a few dining options available.

#### Shinjuku

The world's busiest train station is located in this district, along with the various businesses that comprise Tokyo's major commercial center. The Hotel Kent is situated close to many bars, restaurants and large arcades, perfect if you're in the mood to stay out all night. The English-speaking staff at Star Hotel Tokyo give guests all the basics to ensure that their stay is easy and comfortable. Looking for accommodations that are as lavish as they are conveniently located? Then check-in to the Park Hyatt Tokyo or the Hilton Tokyo, both of which are sure to exceed your expectations for service and amenities.

#### Ikebukuro

Several large department stores selling everything from cosmetics and hosiery

to electronics and video games can be found amongst the bright, neon lights of this district, and with the popular Sunshine City close by, why wouldn't you want to find a hotel in Ikebukuro? The moderately-priced Ark Hotel Tokyo provides guests with Western-style accommodations and a friendly, English-speaking staff, while Hotel Grand City is an even less-expensive option for those looking to be close to Sunshine City. The Kimi Ryokan has rooms with tatami mats, if you're looking for a stay with traditional atmosphere, but be sure to book in advance, as rooms at this inexpensive inn sellout quickly during peak tourist seasons.

#### Ebisu

This is also a popular spot among travelers looking to stay close to Roppongi and Shibuya. Named for the Yebisu brand ale created by the Japan Beer Brewery, today you can visit the Yebisu Garden Place, which houses a free museum dedicated to the history of the Brewery. Nearby, the Japanese-style rooms of the Sheraton Miyako Hotel Tokyo offer a nice change from the ordinary, or try the beautiful, 30s-era Gajoen Kanko Hotel, which offers traditional, stylish rooms and top-notch service.

#### Shinagawa

Moderately-priced hotels in this area include the Shinagawa Prince Hotel, which has a pool, karaoke bar and an in-hotel cinema, as well as its own Aqua Stadium, which has aquariums, dolphin shows and even a roller coaster. Quite an amount of amenities for the price! Budget travelers with a taste for an authentic Japanese ryokan experience can check-in to the conveniently-located Ryokan Sansuiso, while high-end aficionados should look to the Dai-ichi Hotel Tokyo Seafort, a friendly hotel that offers views of Tokyo Bay and a choice of three restaurants, all with large bay windows and lovely, modern decor.

#### Kanda/ Ochanomizu

The Sakura Hotel or the New Central Hotel are good for those looking for very inexpensive accommodations. Somewhat

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

spartan, with shared bathrooms (bring your own towel) and cramped quarters, these lodgings make up for their lack of amenities by often being as cheerful as they are cheap. Friendly and homey, their eclectic common rooms are the melting pot for countless travelers from around the world. The Hotel Juraku is another no-frills option.

©

### Restaurants Insights

Whether your budget calls for a cheap bowl of noodles, or a melt-in-your-mouth Chateaubriand for two, you are certain to find food and drink to suit your taste in Tokyo. Nepali, Persian, Greek, Cajun...anything goes. For a price, of course. Korean restaurants are represented well, second to Japanese in the capital, followed closely by Chinese, then American, French, and Thai. Tokyo also has a wide range of Indian restaurants and Italian cuisine.

#### Nihonbashi

The Royal Park hotel houses Kei-ka-en, which specializes in Cantonese dishes and offers many fresh, seasonal items on their menu. Several floors up, you'll find Palazzo, which switches things up with its eclectic French cuisine and large wine selection. Also, be sure to sit near a window to take in the stunning views of Tokyo at night. Dishes from all over the world are served at L' Aventure. Try the spaghetti with urchin cream sauce for something truly unique, or go to Genjiko for a traditional Japanese dinner that includes tempura, shabu shabu and a nice glass of sake.

#### Ginza

You'll find some quality Chinese and Thai at Coca near the famous Seibu department store. If you find yourself in the mood for different kinds of sake, you have to stop at Sake No Ana, which translates into "The Sake Hole." 130 different kinds are available for tasting here, and there is also a menu of classic Japanese dishes. Italian may seem out of place in Tokyo, but La Fontevini knows how to do it well. They

specialize in fresh, local seafood, but have affordable pizza and pasta options also. Alain Ducasse's BEIGE TOKYO gets its style partly from its location on the top floor of the Chanel Ginza Building. French food is served in a sleek, modern décor.

#### Shibuya

The American-Caribbean flair of Lahaina definitely sticks out in this city. It's well known for the quality of its universally-comforting Cajun food. There's also a Turkish place called Vahsi At, which has belly dancers at night. Belgo is a fine Belgian pub with over one hundred different brews to choose from and a good selection of light meals. Barbacoa embraces the spirit of Carnival with its vibrant dining room and eclectic Brazilian menu. Meals are served informally; you can pick what you'd like from a large buffet.

#### Shinjuku

For a pleasing Thai meal, try Ban Kirao or Ban Thai. Soak up the earthy ambiance of AUREOLE, which serves healthy, contemporary food that will satisfy anyone looking for a macrobiotic meal, like fresh vegetable tortillas. Esperia is known for their large selection of cheeses; different kinds even decorate the dining room. You can incorporate any kind you like into one of their many fine Italian dishes. You have to try dim sum when you're in Tokyo, and Tokyo Daihanten is famous for its inventive and delicious dumplings. Nagani is a bar and restaurant that serves Burmese food in a jungle-themed dining room.

#### Harajuku

The Bombay Cafe combines Indian, Thai and Mexican on its eclectic menu, while Cay offers exotic food in a warmly lit atmosphere; try the lobster in coconut sauce. Aoyama Sakura is another very cozy and intimate place to go, where you can sit in a lush, dark décor and enjoy some traditional Japanese food and a nice glass of sake. For something unique, check out Jap Cho Ok, where you'll find Korean dishes that cater to vegetarians and meat-eaters alike; try the special liquor made from ginseng for a late-night boost. The

seafood and wine bar is the big draw at Underground Mr. Zoogunzoo, where you can dine in a warm, earthy atmosphere.

#### Roppongi

Phothai Down Under is just what it sounds like: Australian-Thai fusion. You can get a tasty steak here, and some nice Australian wine. The buffet during the week is also worth checking out. To the delight of many Western tourists, the Hard Rock Cafe is located here, so if you want a good hamburger and some rock and roll nostalgia, you know where to go. Salsa Sudada is a South American bar and restaurant with more to offer than just great food and margaritas; they have regular dance classes that will fine-tune your merengue dance moves.

#### Akasaka

Anna Miller's stays open 24 hours, and serves breakfast around the clock. The best thing about this place is their wide array of classic pie flavors; everything from cherry to key lime is represented, and they all evoke a feeling of home. Trader Vic's specializes in flavorful Polynesian meals with colorful ingredients like coconut and bananas, and a wine list with choices that originate mostly in California. At the Rib Room, you'll be able to find different cuts of steak cooked to perfection, like Matsuzaka Beef.

#### Ikebukuro

Laten is an Italian restaurant and crêperie that will give you a large portion of whatever you order, and you can top it all off with a decadent chocolate crepe. Watch your meal being prepared at Fukusuke, where the sushi is known for its freshness and quality. The delicious Okinawa-inspired food at Miyarabi is accompanied with some skilled dancers on certain nights; you can spend an entire evening here and never be bored.

©

### Nightlife Insights

If a contest were held for the World's Most Entertaining City, Tokyo would certainly rank among the finalists. Night and day, on

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

a shoestring budget or with a big expense account, you can find fun on every corner.

### Observation Decks

Those who enjoy sightseeing may want to begin their Tokyo experience with a view from the top. The best observation decks are located at Sunshine 60 in Ikebukuro, the Municipal Government Building in Shinjuku, the World Trade Center in Hamamatsucho, and Tokyo Tower in Shiba. Whether to view the city's magnificent, sprawling landscape by day, or dazzling light-covered visage by night, each of these places offers a very different view of this iconic metropolis, but all are sure to have an equally stunning panorama that you won't soon forget.

### Landmarks

Perhaps more than any other Japanese city, Tokyo is jam-packed with famous landmarks, each of which offers unique insights into the culture, history and heart of the Japanese people. Among its most notable spots for sightseers are the seismically active island nation's first modern skyscraper, the Kasumigaseki Building, that houses the heart of the nation's government, and the Tokyo Dome (the so-called "Big Egg") at Korakuen, home of the national champion Yomiura Giants baseball team, as well as the popular Tokyo Dome City. At night, the colorfully lit Rainbow Bridge that spans Tokyo Bay is also not to be missed.

For those looking for sightseeing that's a little more cultured, the Imperial Palace grounds are located at the very center of both the city and Japanese cultural identity, while the 100-year old Ueno Zoo to the northeast is great for kids and adults alike. And, of course, always on the southwestern horizon is the picturesque Mt. Fuji, the most iconic feature of the Japanese landscape.

### Gardens & Parks

If you're looking to get away from the city, there are many beautiful parks and gardens to visit, even in this most densely packed of all major Japanese cities. The Hama Rikyu Garden and Kiyosumi Garden are both beautifully ornate and dotted with

ponds, sculpted bonsai trees and exotic flowers. Hibiya Park is located just outside Ginza, while Tokyo's largest, Ueno Park, is home to several museums, temples and even a zoo that is popular with children. Even amidst the brightly lit districts and thoroughfares, finding a spot for quiet repose in Tokyo is not a problem.

### Amusement Parks

For those who require more active entertainment, the city teems with amusement parks and recreation centers. Tokyo Disneyland is the biggest attraction to the east; Toshimaen with its water park and carnival zone stakes out the west. At mid-town is Korakuen, featuring roller coasters, parachute rides, off-track betting and much more.

For family adventure indoors, there is an enclosed amusement park at Sanrio Puroland in Tama City, or take the kids out to the National Children's Castle in Omotesando.

### Museums

Thanks to an incredible array of museums and galleries, Tokyo can be extremely entertaining even on a rainy day. The two major museums are arguably the National Museum of Western Art and the National Museum of Japanese History. Both will keep you occupied for the day. There are also a number of small museums that specialize in unique artistic forms. From the Bicycle Culture Center and the Museum of Tin Toys, to the Iris Button Museum and the Kite Museum, each houses an interesting collection of pieces that will teach you something new.

### Cinema & Theater

Of course, there are cinemas all around the city, some new and many old, each different and interesting. Cine Front in Shibuya, Nichigeki Plex in Yurakucho and Tower Hall Funabori all show first-run road-show films, as well as art movies and classics.

Tokyo also has its own opera house, a Shakespearean playhouse, and many venues for dance, such as the beautiful Spiral Hall, or the more modern Session House and Space Zero. Huge concert

halls like the Ariake Coliseum, On Air East, Tokyo Opera City and Zepp Tokyo have a regular schedule of live acts ranging from rock bands to orchestral quartets. In the evening you can sample some unique indoor relaxation at the National Noh Theater in Sendagaya, Kabuki-za in Ginza, the Puk Puppet Theater in Yoyogi or the Theater Tram for contemporary dance and dramatic performances.

### Sports

Sports buffs will be happy to find all their favorite pastimes here. Professional baseball, sumo, soccer and volleyball are the major spectator sports in Tokyo, and betting is allowed on horse races, cycling and speedboat racing. Toshimaen is a water-themed entertainment complex, where visiting teams from the USA come regularly for exhibition football, basketball and baseball.

Rugby and tennis, ice hockey and boxing, all have their seasons here, and many of the world's top athletes make regular stops in Tokyo for track and field events. There are marathons for amateurs and pros alike, and locations abound for bowling, golf, billiards, darts, mah-jong and even ballroom dancing; check out the Shinagawa Prince Sports Complex and Tokyo Dome City to get started exploring the city's many sporting options.

### Nightlife

Additionally, what would a metropolis be without an exciting club scene to party the night away? Serving up various kinds of popular and underground music, an array of different clubs around the city are open all night on the weekends to give clubbers a healthy dose of nightlife action.

Located on the outskirts of Tokyo and certainly the most sizable in comparison, Ageha is one of the top venues for fans of the electronic genre. However, if you're looking for something closer to the heart of the city with the same taste of music in mind, Womb is an excellent place to catch top notch DJs and sounds, while anyone who's looking for a good hip hop club should step over to Club Harlem.

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

Alternatively, clubs such as Flower and Muse are good spots for all-mix selections and international crowds. Don't like dancing the night away, when you could be playing video games until late into the night? Sega Joypolis in Odaiba is for you.

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### Things to Do Insights

Considering that Tokyo covers some 700 square miles and is home to over 12 million people (the daytime population greatly exceeds that), it is all the more remarkable that the city's public transportation system is second to none. This can be put down to planning (construction was concomitant with the post-war rebuilding of the city), timing (there was a certain urgency in showcasing the capital at the 1964 Olympics), and the fact that the Japanese are sticklers for order and discipline.

The centerpiece of Tokyo's train system is the overland Yamanote Line, begun in 1885 and completed in 1925. The Yamanote (sometimes shortened to Yamate) comprises some 30 stops in a loop linking most of the city's major centers: Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, Ueno, Tokyo, Shinagawa and Shibuya. It is fast, clean, efficient, safe, and invariably runs on time. The Yamanote is part of Japan Railways (JR) East, a vast network of tracks spread out over eastern Japan. Because the transit system is so easy for outsiders to navigate, we will organize our tours around the major lines.

#### Tour One: Shinjuku

Shinjuku is a district with a flavor all its own. The most remarkable of its landmarks are Buddhist temples and shrines that can be found in a fair concentration throughout the area. One example of the plentiful shrines in the area is the Hanazono Jinja Shrine. This Inari shrine is located in a bustling commercial district and is distinctive as the site of the annual Festival of the Fowls. Two of the temples of note in Shinjuku are the Taisoji Temple and the Tenryuji Temple. The former is known for having two statues of Buddha: one to protect good children and one to scare away naughty children. The latter is known for being almost 400 years old. Another spot worth a stop in this district is the Shinjuku Gyoen, a former Imperial garden, now famous for its 1500 cherry blossoms trees, which paint quite the pretty picture each spring.

#### Tour Two: Ueno

Another district that is both easy to get to on Tokyo's metro system and a great pleasure to visit is the Ueno district. There are so many things to see here that it's hard to choose just a handful. The Ikeda Mansion Main Gate is a wonderful place to begin a journey through this area. The gate was constructed by a wealthy Tokyo family before 1868 and has been at its current location since 1954. A district within a district, Ameyoko is a great place to walk through because many people believe it's one way to get a real taste of Tokyo. Being at the terminus of the Ueno metro line, it's the jumping off point for those that come in from outlying areas. Another world-class sight to see is Sogakudo, where you can see Japan's only, and one of the world's only, concert hall pipe organs, which operates by a special compressed air mechanism. One place in Ueno you won't want to miss is the Ueno Zoo, which houses three famous pandas, a handful of Siberian Tiger kittens, and many other animals, as well as a children's petting zoo.

#### Tour Three: Shinagawa

Every district in Tokyo has its fair share of temples, some new and some old. If you want to immerse yourself in Japanese culture, paying a visit to each neighborhood's favorite shrines and temples is a good way to start. Shinagawa has three such locations, as well as two other popular places of interest. The Ebara Jinja Shrine is noteworthy as being the possible cause of the Meiji Emperor taking up residence in Tokyo, as he visited the shrine just before doing so. Another Meiji period shrine in this district is the Shinagawa Jinja Shrine. It sits atop ancient lava flows from Mount Fuji and is more heavily adorned than most other Jinja shrines. For history and culture visit the Tokaiji Temple. It was built by a Tokugawa shogun in the 16th or 17th century and was a major Buddhist complex until the mid-19th century. There are still at least two places left to see in Shinagawa, and both are water-focused. First is the Shinagawa Aquarium, which features an underwater glass tunnel that gives you a true marine experience. It has over 300 species of marine life and has deep sea and shallow sea aquariums. After all that, you'll need to relax, and the perfect place to do that in Shinagawa is at Kaisuiyu, a Roman-style

bath house. Kaisuiyu offers three different bathing options and provides everything you'll need for your visit there.

#### Tour Four: Shibuya

The ideal place to start a tour of Shibuya is at a statue that is considered the meeting place for the neighborhood. The Hachiko Statue depicts the loyal Akita that belonged to Professor Ueno of the University of Tokyo. The story is that Hachiko walked to work with his master every day, and when his master died, he continued to wait for him. If you would like to see Shibuya's shrines, there are two to visit and both are especially of interest to fans of history and lore. The Yoyogi Hachimangu Shrine is the site of an unearthed hut believed to be built around 8000 BCE. A model of the hut and pieces of the actual hut are still on view there. Another shrine in Shibuya, also associated with the Minamoto family, is the Konno Hachimangu Shrine. It is notable for its cherry tree, which is reputed to be at least 900 years old and sprouts different numbers of petals on its blossoms. The Shibuya district has two museums, one devoted to the arts and one devoted to riches. The Koga Memorial Museum is devoted to Masao Koga, who was a composer known for blending Western and Japanese melodies. The gardens alone at the Koga Museum are worth a visit. The other museum in Shibuya is devoted to treasures of the past. The Meiji Jingu Treasure Museum is a great place to learn about Japanese Imperial history. The museum contains many artifacts from Japan's richest period, such as the Imperial Carriage and several items of clothing worn by the Emperor and Empress on special occasions.

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### Travel Tips

#### Getting There

##### By Air

Tokyo's Narita International Airport (+81 476 32 2802/ <http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/>) offers service on numerous airlines to destinations around the globe.

Its terminals house the following airlines:

Aero Mexico (+1 800 237 6639/ <http://www.aeromexico.com>)

## Tokyo Snapshot continued

Air Canada(+1 800 776 3000/ <http://www.aircanada.ca>)

Air France(+81 476 32 7710/ <http://www.airfrance.com/>)

Air Japan(+81 120 02 9120/ <http://www.air-japan.co.jp/>)

Air New Zealand(+81 476 34 8388/ <http://www.airnz.com/>)

Air Nippon(+81 120 029 333/ <http://www.air-nippon.co.jp/>)

All Nippon Airways(+81 354 35 0333/ <http://svc.ana.co.jp/eng/index.html>)

American Airlines(+ 1 800 433 7300/ <http://www.aa.com>)

British Airways(+81 335 93 8811/ <http://www.british-airways.com/>)

Cathay Pacific(+81 476 32 7650/ <http://www.cathaypacific.com/>)

China Airlines(+81 355 20 0333/ <http://www.china-airlines.com/us/index.htm>)

Continental(+1 800 525 0280/ <http://www.continental.com>)

Delta(+1 800 221 1212/ <http://www.delta.com>)

J-Air(+81 120 25 5971/ <http://www.jair.co.jp/>)

JALways(+81 354 60 0511/ <http://www.jalways.co.jp/>)

Japan Airlines(+81 354 60 0511/ <http://www.jal.co.jp/e/index.html>)

KLM(+81 476 32 5720/ <http://www.klm.com/>)

Korean Air(+81 476 32 7561/ <http://www.koreanair.com/>)

Lufthansa(+81 476 34 8130/ <http://www.lufthansa.com/>)

Northwest(+1 800 225 2525/ <http://www.nwa.com>)

Thai Airways(+81 476 34 8329/ <http://www.thaiair.com/>)

United(+1 800 241 6522/ <http://www.ual.com>)

US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/ <http://www.usairways.com>)

Virgin Atlantic Airways(+81 476 30 3611/ <http://www.virgin-atlantic.com/>)

Tokyo is also serviced by Haneda Airport(<http://www.tokyo-airport-bldg.co.jp/en/>). For travel information, visit their website.

There are a number of transit services that provide transportation from Narita to Tokyo and destinations throughout Japan. Bus services include:

Airport Limousine Bus(+81 336 65 7220/ <http://www.limousinebus.co.jp/e/>) Keisei Bus(+81 354 38 8511/ <http://www.keiseibus.co.jp>) Odakyu Bus(+81 42 734 5211/ <http://www.odakyubus.co.jp/>) Tokyu Bus(+81 44 988 7979/ <http://www.tokyubus.co.jp/>)

### Taxi Companies

Jet Partner(+81 478 73 7291/ <http://www.ckt-group.co.jp/>) Jet Harmony(+81 120 81 8952) Sky Gate Shuttle(+81 355 47 5667/ <http://www.tokyomk.com/>) Limousine Liner(+81 338 20 3255)

Be advised that services available in English are limited and visitors should plan accordingly.

### Car Rental Companies

Hertz has 18 locations throughout the greater Tokyo area. See <http://www.hertz.com/> for locations, pricing, and online reservations.

National Car Rental also has 18 locations throughout the greater Tokyo Area. See <http://www.nationalcar.com/> for locations, pricing, and online reservations.

### By Train

Narita Airport can be reached by JR East line on the Narita Express(+81 334 23 0111/ <http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/>) or Keisei Railways(<http://www.keisei.co.jp/>)

[keisei/tetudou/keisei\\_us/top.html](http://www.keisei/tetudou/keisei_us/top.html)). These companies also provide transportation to and from Tokyo Station.

### By Bus

JR Bus Kanto(<http://www.jrbuskanto.co.jp/>), Keisei Bus(+81 354 38 8511/ <http://www.keiseibus.co.jp/>), Odakyu Bus(+81 42 734 5211/ <http://www.odakyubus.co.jp/>), Tokyu Bus(+81 44 988 7979/ <http://www.tokyubus.co.jp/>), and a number of other local providers offer transportation to destinations throughout Japan.

### By Car

The Higashi Kanto Expressway, the Shin-Kuko Expressway, and Route 295 are easily accessible to Narita Airport.

### Getting Around

Tokyo is serviced by an efficient and comprehensive subway system. The Tokyo Metro(+81 338 37 7111/ <http://www.tokyometro.go.jp/e/index.html>) offers a variety of fare tickets including the TTA Subway One-day open ticket.

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## Fun Facts

1. Originally a small fishing village known as Edo, Tokyo's current name means "Eastern Capital." Native Tokyoites may still call themselves "Edokko" (children of Edo).
2. The Imperial Palace is totally closed to the public, except on New Year's Day and the Emperor's birthday (Dec. 23rd), when he gives a speech to his loyal subjects.
3. Streets in Tokyo, for the most part, don't have names. Instead, addresses consist of a ward name (Shibuya, Shinjuku, Akihabara, etc.) followed by three numbers representing continuously smaller areas of the city.

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