

Tokyo 東京



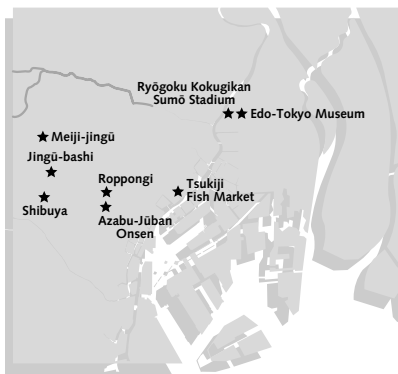
You may know Tokyo as glamorous film star, cauldron of technological innovations, self-made capital, funky fashionista, metropolis that runs like clockwork, producer of unique pop culture and city that breeds toddlers on the fast track and salarymen driven to subway suicide. Up close, it's still fascinating, but take a deep breath and step out of Shinjuku station knowing that at street level, all you need to do is tap one shoulder from the swiftly power-walking stream of pedestrians to receive a curious smile and gracious assistance if you need it. For even in this modern megalopolis, there remains a distinct, tangible sense of things inherently Japanese.

Finding a superficial resemblance to old Japan in Tokyo requires scrutiny. If you take an oblique view, you'll find that much of the city's contemporary culture descends from old traditions. The manga that's captivating today's youth in Madrid can trace its origins to Edo-era *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints of the 'floating world') that inspired the *Japonisme* work of van Gogh in the 1880s. In a city so efficient that you could set your watch by the subway schedules displayed on LED screens, its nameless streets and alleys make the address system medieval by comparison.

And therein lies the contradictory nature of this city that's constantly pushing and pulling on itself towards reinvention. Its massive scale means a stunning abundance of experiences, but the most memorable undoubtedly lie in the meticulous, tiny details that whisper of tradition.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dodge flying fish on the floor of **Tsukiji Fish Market** (p132) and feast on early-morning sushi
- Attend the seasonal spectacle of *sumō* at **Ryōgoku Kokugikan Sumō Stadium** (p178) for salt-slinging, belly-slapping and solemn ritual
- Stroll around the grounds of **Meiji-jingū** (p137), Tokyo's most impressive Shintō shrine
- Snap shots of goth Lolitas at **Jingū-bashi** (p138), who will pose and preen for your photographic pleasure
- See how the Edo-half lived at the wonderful **Edo-Tokyo Museum** (p142)
- Get down with your funky self, or simply observe the wildlife, in the nocturnal environs of **Roppongi** (p173)
- Stop at the Hachikō statue, shop pop culture and end your sojourn with a drink in **Shibuya** (p138)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ POPULATION: 12.56 MILLION

HISTORY

Tokyo is something of a miracle, a city that rose from the ashes of WWII to become one of the world's leading economic centres.

Tokyo was formerly known as Edo (literally 'Gate of the River'), so named for its location at the mouth of Sumida-gawa. The city first became significant in 1603, when Tokugawa Ieyasu established his *shōgunate* (military government) there. Edo grew into a city from which the Tokugawa clan governed the whole of Japan. By the late 18th century it had become the most populous city in the world. When the authority of the emperor was restored in 1868, the capital moved from Kyoto to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo (Eastern Capital).

After 250 years of isolation, Tokyo began transforming itself into a modern metropolis. Remarkably, it has succeeded in achieving this despite two major disasters that each practically levelled the city – the Kantō Earthquake and ensuing fires of 1923, and the US air raids of 1944 and 1945.

After the giddy heights of Japan's Bubble Economy of the 80s burst in the 90s, Tokyo has spent much of the interim recovering from resulting recession. But these days, the economy is holding steady. Apart from economics, Tokyo's cultural exports continue to influence the global scene, with its fashion, musical genres, illustration and *anime*, quirky technologies, and uniquely Japanese game shows thriving at home and abroad.

ORIENTATION

Tokyo is a vast conurbation spreading out across the Kantō Plain from Tokyo Bay (Tokyo-wan). The central metropolitan area is made up of 23 *ku* (wards), while outlying areas are divided into 27 separate *shi* (cities), a *gun* (county) and four island-districts. Nearly everything of interest to visitors lies on or near the JR Yamanote line, the rail loop that circles central Tokyo. Areas not on the Yamanote line – like Roppongi, Tsukiji and Asakusa – are nonetheless within easy reach, as the central city is crisscrossed by Tokyo's excellent subway system.

In Edo times, Yamanote referred to 'Up-town': the estates and residences of feudal barons, military aristocracy and other Edo elite, in the hilly regions of the city. Shitamachi or 'Downtown' was home to the working classes, merchants and artisans. Even today

the distinction persists. The areas west of the Imperial Palace (Kōkyō) are more modernised, housing the commercial and business centres of modern Tokyo; the areas east of the palace, like Asakusa and Ueno, retain more of the character of old Edo.

A trip around the JR Yamanote line makes a good introduction to the city. You might start at Tokyo station, the first point of arrival for many travellers. Near to the station are the Marunouchi and Ōtemachi office districts and the high-class shopping district of Ginza. Continuing north from Tokyo station brings you to Akihabara, the discount electronics centre of Tokyo. Further along is Ueno, home to many of the city's museums. After rounding the top of the loop you descend into Ikebukuro, a shopping and entertainment district. A few stops further on is Shinjuku, a massive shopping, entertainment and business district considered by many the heart of modern Tokyo. From there, trains continue through to the youth-oriented, fashionable shopping areas of Harajuku, Shibuya and Ebisu. A swing through Shinagawa at the bottom of the loop then brings you back to Tokyo station.

The information in this chapter is presented in an anticlockwise direction around the Yamanote line.

Maps

We strongly recommend you pick up a free copy of the excellent *Tourist Map of Tokyo* from one of the Tourist Information Centres (TICs – see p109). Along with detailed insets of Tokyo's major neighbourhoods, it also includes subway and rail maps. For more in-depth exploration of the city, pick up a copy of *Tokyo City Atlas: A Bilingual Atlas* (Kodansha), which includes *banchi* (street address) numbers essential for finding addresses.

Tokyo's train and subway lines are much easier to navigate with the free, colour-coded *Tokyo Metro Guide* map. It's available at subway stations and TICs around town, and we've included it in the colour section of this guide.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Tokyo's traditional bookshop area is Jimbōchō. Mostly catering to Japanese readers, it is still a fascinating place to browse for Edo-period gardening manuals or used

TOKYO IN...

One Day

Show up at dawn to **Tsukiji Fish Market** (p132) for a look at the day's catch – the brave can then breakfast on the same. Follow this with coffee and a stroll up Chūō-dōri in **GINZA** (p132), browsing techie toys at the **Sony Building** (p132) or **Leica gallery** (p132). Stop for a weekday lunch in the **Tokyo International Forum plaza** (p111), wander through **Imperial Palace East Garden** (p110) to **Kitanomaru-kōen** (p111) and possibly to **Yasukuni-jinja** (p111). In the evening, head south for a night in **Roppongi** (p174).

One Week

Immerse yourself in crowd culture with a walking tour of **East Shinjuku** (p143). Do the one-day itinerary of Ginza and Central Tokyo, above. Save Saturday night for wild Roppongi, perhaps pulling an all-nighter. Spend a sleepy Sunday afternoon meeting Harajuku's famous **cosplay-zoku** (see the boxed text, p138), visiting **Meiji-jingū** (p137) and a walk in the park at **Yoyogi-kōen** (p138). Shop for records and trinkets in **Shibuya** (p180). Consider taking a classic tour of **Asakusa** (p134) via *jinrikisha* (people-powered rickshaw), followed by a soak at a *sentō* (public bath). Devote one afternoon to the **Edo-Tokyo Museum** (p142), **Ghibli Museum** (p142) or five museums in one day in **Ueno-kōen** (p133).

manga. The annual Kanda Furuon Matsuri (Kanda Secondhand Book Festival) is a bibliophile's paradise, occupying the whole district at the end of October. For places to find manga and *anime*, see p180.

Aoyama Book Center Roppongi-dōri (Map p119;

☎ 3479-0479; 6-1-20 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 10am-5am Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun, closed 2nd & 3rd Tue each month; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3);

Roppongi Hills (Map p119; ☎ 5775-2151; 4th fl, West Walk, Roppongi Hills, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 11am-9pm; ☉ Hibiya line to Roppongi, exit C1) The newly remodelled Roppongi-dōri branch is a prime spot for night owls, with a great international selection of reads.

Blue Parrot (Map p114; ☎ 3202-3671; www.blueparrottokyo.com; 3rd fl, Obayashi Bldg, 2-14-10 Takadanobaba, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 11am-9:30pm; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Takadanobaba, Waseda-dōri exit) One of the best selections of used English-language books in Tokyo.

Good Day Books (Map p121; ☎ 5421-0957; 3rd fl, Asahi Bldg, 1-11-2 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, east exit) Another place to find an excellent selection of used English-language books.

Hacknet (Map p121; ☎ 5728-6611; www.hacknet.tv in Japanese; 1-30-10 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Carrying a candy-store array of art and design books in Ebisu's Q-Flagship Building.

Kinokuniya Shinjuku-dōri (Map p116; ☎ 3354-0131; 3-17-7 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit); Takashimaya (Map p116; ☎ 5361-3301; 5-24-2 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku;

☎ 10am-8pm Sun-Fri, to 8.30pm Sat; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, new south exit) Kinokuniya's newer branch, in the Takashimaya Times Sq annex, has one of Tokyo's largest selections of English-language books on the 6th floor.

Maruzen (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5288-8881; 1st-4th fl, Oazo Bldg, 1-6-4 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ 9am-9pm; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Tokyo, Marunouchi north exit) Located across from Tokyo station in central Tokyo, Maruzen houses an impressive selection of books and magazines comparable to Kinokuniya's. The 4th floor houses foreign-language books, a stationery shop and a café. The revamped original branch, near exit B1 of Nihombashi station, was due to reopen by this book's publication.

Tower Books (Map p117; ☎ 3496-3661; 7th fl, Tower Records Bldg, 1-22-14 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-10pm; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Tower carries English-language books and a fabulous array of international magazines and newspapers; prices tend to be considerably cheaper than elsewhere around town. It's directly on Jingū-dōri.

Cultural Centres

Cultural centres in Tokyo generally act as focal points of the national groups they represent, and usually have good bulletin boards, events, small libraries and language classes.

British Council (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3235-8031; www.britishcouncil.org/japan.htm; 1-2 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm Sat; ☉ JR Chūō, Sōbu lines to lidabashi, west exit or Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō, Toei Ōedo lines to lidabashi, exit B3) Find it several blocks south along the canal on Sotobori-dōri.

BOOKS ON TOKYO

Several publications might supplement the one you have in your hands, particularly if you're planning to become a resident of Tokyo. For a comprehensive guide to the city, pick up Lonely Planet's *Tokyo*.

Tokyo for Free by Susan Pompian (Kodansha, 1998) lists more than 400 things that you can do for free in this expensive city, while *The Best of Tokyo* by Don Morton and Tsunoi Naoko (Tuttle, 1993) takes a light-hearted look at the city, with recommendations ranging from 'best traditional Japanese dolls' to 'best toilet'.

Tokyo: Exploring the City of the Shogun by Enbutsu Sumiko (Kodansha, 2007) details walking tours of traditional Tokyo with fascinating historical and cultural detail. Rick Kennedy's *Little Adventures in Tokyo* (Kodansha, 1998) introduces some of his secret finds in and around Tokyo.

Tokyo: A Guide to Recent Architecture by Tajima Noriyuki (Elipsis Kōnemann, 1998) is a great guide to Tokyo's architectural masterpieces and oddities.

Goethe-Institut Tokyo (Map p119; ☎ 3584-3201; www.goethe.de/ins/jp/tok/deindex.htm in Japanese & German; 7-5-56 Akasaka, Minato-ku; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-1pm & 2-3.30pm Fri; ☉ Ginza, Hanzōmon, Toei Ōedo lines to Aoyama-itshōme, exit A4) Walk eastward on Aoyama-dōri; turn right at Sōgetsu Kaikan and walk one more block to Goethe Institut.

L'Institut Franco-Japonais de Tokyo (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5206-2500; www.ifjtokyo.or.jp in Japanese & French; 15 Ichigaya Funagawarachō, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ noon-8pm Mon, 9.30am-8pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; ☉ JR Chūō, Sōbu lines to lidabashi, west exit or Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō, Toei Ōedo lines to lidabashi, exit B3) Head south along Sotobori-dōri and then hang a right at the stoplight before continuing for about 50m uphill.

Emergency

You should be able to get your point across in simple English. See p108 for more information about dealing with a medical emergency.

Emergency numbers:

Fire & ambulance (☎ 119)

Japan Helpline (☎ 0120-461-997; ☎ 24hr) If you have problems communicating, ring this emergency number.

Police (☎ 110)

Immigration Offices

See p793 for information on foreign embassies and consulates in Tokyo.

Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau (Map pp112-13; ☎ 5796-7112; www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/iic-01.html; 5-5-30 Kōnan, Minato-ku; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri; ☉ Tokyo Monorail to Tennōzu-Isle) A 15-minute walk from Tennōzu-Isle station; board the Tokyo Monorail from Hamamatsuchō JR station. Print a map from the web page for a clear route from Tennōzu-Isle station.

Internet Access

In some neighbourhoods it can be challenging to access the internet. The best bet is finding the local *manga kissa*, 24-hour manga-reading, DVD-viewing internet cafés dotted around the major transport hubs. Though often crowded and smoky, they offer inexpensive internet access, cheap eats and a thousand ways to kill time (see the boxed text, p146).

Café J Net New New (Map p117; ☎ 5458-5935; 7th fl, Saitō Bldg, 34-5 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; per hr ¥320; ☎ 24hr; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) This *manga kissa* is conveniently located off Bunkamura-dōri in Shibuya.

Marunouchi Café (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3212-5025; 1st fl, Shin-Tokyo Bldg, 3-3-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun; ☉ Marunouchi line to Tokyo, exit 6) Free internet access in aesthetically pleasing surroundings.

TnT Internet Café (Map p114; ☎ 5950-9983; 1st fl, Liberty Ikebukuro Bldg, 2-18-1 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; per hr ¥1000; ☎ noon-7pm, closed Sun & some Wed; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) This spot has internet access but no café.

Internet Resources

There are thousands of websites about Tokyo. Here are four of the most useful:

WI-FI

The easiest way to access the internet is at your local *manga kissa* (see the boxed text, p146), but if you're dragging your own laptop around, free wi-fi is easy to find. **Freespot** (www.freespot.com/users/map_e.html) lists a bunch of free hotspots, many in cafés.

Metropolis (www.metropolis.co.jp) The best all-round site for Tokyo. Lots of events, places of interest and hip feature articles.

Tokyo Journal (www.tokyo.to) Has monthly events listings, also interesting articles and interviews from time to time.

Tokyo Food Page (www.bento.com/tf-rest.html) The authority on Tokyo's dining scene, but be aware that a fair number of listings are outdated.

Tokyo Q (www.tokyoq.com) Another great all-round Tokyo site for finding places to shop, drink and explore.

Laundry

Most hotels, midrange and up, have laundry services. If you are in a budget ryokan (traditional Japanese inn), ask the staff for the nearest *koin randorii* (laundrette). Costs start from ¥150 for a load of washing, and drying usually costs ¥100 for 10 minutes.

Kuriningu-yasan (dry-cleaners) are in almost every neighbourhood. The standards are high and some offer rush service. It's about ¥200 for your basic business shirt.

Left Luggage

Travellers wary of hauling unwieldy luggage through Tokyo subways and stations should take advantage of the baggage courier services operating from Narita airport. For about ¥2000 per large bag, a courier will deliver the goods to your hotel the next day (or pick it up the day before your flight out). At Narita, find the courier counters in each terminal hall; signs in English point the way.

ABC (☎ 0120-919-120)

NPS Skyporter (☎ 0120-007-952)

There are coin lockers in all train and bus stations in Tokyo. Smaller lockers start at ¥300 (you can leave luggage for up to three days). Otherwise, the Akaboshi (Red Cap) luggage service on the Yaesu side of Tokyo station will store small/large bags during the day for ¥300/400 (you must pick up your luggage by the end of the day you leave it). For longer periods, there is an overnight luggage-storage service in Tokyo station that will hold luggage for up to two weeks, with rates starting at ¥500 per bag per day. Ask at the main information counter on the Yaesu side for a map to both of these services.

Libraries

Bibliothèque de la Maison franco-japonaise (Map p121; ☎ 5421-7643; biblio@mfrj.gr.jp; 3-9-25 Ebisu,

Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu) From Ebisu station, take the Skywalk to the terminus, turn left at the exit and walk two blocks before turning left at the primary school. The public library, with its formidable collection of French volumes, will be on your right.

British Council (see p106) Comprehensive selection of books and magazines.

Goethe Institut Tokyo Bibliotek (see p107; ☎ noon-6pm Mon-Thu, to 8pm Fri) With 15,000 volumes.

Japan Foundation Library (Map pp124-5; ☎ 5562-3527; www.jpf.go.jp/e/ffc/lib/index.html; 20th fl, ARK Mori Bldg, 1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm 3rd Sat each month, closed last Mon each month; ㊟ Namboku line to Roppongi itchōme, exit 3) Has some 30,000 English-language publications and is open only to foreigners.

National Diet Library (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3581-2331; www.ndl.go.jp/en; 1-10-1 Nagatachō, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat; ㊟ Hanzōmon, Yūrakuchō lines to Nagatachō, exit 2) This small treasure has 1.3 million books in Western languages.

US Embassy Reference Service (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3224-5292; 1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri; ㊟ Ginza, Namboku lines to Tameike-sannō, exit 13) The US embassy has a reference library relating to US culture, economics and policy; call a day ahead for an appointment.

Media

There's plenty of English-language information on Tokyo, starting with the three English-language newspapers (*Japan Times*, *Daily Yomiuri*, *Asahi Shimbun*). The best listings of Tokyo events can be found in Saturday's *Japan Times*.

The *Tokyo Journal*'s Cityscope listings section makes it worth the purchase price, but the free weekly *Metropolis* is the magazine of choice for most Tokyo residents.

Medical Services

All hospitals listed have English-speaking staff and 24-hour emergency departments. Travel insurance is advisable to cover any medical treatment you may need while in Tokyo. Medical treatment is among the best in the world, but also the most expensive.

Japanese Red Cross Medical Center (Map pp112-13; Nihon Sekijūjūisha Iryō Sentā; ☎ 3400-1311; www.med.jrc.or.jp in Japanese; 4-1-22 Hiro-o, Shibuya-ku; ㊟ Hibiya line to Hiro-o, exit 3)

St Luke's International Hospital (Map pp124-5; Seiroka Byōin; ☎ 3541-5151; www.luke.or.jp/eng/index.html; 9-1 Akashichō, Chūō-ku; ㊟ Hibiya line to Tsukiji, exit 3)

Tokyo Medical & Surgical Clinic (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3436-3028; www.tmsc.jp; 2nd fl, 32 Shiba-Kōen Bldg, 3-4-30 Shiba-kōen, Minato-ku; ㊟ Toei Mita line to Onarimon, exit A1)

Money

Banks are open from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday. Look out for the 'Foreign Exchange' sign outside. Some post offices also offer foreign-exchange services, and most have English-language ATMs.

Tokyo has a reasonable number of ATMs that accept foreign-issued cards. The best bet for foreign travellers is Citibank, which has English-language ATMs, open 24 hours a day.

For lost or stolen credit cards, call the following 24-hour, toll-free numbers within Japan.

American Express (☎ 0120-020-120)

MasterCard (☎ 00531-113-886)

Visa (☎ 0120-133-173)

Post

The Tokyo central post office is outside Tokyo station (Map pp126-7; take the Marunouchi exit and then cross the street to the south). Call ☎ 5472-5851 for postal information in English. Poste restante mail will be held at the central post office for 30 days.

Telephone & Fax

Almost all public phones in Tokyo take prepaid phone cards. For domestic directory assistance, call ☎ 104 and ask to be transferred to an English speaker. For details on making international calls from a public phone, see p802.

You can send faxes from the front desk of many hotels (some allow nonguests to use their services for a fee), some convenience stores and from Kinko's copy shops.

Tourist Information

The Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) runs two **tourist information centres** (☎ 0476-303-383, 0476-345-877; ☎ 8am-8pm) on the arrival floors of both terminals at Narita airport. Staffed by knowledgeable folks who speak English, this centre is a good place to get oriented or to make a hotel booking if you haven't yet figured out where to stay.

TIC offices will make accommodation reservations, but only for hotels and ryokan that are members of the **Welcome Inn group** (www

.itcj.jp). It can also arrange for tours of the city with volunteer guides. The Metropolitan Government also offers **Teletourist** (☎ 3201-2911), a round-the-clock taped information service on current events in town.

Asakusa Tourist Information Center (Map pp130-1; ☎ 5246-1151; 4-5-6 Higashi-Ueno, Taitō-ku; ☎ 10am-5pm; ㊟ Ginza line to Asakusa, exit 2) In Asakusa, stop by the friendly centre where you can arrange free guided tours of the area.

TIC (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3216-1901; www.jnto.go.jp; 10th fl, Kōtsu Kaikan Bldg, 2-10-1 Yūrakuchō, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Yūrakuchō, just outside Yūrakuchō station) Another JNTO-operated TIC. It has by far the most comprehensive information on travel in Tokyo and Japan, and is an essential port of call. The Kōtsu Kaikan Building is just opposite the station as you exit to the right.

Tokyo Tourist Information Center (Map p116; ☎ 5321-3077; 1st fl, Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bldg No 1, 2-8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm; ㊟ Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit A4) A good place to pick up a Grutt Pass (¥2000). The pass is a book of tickets entitling the bearer to free or discounted entrance at almost 50 Tokyo museums and zoos. It's valid for two months after the first visit, a terrific deal for multiple museum goers. The pass is also available at participating museums.

Travel Agencies

In Tokyo there are a number of travel agencies where English is spoken and where discounting on flights and domestic travel is the norm. For an idea of current prices check the *Japan Times* or *Metropolis*.

Three well-established agencies where English is spoken:

A'cross Travellers Bureau Ikebukuro (Map p114; ☎ 5391-3227; www.across-travel.com; 3rd fl, Nippon Life Higashi-Ikebukuro Bldg, 1-11-1 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit; Shibuya (Map p117; ☎ 5467-0077; 3rd fl, TK Shibuya East Bldg, 1-14-14 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit); Shinjuku (Map p116; ☎ 3340-6745; 2nd fl, Yamate Shinjuku Bldg, 1-19-6 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit)

No 1 Travel Ikebukuro (Map p114; ☎ 3986-4690; www.no1-travel.com; 4th fl, Daini Mikasa Bldg, 1-16-10 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4.30pm Sat; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) Just across from the west exit of Ikebukuro JR station, along Azalea-dōri; Shibuya (Map p117; ☎ 3770-1381; 7th fl, Shibuya Ichino Bldg, 1-11-1 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4.30pm Sat; ㊟ JR

Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Walk north up Jingū-dōri and turn right after Tower Records; Shinjuku (Map p116; ☎ 3205-6073; 7th fl, Don Quixote Bldg, 1-16-5 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4.30pm Sat; 🚗 JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit)

STA Travel (Map p114; ☎ 5391-2922; www.statravel.co.jp; 7th fl, Nukariya Bldg, 1-16-20 Minami-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat; 🚗 JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, south exit)

Useful Organisations & Services

There are innumerable associations for foreign residents and travellers. For the one most suited to your needs and interests, we recommend checking the listings sections of *Metropolis* and *Tokyo Journal*.

Several useful telephone services offer information and support for foreigners in Tokyo.

Foreign Residents' Advisory Center (☎ 5320-7744; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) For general information.

JR English Information (☎ 050-2016-1603; ☎ 10am-6pm) Offers information on train schedules and fares.

Tokyo English Lifeline (TELL; ☎ 5774-0992; www.telljp.com; ☎ 9am-4pm & 7-11pm) Can help with information and counselling.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Tokyo can be annoying at times but it is rarely dangerous. If possible, avoid the rail network during peak hours – around 8am to 9.30am and 5pm to 7pm – when the surging crowds would try anyone's patience. *Chikan* (gropers) can be a problem, but before you cry *chikan*, be sure it's not just a crowded car.

Some travellers may also be disturbed by the overtly sexual nature of some of the signs and sights in Tokyo's red-light districts, like Shinjuku's Kabukichō and parts of Ikebukuro. Those venturing into hostess clubs should be prepared to spend liberally and to watch their drinks carefully, as both drinks and credit cards of the unwary may be corrupted.

Earthquakes

Check the locations of emergency exits in your hotel and be aware of earthquake safety procedures (see p792). If an earthquake occurs, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) will broadcast information and instructions in English on all its TV and radio networks. Tune to channel 1 on your TV, or to NHK

(639kHz AM), FEN (810kHz AM) or InterFM (76.1FM) on your radio.

SIGHTS

Hopping on and off the JR Yamanote loop and crisscrossing town on the metro lines, you can easily catch the major sights from wherever you're based in Tokyo. From Central Tokyo, where Ginza glam is just a short walk from the serene Imperial Palace, the neighbourhoods to the north harbour the big national museums of Ueno Park as well as Shitamachi (Old Town). Moving southeast, Shinjuku's skyscrapers are just a few stops from Harajuku and Shibuya, teeming with trendy young fashionistas. Stylish Ebisu lies further south before the Yamanote line swoops north again. Metro lines whisk you westward towards the diplomatic district of Akasaka and the nightlife of Roppongi. You can even stroll, shop and dine along the waterfront of Tokyo Bay in Odaiba, with a lovely driverless monorail trip over the bay.

Central Tokyo 東京中心部 IMPERIAL PALACE 皇居

The Imperial Palace (Kōkyō; Map pp126-7) occupies the site of the castle Edo-jō, from which the Tokugawa *shōgunate* ruled Japan. In its heyday the castle was the largest in the world, though little remains of it today apart from the massive moat and walls. The present palace, completed in 1968, replaced the palace built in 1888 that was destroyed by Allied bombing in WWII.

As it's the home of Japan's emperor and imperial family, the palace is closed to the public for all but two days of the year, 2 January and 23 December (the emperor's birthday). Though you can't enter the palace itself, you can wander around its outskirts and visit the gardens.

It's an easy walk from Tokyo station, or from Hibiya or Nijū-bashi-mae subway stations, to Nijū-bashi. Crossing Babasaki Moat and the expansive Imperial Palace Plaza (Kōkyō-mae Hiroba), you'll arrive at a vantage point that gives a picture-postcard view of the palace peeking over its fortifications, behind Nijū-bashi.

IMPERIAL PALACE EAST GARDEN 皇居東御苑

The **Imperial Palace East Garden** (Kōkyō Higashi-gyoen; Map pp126-7; ☎ 3213-2050; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, last entry 3pm; 🚗 Chiyoda, Marunouchi,

TOKYO FOR FREE

Unlike Tokyo's gardens, most city parks are free (Shinjuku-gyoen being the exception), and provide a peaceful backdrop for a picnic – try **Kitanomaru-kōen** (below), **Yoyogi-kōen** (p138) or **Hibiya-kōen** (p133).

Temples and shrines are always free unless you'd like to enter their main halls, and many of Tokyo's skyscrapers, like the **Tokyo Metropolitan Government Offices** (p137) and the **Shinjuku NS Building** (p137), have free observation floors. Galleries, especially around Ginza and Harajuku, welcome visitors. Company showrooms like the **Sony Building** (p132) and **Toyota Mega Web** (p141) in Odaiba are good for gearheads.

And don't forget **Tsukiji Market** (p132), where you could spend hours.

Tōzai lines to Ōtemachi, exit (C10) is the only quarter of the palace proper that is open to the public. The main entrance is through **Ōte-mon**, a 10-minute walk north of Nijū-bashi. This was once the principal gate of Edo-jō; the garden lies at what was once the heart of the old castle. You'll be given a numbered token to turn in when you depart. The store inside the garden sells a good map for ¥150.

KITANOMARU-KŌEN 北の丸公園

Kitanomaru-kōen (Map pp126-7) makes an excellent picnicking locale and is good for a leisurely stroll. You can get there from Kudanshita or Takebashi subway stations.

Kitanomaru-kōen contains the **Nihon Budōkan** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3216-5100; 2-3 Kitanomaru-kōen, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ vary), where you may witness a variety of martial arts. South of the Budōkan is the **Science Museum** (Kagaku Gijitsukan; Map pp126-7; ☎ 3212-2440; www.jsf.or.jp; 2-1 Kitanomaru-kōen, Chiyoda-ku; adult/child ¥600/250; ☎ 9am-4.50pm Tue-Sun), which is a decent rainy-day stop for those with children in tow, especially since most exhibits are interactive. An English booklet is included with entry.

Continuing south from the Science Museum brings you to the **National Museum of Modern Art** (Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5777-8600; www.momat.go.jp/english; 3-1 Kitanomaru-kōen, Chiyoda-ku; adult ¥420, student ¥70-130; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Fri). The permanent exhibition here features Japanese art from the Meiji period (1868-1912) onwards, but check the website for any special exhibitions. Hold

onto your ticket stub, which gives you free admission to the nearby **Crafts Gallery** (Bijutsukan Kōgeikan; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5777-8600; 1-1 Kitanomaru-kōen, Chiyoda-ku; adult ¥200, student ¥40-70; ☎ 2-5pm Tue-Fri), housing a good display of crafts such as ceramics, lacquerware and dolls.

YASUKUNI-JINJA 靖国神社

If you take the Tayasu-mon exit (just past the Budōkan) of Kitanomaru-kōen, across the road and to your left is the impressive **Yasukuni-jinja** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3261-8326; 3-1-1 Kudanshita, Chiyoda-ku; admission free; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb; 🚗 Hanzōmon, Tōzai, Toei Shinjuku line to Kudanshita, exit 1), the Shrine for Establishing Peace in the Empire. Dedicated to the 2.4 million Japanese war-dead since 1853, it is the most controversial shrine in Japan.

The Japanese constitutional separation of religion and politics and the renunciation of militarism didn't stop a group of class-A war criminals being enshrined here in 1979; it also doesn't stop annual visits by politicians on the anniversary of Japan's defeat in WWII (15 August). The loudest protests are from Japan's Asian neighbours, who suffered most from Japanese aggression.

YASUKUNI-JINJA YUSHŪKAN

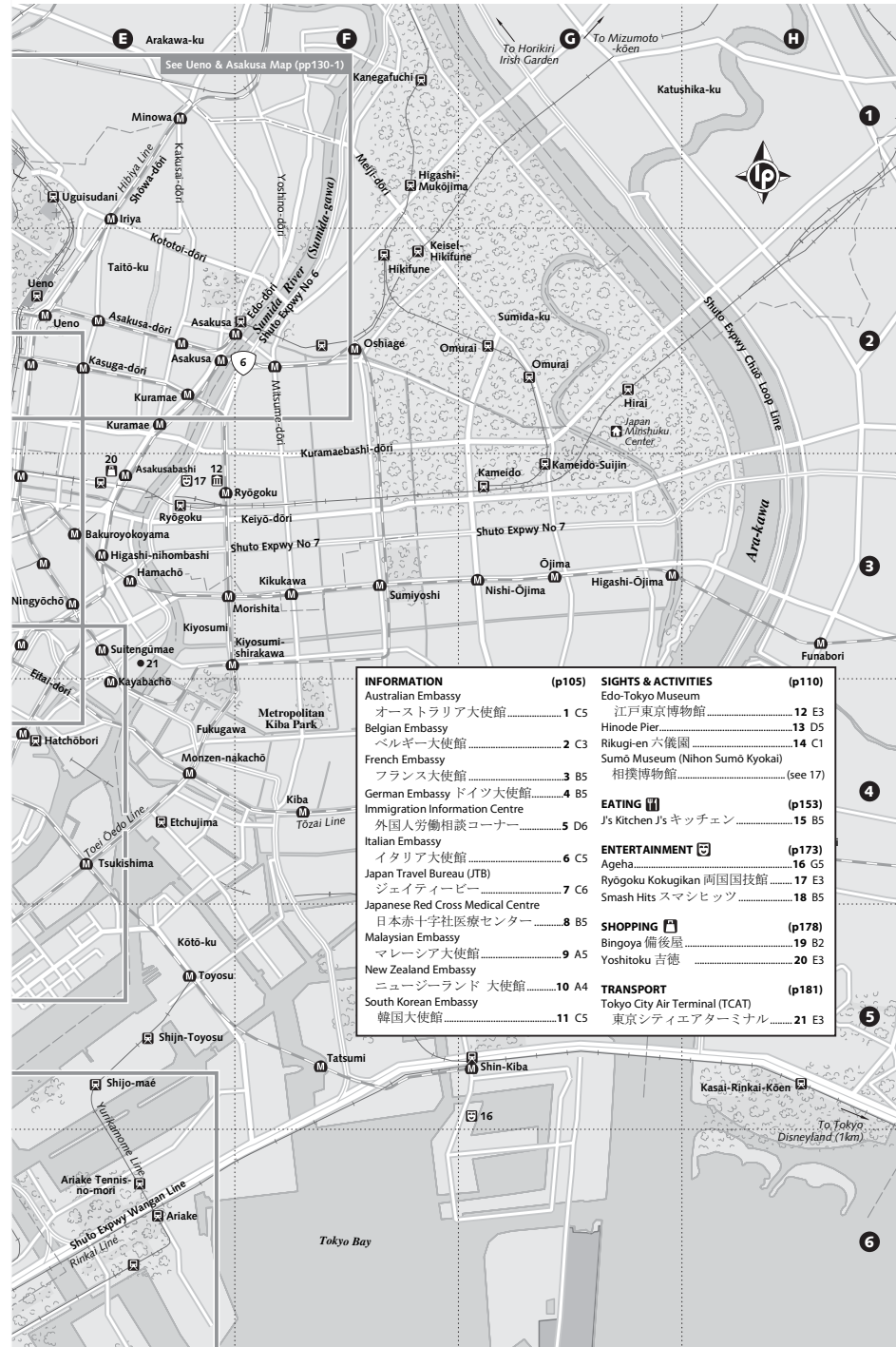
靖国神社遊就館

Next to Yasukuni-jinja is the **Yushūkan** (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3261-0998; www.yasukuni.or.jp; adult ¥800, student ¥300-500; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb, closed 28-31 Aug & 28-31 Dec; 🚗 Hanzōmon, Tōzai, Toei Shinjuku line to Kudanshita, exit 1), a war memorial museum that features items commemorating Japanese war-dead. There are limited English explanations, but an English pamphlet is available. Interesting exhibits include the long torpedo in the large exhibition hall that is actually a *kaiten* (human torpedo), a submarine version of the *kamikaze* (WWII suicide pilots). There are also displays of military uniforms, samurai armour and paintings of famous battles. Perhaps most interesting of all are the excerpts from books (some in English) arguing that America forced Japan into bombing Pearl Harbor.

TOKYO INTERNATIONAL FORUM

東京国際フォーラム

A remarkable edifice in central Tokyo, the **forum** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 5221-9000; www.t-i-forum.co.jp/english; 3-5-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; ☎ 7am-11.30pm;



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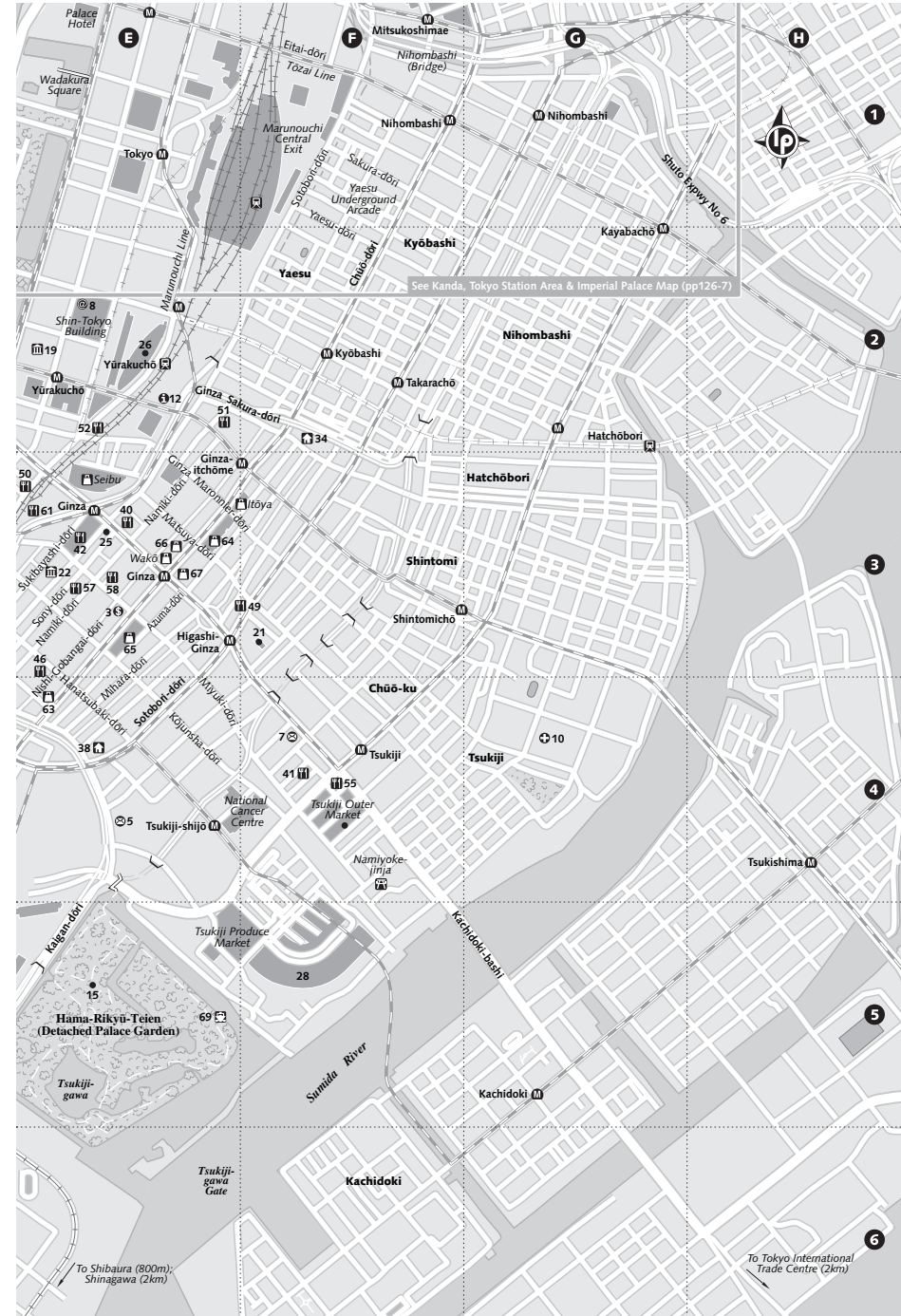
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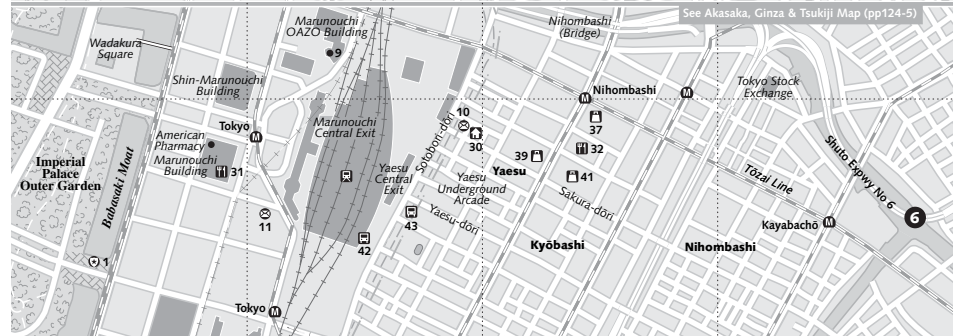
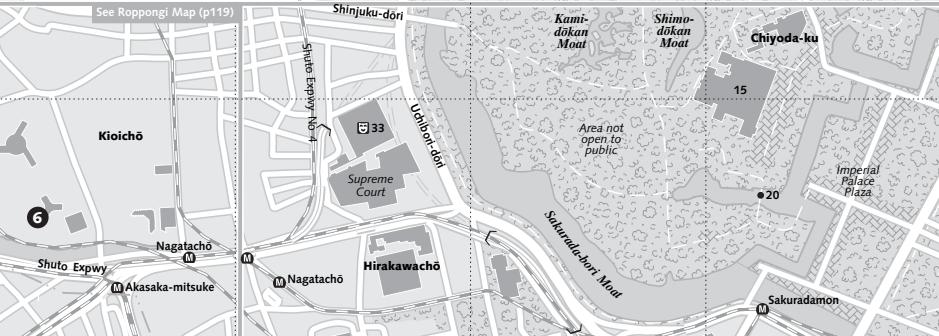
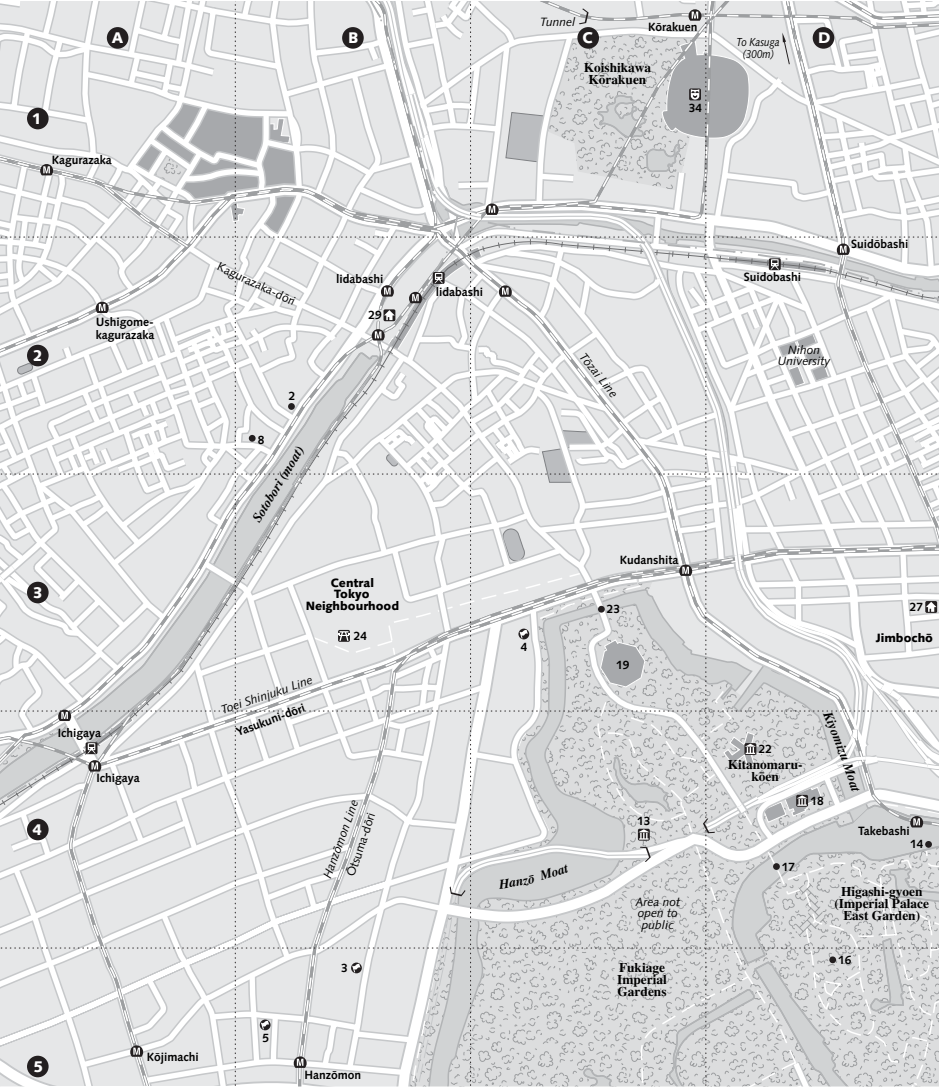




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● JR, Yūrakuchō lines to Yūrakuchō, exit A4b) is mostly used for conventions and events. Its prominent glass wing looks like a transparent ship plying Tokyo's urban waters. In contrast, the west wing is a boxy affair of cantilevered, overhanging spaces and cavernous atria.

GINZA 銀座

GINZA (Map pp124-5) is Tokyo's answer to NYC's Fifth Ave. Back in the 1870s, Ginza was one of the first areas to modernise, featuring a large number of novel (for Tokyoites of that era) Western-style brick buildings. Ginza was also home to Tokyo's first department stores and other harbinger of the modern world, such as gas lamps.

Today other shopping districts rival Ginza in opulence, vitality and popularity, but Ginza retains a distinct snob value – conspicuous consumption continues to be big here. It's therefore a superb place to window-shop and browse the galleries (usually free).

Saturday afternoons and Sundays are the best, when Chūō-dōri and some smaller streets are closed to vehicles, allowing kimono-clad ladies and toddlers to respectively amble and gambol in the middle of the boulevard.

Sony Building ソニービル

Perfect for a rainy day, the **Sony Building** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3573-2371; www.sonybuilding.jp; 5-3-1 Ginza, Chūō-ku; admission free; ☎ 11am-7pm; ● Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi line to Ginza, exit B9) has fascinating hands-on displays of Sony's latest products, and some that are yet to be released. Although there's often a wait, kids (and gamer types) love the free video and virtual-reality games on the 6th floor.

Galleries

Ginza is packed with galleries, many so small that they can be viewed in a few minutes. Wander around a bit and you'll find galleries displaying a mad variety of contemporary art – you're sure to confront something intriguing to your particular sensibilities, especially if you're into graphic design. Though scattered throughout Ginza, they are concentrated in the area south of Harumi-dōri, between Ginza-dōri and Chūō-dōri.

Idemitsu Museum of Arts (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3213-9402; 9th fl, 3-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; adult/student ¥800/500; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 7pm Fri;

● Chiyoda, Toei Mita lines to Hibiya, exits A1 & B3) holds Japanese and Chinese art and is famous for its collection of work by the Zen monk Sengai. Find it next door to the Imperial Theatre.

Exhibiting the outstanding work of up-and-coming photographers and long-time professionals, **Leica Ginza Salon** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 6215-7070; www.leica-camera.us/culture/galleries/gal_lery_tokyo; 1st & 2nd fl, Tokaido Bldg, 6-4-1 Ginza, Chūō-ku; admission free; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Fri; ● Marunouchi line to Ginza, exit C2) remains one of the best photography galleries in the area.

Kabuki-za 歌舞伎座

You may not have the time to take in a long-haul kabuki performance (p177) at **Kabuki-za** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 5565-6000; www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater/index.html; 4-12-5 Ginza, Chūō-ku; admission ¥2500-17,000; ☎ 11am-9pm; ● Hibiya, Toei Asakusa lines to Higashi-Ginza, exit 3), but even so, do a walk-by to check out its beautifully dramatic exterior.

HAMARIKYŪ-TEIEN 浜離宮庭園

Walk the garden paths along ponds and tea-houses at **Hama-Rikyū-Teien** (Detached Palace Garden; Map pp124-5; ☎ 3541-0200; admission ¥300; ☎ 9am-5pm; ● Toei Ōedo line to Tsukiji-Shijō, exit A2), perhaps on a journey between Ginza and Asakusa (p134), via the Sumida-gawa Cruise.

TSUKIJI FISH MARKET 築地市場

Tsukiji Fish Market (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3541-2640; www.tsukiji-market.or.jp; 5-2 Tsukiji, Chūō-ku; ☎ closed 2nd & 4th Wed most months, Sun & public holidays; ● Toei Ōedo line to Tsukiji-Shijō, exits A1 & A2) is where all that seafood comes after it's been fished out of the sea and before it turns up on a sashimi platter. The day begins very early, with the arrival of the catch and its wholesale auctioning. The early-morning (that's 5am) auction is not officially open to the general public, but unobtrusive visitors are welcome to attend. Flash photography is not permitted during the auctions – remember that this is a working market and try to keep a respectful profile. To get to the auction, head into the main entrance of the market hall all the way to the end. You can pick up an English guide at the market entrance.

The stalls and shopfront eateries of the outer market are also fun to wander around, and the market is at its best before 8am. Wear shoes you won't mind getting a little set and mucky, and be extremely wary of the motorised carts speeding around the market, especially if you're with small children.

HIBIYA-KŌEN 日比谷公園

If Ginza leaves you yearning for greenery, head west to **Hibiya-kōen** (Map pp124-5; admission free; ● Chiyoda, Hibiya, Toei Mita lines to Hibiya, exits A10 & A14), Tokyo's first Western-style park. It makes for a pleasant break, especially if you claim one of the benches overlooking the pond on the park's eastern side. About midway down on the eastern side is a small café where you can refresh with coffee or ice cream.

Ueno 上野

Ueno is one of the last areas in Tokyo where the old Shitamachi feel still permeates. Ueno's aging but spry shopping arcade, Ameyoko Arcade (Map pp130-1), remains a bustling market that feels worlds away from the monumental marketplace of Roppongi Hills (p139). But Ueno has no need for fancy shopping malls, for its real draw is Ueno-kōen, which boasts the highest concentration of museums and galleries anywhere in Japan.

UENO-KŌEN 上野公園

Ueno Hill was the site of a last-ditch defence of the Tokugawa *shōgunate* by about 2000 Tokugawa loyalists in 1868. They were duly dispatched by the imperial army, and the new Meiji government decreed that Ueno Hill would be transformed into Tokyo's first public park. Today, **Ueno-kōen** (Map pp130-1; ● JR Yamanote line to Ueno, Park exit) may not be the best of Tokyo's parks, but it certainly packs in more attractions than any others. Across the street from the Park exit is a large map showing the layout of the park and museum complex.

The park is famous as Tokyo's most popular site for *hanami* (blossom-viewing) in early to mid-April – which doesn't mean it's the best place to see the blossoms (see p137 for an altogether quieter *hanami* spot). In addition to the cherry blossoms, check out the lotuses in the pond, Shinobazu-ike, at the southern end of the park. Ueno-kōen is the centre of Tokyo's sizable but largely invisible homeless population.

Saigō Takamori Statue 西郷隆盛銅像

Near the southern entrance to the park is this unconventional **statue** (Map pp130-1) of a samurai walking his dog. Saigō Takamori started out supporting the Meiji Restoration but ended up ritually disembowelling himself in defeated opposition to it. The turnout in his loyalties occurred when the Meiji govern-

BASE CAMP

Tokyo's homeless population is estimated at more than 30,000, although government figures peg it significantly lower. Though homeless encampments exist along Tokyo riverbanks, under bridges and in isolated corners of the city's larger parks, for visitors the city's most visible homeless settlement is in Ueno-kōen. The disenfranchised population of this blue-tarp-and-cardboard tent city keeps its presence discreet during the daytime, when the park is full of visitors.

Most of these people are middle-aged and aging men who hit the skids during Japan's economic slump. Despite their marginalised circumstances, they hang their laundry on plastic clotheslines and line their shoes outside makeshift shelters, and continue to *gaman* (endure).

ment withdrew the powers of the military class to which he belonged (see p715).

Tokyo National Museum 東京国立博物館 The **Tokyo National Museum** (Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan; Map pp130-1; ☎ 3822-1111; www.tnm.jp; 13-9 Ueno-kōen, Taishō-ku; adult/student ¥420/130, 2nd Sat free; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Fri Apr-Sep) is the one museum in Tokyo worth a spot in your itinerary. Not only is it Japan's largest, housing some 87,000 items, it also has the world's largest collection of Japanese art. Only a portion of the museum's works is displayed at any one time.

The museum has four galleries, the most important of which is the **Main Hall** (Honkan). It's straight ahead as you enter, and houses a very impressive array of Japanese art, from sculpture and swords to lacquerware and calligraphy. The **Gallery of Eastern Antiquities** (Tōyō-kan), to the right of the ticket booth, displays a collection of art and archaeological finds from all over Asia. The **Hyōkei-kan**, to the left of the ticket booth, houses Japanese archaeological finds and includes a room devoted to artefacts once used by the Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaidō.

Perhaps best of all is the **Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures** (Hōryūji Hōmotsu-kan), which houses some of Japan's most important Buddhist artworks, all from Hōryū-ji in Nara.

Take some air after your museum visit with a stroll around the **Tokugawa Shōgun Cemetery**, behind the museum.

Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art

東京都美術館

This **museum of art** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3823-6921; www.tobikan.jp; 8-36 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; admission varies; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun, closed 3rd Mon each month) has several galleries that run temporary displays of contemporary Japanese art. Galleries feature both Western-style art and Japanese-style art, such as *sumi-e* (ink brush) and *ikebana* (flower arrangement). Apart from the main gallery, the rental galleries are not curated by the museum, so exhibitions can be of differing standards.

National Science Museum

国立科学博物館

With limited interpretive signage in English, this **museum** (Kokuritsu Kagaku Hakubutsukan; Map pp130-1; ☎ 3822-0111 Mon-Fri, 3822-0114 Sat & Sun; www.kahaku.go.jp/english; 7-20 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; adult/child ¥500/free; ☎ 9am-4:30pm Tue-Sun) often installs excellent special exhibitions – usually around ¥500 extra. The interactive exhibits make it a good place to bring kids, especially combined with a trip to the Ueno Zoo.

National Museum of Western Art

国立西洋美術館

The **National Museum of Western Art** (Kokuritsu Seiyō Bijutsukan; Map pp130-1; ☎ 3828-5131; www.nmwa.go.jp; 7-7 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; adult ¥420, student ¥70-130; ☎ 9:30am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Fri) has a respectable, though rather indifferently displayed, permanent collection. It frequently hosts special exhibits (admission varies) on loan from other museums of international repute.

Shitamachi Museum 下町風俗資料館

This **museum** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3823-7451; 2-1 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; adult/student ¥300/100; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm Tue-Sun) re-creates life in Edo's Shitamachi, the plebeian downtown quarter of old Tokyo. Exhibits include a sweet shop, the home and business of a copper boilermaker and a tenement house. Docents are on hand to teach games or help you try on the clothes, making for a fun, hands-on visit.

Ueno Zoo 上野動物園

Established in 1882, **Ueno Zoo** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3828-5171; 9-83 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; adult/student ¥600/200; ☎ 9:30am-5pm Tue-Sun) was the first of its kind in Japan. It's a good outing if you have children; otherwise, it can be safely dropped from a busy itinerary. If you're a panda fan,

note that those universally charming creatures are not on view on Fridays.

Tōshō-gū 東照宮

Dating from 1651 this **shrine** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3822-3455; 9-88 Ueno-kōen, Taitō-ku; admission ¥200; ☎ 9am-4:30pm Dec-Feb, to 5:30pm Mar-Nov), like its counterpart in Nikkō, is dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, who unified Japan. The shrine is one of the few extant early-Edo structures, having fortunately survived Tokyo's innumerable disasters.

Ameyoko Arcade アメヤ横丁

Ameyoko Arcade (Ameya-yokochō; Map pp130-1) was famous as a black-market district after WWII, and is still a lively shopping area where many bargains can be found. Shopkeepers are much less restrained than elsewhere in Tokyo, attracting customers with raucous cries that rattle down the crowded alleyways like the trains overhead. Look for its big archway sign opposite Ueno station's south side.

Asakusa 浅草

Long considered the heart of old Shitamachi, Asakusa is an interesting, compact neighbourhood to explore on foot. Asakusa's main attraction is the temple Sensō-ji, also known as Asakusa Kannon-dō. In Edo times, Asakusa was a halfway stop between the city and its most infamous pleasure district, Yoshiwara. Eventually Asakusa developed into a pleasure quarter in its own right, becoming the centre for that most loved of Edo entertainments, kabuki. In the shadow of Sensō-ji a fairground spirit prevailed and a range of very secular establishments thrived, from kabuki theatres to brothels.

When Japan ended its self-imposed isolation with the commencement of the Meiji Restoration, it was in Asakusa that the first cinemas opened, the first music halls appeared and Western opera was first performed before Japanese audiences at Asakusa's Teikoku Gekijo (Imperial Theatre). It was also here that another Western cultural import – the striptease – was introduced.

Unfortunately, Asakusa never quite recovered from the bombing at the end of WWII. Sensō-ji was rebuilt, but other areas of Tokyo assumed Asakusa's pleasure-district role. To its advantage, however, Asakusa may be one of the few areas of Tokyo to have retained something of the spirit of Shitamachi.

SENSŌ-JI 浅草寺

This **temple** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3842-0181; 2-3-1 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; admission free; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Ginza line to Asakusa, exit 1 or Toei Asakusa line to Asakusa, exit A5) enshrines a golden image of Kannon (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy), which, according to legend, was miraculously fished out of the nearby Sumida River by two fishermen in AD 628. The image has remained on the spot ever since, through successive rebuildings of the temple; the present structure dates from 1950.

Approaching Sensō-ji from Asakusa subway station, the entrance is via Kaminarimon (Thunder Gate). The gate's protector gods are Fūjin, the god of wind, on the right; and Raijin, the god of thunder, on the left.

Near Kaminarimon, you'll probably be wooed by *jinrikisha* drivers in traditional dress; they can cart you around on tours (10/30/60 minutes for ¥2000/5000/9000 per person), providing commentary in English or Japanese.

Straight ahead is Nakamise-dōri, the temple precinct's shopping street, where everything from tourist trinkets to genuine Edo-style crafts is sold. Need a formal wig to wear with your kimono? Here's where to shop.

Nakamise-dōri leads to the main temple compound. Whether the ancient image of Kannon actually exists is a secret, as it's not on public display. This doesn't stop a steady stream of worshippers from travelling to the top of the stairs to bow and clap. In front of the temple is a large incense cauldron: the smoke is said to bestow health and you'll see visitors rubbing it into their bodies through their clothes.

DEMBŌ-IN 伝法院

To the left of the temple precinct is Dembō-in (Dembō Garden; Map pp130-1). Although it's not open to the public, it is possible to obtain a pass by calling a few days ahead to the **main office** (☎ 3842-0181; 2-3-1 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk Mon-Sat, closed for ceremonies; ☎ Ginza line to Asakusa, exit 1 or Toei Asakusa line to Asakusa, exit A5) to the left of the Five-Storeyed Pagoda. The garden is one of Tokyo's best, containing a picturesque pond and a replica of a famous Kyoto teahouse.

SUMIDA-GAWA CRUISE 隅田川クルーズ

A Sumida River cruise on the **Suijo Bus** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 0120-977-311; www.suijobus.co.jp; fare to Hamarikyū-teien/Hinode Pier ¥720/760; ☎ 9:30am-6pm;

☎ Ginza line to Asakusa, exit 4 or Toei Asakusa line to Asakusa, exit A5) may not be the most scenic you've ever experienced, but it's a great way to get to or from Asakusa.

Cruises depart about every half-hour from the pier next to the bridge, Azuma-bashi, and go to Hamarikyū-teien (p132) and Hinode Pier (Map pp112-13). A good way to do the cruise is to buy a ticket to Hamarikyū-teien (where you'll have to pay an additional ¥300 entry fee). After exploring the garden, you can walk into Ginza in about 10 to 15 minutes.

Ikebukuro 池袋

Traditionally Shinjuku's poor cousin, bawdy Ikebukuro shouldn't rate high on a busy schedule, but its attractions include two of the world's largest department stores (Seibu and Tōbu), the second-busiest station in Tokyo and the escalator experience of a lifetime (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space). Like Shinjuku, Ikebukuro divides into an east side and a west side.

SUNSHINE CITY サンシャインシティ

Billed as a 'city in a building', **Sunshine City** (Map p114; ☎ 3989-3331; 3-1-1 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 10am-10pm; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit) is 60 floors of office space and shopping malls, with a few cultural and entertainment options thrown in, all in east Ikebukuro. If you've got ¥620 to burn, you can take a lift (from 10am to 9:30pm) to the lookout on the 60th floor and gaze out on the building blocks below.

On the 7th floor of the Bunka Kaikan Building of Sunshine City is the **Ancient Orient Museum** (☎ 3989-3491; 3-1-4 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; admission ¥500; ☎ 10am-5pm), displaying antiquities and art from across Asia.

Also of interest to some might be the **Sunshine Planetarium** (Sunshine Starlight Dome; ☎ 3989-3475; 10th fl, World Import Mart Bldg, 3-1-3 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; adult/child ¥800/500; ☎ noon-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6:30pm Sat & Sun), though shows are in Japanese, and the **Sunshine International Aquarium** (☎ 3989-3466; 10th fl, World Import Mart Bldg, 3-1-3 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; adult/child ¥1800/900; ☎ 10am-6pm).

DEPARTMENT STORES

Seibu (Map p114; ☎ 3981-0111; 1-28-1 Minami-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun, closed some Tue; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit) was for many years the world's biggest department

HELLO, KITTY

If necessity is the mother of invention, Tokyoites have an inventive view of necessity. Where but here would you find a place like **Nekobukuro** (Map p114; ☎ 3980-6111; 8th fl, Tōkyū Hands, 1-28-10 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; admission ¥600; ☎ 10am-8pm; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit)? In a city where apartments are tiny and lives busy, adopting a pet is impossible for many...but at Nekobukuro, visitors can play with kitties without the litter. It's basically a petting zoo (for people) slash luxury apartment (for the 20-odd resident cats). Prowl on by if you need a little feline affection.

store. You could easily spend an hour wandering Seibu's *depachika* (basement food hall) sampling the tidbits on offer, while the top floor houses some 50 restaurants, many offering great lunch specials. On the 12th floor of the Seibu department store annexe is **Seibu Art Gallery**, which has changing art exhibits that are usually of fairly high standard.

On the west side, **Tōbu** (Map p114; ☎ 3981-2211; 1-1-25 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, closed some Wed; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) is the bigger of the two and also has an amazing *depachika*. At the southwestern end of Ikebukuro station lies Tōbu's **Metropolitan Plaza**, packed with classy boutiques, restaurants on the 8th floor and a massive HMV music store on the 6th floor. This is where you'll find the **Japan Traditional Craft Center** (p179), both a showplace and shop featuring traditional crafts, and the **Tōbu Museum of Art** on the 1st through 3rd floors of the plaza.

Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space

東京芸術劇場

Part of the 'Tokyo Renaissance' plan launched by the Department of Education, the **Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space** (Map p114; ☎ 5391-2111; www.geigeki.jp/english/index.html; 1-8-1 Nishi-Ikebukuro; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) was plonked down just where Tokyo needed it most – on Ikebukuro's west side. Designed to host performance art, the building has four halls as well as shops and cafés. Those without a ticket for anything should treat themselves to the soaring escalator ride – and the thrills just don't stop.

Shinjuku 新宿

Here in Shinjuku (Map p116), nearly everything that makes Tokyo interesting is crammed into one busy district: upscale department stores, discount shopping arcades, flashing neon, buttoned-up government offices, swarming push-and-shove crowds, streetside video screens, stand-up noodle bars, hostess clubs, shyly tucked-away shrines and seamy strip bars.

Shinjuku is a sprawling business, commercial and entertainment centre that never lets up. Every day approximately three million people pass through the station alone, making it one of the busiest in the world. On the western side of the station is Tokyo's highest concentration of skyscrapers and, presiding over them, Tange Kenzō's Tokyo Metropolitan Government Offices – massive awe-inspiring structures. The eastern side of the station, by contrast, is a labyrinth of department stores, restaurants, boutiques, neon and a glimpse of Tokyo's underbelly.

EAST SIDE 東新宿

Shinjuku's east side is good for roaming rather than a place for seeking out specific sights.

Kabukichō 歌舞伎町

Tokyo's most notorious red-light district lies east of Seibu Shinjuku station, north of Yasukuni-dōri. This is one of the world's more imaginative red-light districts, with 'soaplands' (massage parlours), love hotels, peep shows, pink cabarets ('pink' is the Japanese equivalent of 'blue' in English), porno-video booths and strip shows involving audience participation. The streets here are all crackling neon and drunken salarymen. High-pitched female voices wail out invitations to enter their establishments through distorted speakers, and *freeters* (floating, part-time workers) earn some yen passing out advertisements for karaoke boxes. Most of what goes on is very much off-limits to foreigners, but it's still an interesting area for a stroll.

Kabukichō is not wall-to-wall sex; there are also some straight entertainment options, including cinemas and some good restaurants (p156). For a drink, stroll around the teeny, intriguing alleys of the **Golden Gai** (p163).

Hanazono-jinja 花園神社

Nestled in the shadow of Kabukichō is this quiet, unassuming shrine, **Hanazono-jinja** (Map

p116; ☎ 3200-3093; 5-17-3 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; 🚶 Marunouchi line to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exits B3 & B5). It only takes a few minutes to stroll the grounds, but it's a quiet refuge from the Shinjuku streets. It's particularly pleasant when it's lit up in the evening.

Shinjuku-gyoen 新宿御苑

One of the city's best escapes and top cherry-blossom viewing spots, **Shinjuku-gyoen** (Map p116; ☎ 3350-0151; Naitochō, Shinjuku-ku; adult/child under 15/child under 6 ¥200/50/free; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Marunouchi line to Shinjuku-gyoenmae, exit 1) is also one of Tokyo's largest parks at 57.6 hectares (144 acres). It dates back to 1906 and was designed as a European-style park, though it also has a Japanese garden, a hot-house containing tropical plants and a pond with giant carp.

WEST SIDE 西新宿

Shinjuku's west side is mainly administrative, but photography freaks, take note: the area behind the Keiō department store is home to Tokyo's largest **camera stores**, Yodobashi and Sakuraya (p181). They carry practically everything photography-related that you could possibly want, all at very reasonable prices, and even a limited selection of secondhand equipment.

Elsewhere, the attractions of west Shinjuku are mainly centred around the interiors of buildings and the observation floors of the impressive Tokyo Metropolitan Government Offices.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government Offices

東京都庁

These city **offices** (Tokyo Tochō; Map p116; ☎ 5321-1111; 2-8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-11pm Tue-Sun, North Tower closed 2nd & 4th Mon, South Tower closed 1st & 3rd Tue; 🚶 Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit A4) occupy two adjoining buildings worth visiting for their stunning architecture and for the great views from the **twinn observation floors**. On really clear days, you might even spot Mt Fuji to the west. To reach the observation floors, take one of the two 1st-floor lifts.

Most visitors are won over by the buildings' complex symmetry and computer-chip appearance. Particularly impressive is the spacious Citizen's Plaza in front of the No 1 building, more reminiscent of a Roman amphitheatre than anything Japanese.

Shinjuku NS Building 新宿 NS ビル

The interior of the **Shinjuku NS Building** (Map p116; 2-4-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; admission free; ☎ 11am-10pm; 🚶 Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit A2) is hollow, featuring a 1600 sq metre atrium illuminated by sunlight that streams in through the glass roof. The atrium features a 29m-tall pendulum clock. The restaurants on the 29th and 30th floors have excellent views over Tokyo, but if you're not hungry the views are still free.

Pentax Forum

ペンタックスフォーラム

Set up as an interactive showroom where photography buffs can play with the latest photography equipment, **Pentax Forum** (Map p116; ☎ 3348-2941; 1st fl, Shinjuku Mitsui Bldg, 2-1-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; admission free; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm, closed 1 Jan; 🚶 Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit B2) is a must for shutterbugs.

Harajuku & Aoyama 原宿・青山

Harajuku and Aoyama (Map p117) are where Tokyoites come to be spendy and trendy. They're pleasant areas to stroll and watch locals in contented consumer mode. **Takeshita-dōri** buzzes with bleach-headed teenagers shopping for illiterate T-shirts and fishnet stockings; **Omote-sandō**, with its alfresco cafés and boutiques, is still the closest Tokyo gets to Paris; the bistro alleys of Aoyama harbour some of the best international cuisine in town; and above it all is **Meiji-jingū**, Tokyo's most splendid shrine.

For snaps of the idiosyncratically clad natives, check out the Sunday madness at **Jingū-bashi** (see the boxed text, p138).

MEIJI-JINGŪ 明治神宮

Completed in 1920, the **shrine** (Map p117; ☎ 3379-5511; www.meijijingu.or.jp; 1-1 Yoyogi Kamizonochō, Shibuya-ku; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Harajuku, Omote-sandō exit) was built in memory of Emperor Meiji and Empress Shōken, under whose rule Japan ended its long isolation from the outside world. Unfortunately, like much else in Tokyo, the shrine was destroyed in WWII bombing. Rebuilding was completed in 1958.

Meiji-jingū might be a reconstruction of the original but, unlike so many of Japan's post-war reconstructions, it is altogether authentic. The shrine itself was built with Japanese cypress, while the cypress for the huge *torii* (gates) came from Alishan in Taiwan.

The shrine's inner garden, **Meiji-jingū-gyoen** (adult/child ¥500/200; ☎ 9am-4.30pm), is almost deserted on weekdays. It's particularly beautiful in June, when the irises are in bloom.

YOYOGI-KŌEN 代々木公園

Weekends at **Yoyogi-kōen** (Map p117; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Harajuku, Omote-sandō exit or Chiyoda line to Yoyogi-kōen, exit 4) are prime for stumbling upon the cool and unusual – *shamisen* (three-stringed lute) or punk-rock practice, or fire-eating, for example. At 53.2 hectares (133 acres), its wooded grounds make for a relaxing walk even if there aren't any interesting goings-on. It's at its best on a sunny Sunday in spring or autumn.

ŌTA MEMORIAL ART MUSEUM

太田記念美術館

Pad quietly in slippers through the **Ōta Museum** (Map p117; ☎ 3403-0880; www.ukiyoe-ota-muse.jp/english.html; 1-10-10 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; adult/student ¥1000/700; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun, closed from 27th to end of month; ㊟ Chiyoda line to Meiji-jingūmae, exit 5) to view its first-rate collection of *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints), including works by masters of the art such as Hiroshige. Find it in the alley just northwest of the Laforet Building. Extra charges apply for special exhibits.

GALLERIES

Aoyama is packed with tiny galleries, most of them free. Up Killer-dōri, look for the **Watari-um** (Watari Museum of Contemporary Art; Map p117; ☎ 3402-3001; www.watarium.co.jp; 3-7-6 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; adult/student ¥1000/800; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 11am-9pm Wed; ㊟ Ginza line to Gaienmae, exit 3). The attached museum shop **On Sundays**

(☎ 3470-1424; ☎ vary) sells art books, funky gifts and piles of arty postcards. From Gaienmae station, head southwest along Aoyama-dōri and turn right at the Bell Commons building to walk up Killer-dōri.

On the other side of Omote-sandō, the **Spiral Building** (Map p117; ☎ 3498-1171; 5-6-23 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; admission free; ☎ 11am-8pm; ㊟ Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit B1) features changing exhibits, dining and live music. Even more museum-store wares are sold on the 2nd floor.

Just around the corner from the Spiral Building, Kottō-dōri (also billed as 'Antique St') is a good place to seek out both galleries and souvenirs.

Shibuya 渋谷

Shibuya Crossing (Map p117) is probably one of the world's most visually famous four-way intersections, where the green light given to pedestrians releases a timed surge of humanity. Mostly of interest as a stupendous youth-oriented shopping district and people-watching hotspot, the goods for sale and energy of Shibuya offer glimpses into the desires and psyche of a certain generation. Especially on weekends, you might get the feeling that the jammed streets are populated solely by fashionable under 25s.

HACHIKŌ STATUE ハチ公像

In the 1920s, a professor who lived near Shibuya station kept a small Akita dog, who would come to the station every afternoon to await his master's return. The professor died in 1925, but the dog continued to show up and wait at the station until his own death 11

years later. The poor dog's faithfulness was not lost on the locals, who built a statue to honour his memory.

TOBACCO & SALT MUSEUM

たばこと塩の博物館

This unusual little **museum** (Map p117; ☎ 3476-2041; 1-16-8 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; adult/child ¥100/50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) has some fairly interesting exhibits detailing the history of tobacco and the methods of salt production practised in pre-modern Japan (until recently, Japan harvested all its salt from the sea). While there's little English signage, much of the material is self-explanatory.

TEPCO ELECTRIC ENERGY MUSEUM

電力館

Folks with kids in tow and an interest in electric power might want to stop by the **Tepeco Electric Energy Museum** (Denryokukan; Map p117; ☎ 3477-1191; 1-12-10 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Tue; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit). Displays are well presented and cover everything associated with electricity, and each of the seven floors supplies English handouts with explanations. It's just north of the Marui One department store along Fire-dōri.

LOVE HOTEL HILL

Around the top of Dōgenzaka is the highest concentration of **love hotels** (also primarily referred to as 'boutique' hotels) in Japan. There's a love hotel for everyone, from miniature Gothic castles to Middle Eastern temples...and these are just the buildings – room themes are even wackier. It's OK to wander in and take a look at the screen with illuminated pictures of available rooms.

The area is also home to alfresco *cafés*, *izakaya* (pub-style restaurant), performance halls and restaurants. Huge live-music venues and dance clubs line this lively slope.

Ebisu & Daikanyama 恵比寿・代官山

More low-key than crowded Shibuya and Shinjuku, Ebisu and Daikanyama (Map p121) are stylish neighbourhoods that make great spots for a casual afternoon wander. Daikanyama has a very natural Euro-Japanese fusion atmosphere, with abundant alfresco *cafés* and boutiques featuring imaginative local designers. Neighbouring Ebisu, mean-

while, possesses some of Tokyo's better clubs and bars, and the open-air Yebisu Garden Place complex.

YEBISU GARDEN PLACE

恵比寿ガーデンプレイス

This **complex** (Map p121; ☎ 5423-7111; http://gardenplace.jp; 4-20 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku; ㊟ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, east exit to Skywalk) of shops, restaurants and a 39-floor **tower** is surrounded by an open mall area – perfect for hanging out on warmer days, when you might catch live music. Located here, the headquarters of Sapporo Breweries contains the **Beer Museum Yebisu** (☎ 5423-7255; 4-20-1 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). There are lots of good exhibits, but the real draw is the Tasting Lounge, where you can sample Sapporo's various brews (¥200 a glass).

You'll find restaurants and outdoor *cafés* in every building. Check out the views of Tokyo from the Ebisu perspective at restaurants on the 38th and 39th floors of **Yebisu Garden Place Tower**.

Finally, check out the **Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography** (☎ 3280-0099; www.syabi.com/top/top_eng.html; 1-13-3 Mita, Meguro-ku; admission varies; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Wed, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Thu & Fri), Japan's first large-scale museum devoted entirely to photography. The emphasis here is on Japanese photography, but international work is also displayed.

Roppongi & Akasaka 六本木・赤坂

Rife with restaurants and bars, Roppongi's nightlife rocks. Though there aren't many compelling reasons to visit the neighbourhood during the daytime, **Roppongi Hills** (Map p119) is worth checking out for shopping, cinema and art exhibitions.

Likewise, Akasaka is of interest less for its sights than for its high concentration of top-end hotels. Still, the area has a few attractions if you find yourself here.

ROPPONGI HILLS 六本木ヒルズ

This massive development was no less than 17 years in the making, conceived by developer Mori Minoru, who envisioned improving people's quality of urban life by centralising home, work and leisure into a microcosm of a city. If a million visitors per weekend is any indication of success, this is overshadowed only by the magnitude of the place itself. The shopping-dining-entertainment-housing complex is embellished with public art and

COSPLAY-ZOKU

When Tokyo's forces of law and order donned their riot gear to oust the Takenokozoku – the dancers with 1950s rockabilly hair – from Yoyogi-kōen (above), no-one imagined that the Takenokozoku would be replaced by an even odder, younger crowd.

Enter the Cosplay-zoku, the Costume Play Gang. Mainly teenage girls from the dormitory towns and cities around Tokyo's fringe, the Cosplay-zoku assemble at Harajuku's Jingū-bashi each weekend, bedecked in goth make-up, kimono punk getups, subversive Edwardiana and cartoon-nurse exaggeration.

Cosplay-zoku are united in their fondness for Japanese *visual-kei* (visual type) bands or *anime* and manga characters, and a sense of pride in their alienation. Many of the girls are *jijime-ko*, kids bullied in school, who find release and expression in their temporary weekend identities.

The end result is Tokyo's famous weekend circus of excited photographers, bewildered tourists and cultural voyeurs. The girls revel, primp and pose for the cameras until dusk, when they hop on their trains back to 'normal' life in the faceless housing blocks of Chiba and Kawasaki.

a Japanese garden, and is so big as to warrant **guided tours** (Map p119; ☎ 6406-6677; www.roppongi-hills.com/jp/tour/detail_019.html; Roppongi 6-chôme, Minato-ku; adult/student/child ¥1500/1000/500; 🕒 9am-6pm; 📍 Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exits 1c & 3) – book seven days in advance.

Mori Art Museum 森美術館

Making its debut in 2003, this contemporary **art museum** (Map p119; ☎ 5777-8600; www.mori.art.museum; 53rd fl, Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; admission incl entry to Tokyo City View about ¥1500; 🕒 10am-10pm Wed-Mon, to 5pm Tue) boasts an enviable location at the top of Mori Tower. Exhibitions tend towards the (mind-bogglingly myriad) multimedia variety and are of a respectably high calibre. As yet lacking a permanent collection, the museum is only open during its temporary exhibitions. Check the website for current shows.

Tokyo City View 東京シティビュー

The eponymous **view** (Map p119; ☎ 6406-6652; 52nd fl, Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; adult/student/child ¥1500/1000/500; 🕒 9-1am, last admission midnight) offers 360 degrees' worth of Tokyo. If the floor-to-ceiling windows don't give you enough of an eyeful, there's an open-air deck that's open when weather permits.

HIE-JINJA 日枝神社

This modern shrine is largely cement, but the highlight of **Hie-jinja** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3581-2471; www.hiejinja.net/jinja/english/index.html; 2-10-5 Nagatachō, Chiyoda-ku; 📍 Ginza, Marunouchi lines to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) is the walk up to the shrine through a 'tunnel' of orange *torii* – a spectacular sight during cherry-blossom season. Walking south on Sotobori-dōri, look for the concrete plaza-style entrance leading up to the shrine gates.

TOKYO TOWER 東京タワー

Nine metres taller than the Eiffel Tower, on which it is based, the 333m **Tokyo Tower** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3433-5111; www.tokyotower.co.jp/333/foreign/eng/index.html; 4-2-8 Shiba-kōen, Minato-ku; main observation deck ¥310-820, special observation deck extra ¥350-600; 🕒 9am-10pm; 📍 Hibiya line to Kamiyamachō, exits 1 & 2) is a pleasantly retro spire from which to look out across Tokyo. Completed in 1958, it stands as a kind of gaudy orange counterpoint to ultramodern Roppongi Hills.

While the daytime view is unremarkable, the night view is stellar. If you spring for admission to the special observation deck at

250m, the trip up in that wonky elevator is almost as exciting as the view.

Behind Tokyo Tower, **Zōjō-ji** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3432-1431; 4-7-35 Shiba-kōen, Minato-ku; 🕒 dawn-dusk; 📍 Toei Ōedo line to Akabanebashi, Akabanebashi exit) was the family temple of the Tokugawas. In the evening, we recommend walking to Tokyo Tower from Hamamatsuchō station on the JR Yamanote line. Cut through Zōjō-ji and admire the bizarre juxtaposition of the illuminated tower leaping skyward above the dark shape of the main hall.

ŌKURA SHŪKOKAN 大倉集古館

The grounds of the venerable Ōkura Hotel contain this small **museum** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3583-0781; 2-10-3 Toranomon, Minato-ku; adult ¥800, student ¥300-500; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Ginza line to Tameike-sannō, exit 13), with its collection of sculpture, lacquer writing boxes and no fewer than three National Treasures. The two-storey museum is also surrounded by a small but well-populated sculpture garden.

AOYAMA REIEN 青山霊園

Better known as **Aoyama Botchi** (Map p119; Minami-Aoyama 2-chôme, Minato-ku; 🕒 24hr; 📍 Ginza line to Gaienmae, exits 1 & 2), this cemetery is a good alternative to Ueno-kōen during *hanami* season, but perfect for a peaceful walk at any time when the masses of the living are too overwhelming. Head south on Gaien-nishi-dōri to get there.

Odaiba & Tokyo Bay お台場・東京湾

A futuristic island in Tokyo Bay, Odaiba (Map p122) was built on reclaimed land and stands as another reminder that Tokyo is a forward-looking, oddball waterfront city.

There's tonnes to do here besides enjoying the views of Tokyo and the bay, most of it in megamall-amusement park complexes. Shopping malls include **Decks Tokyo Beach** (Map p122; ☎ 3599-6500; www.odaiba-decks.com; 1-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku; 🕒 11am-9pm; 📍 Yurikamome line to Odaiba Kaihin-kōen), with a Hong Kong-themed mall and Sega amusement centre, or the women-focused shopping experience of **Venus Fort** (Map p122; ☎ 3599-0700; www.venusfort.co.jp/index.html; Palette Town, Aomi 1-chôme, Kōtō-ku; 🕒 shops 11am-9pm Sun-Fri, to 10pm Sat, restaurants to 11pm; 📍 Yurikamome to Aomi or Rinkai line to Tokyo Teleport) – complete with kitschy 18th-century Italian styling!

The easiest way to get to Odaiba is on the driverless Yurikamome line, which connects at Shimbashi station.

OFF THE BEATEN DŌRI

Not far from the city centre are two of Tokyo's coolest, out-of-the-way neighbourhoods that, while as contemporary as they come, seem more low scale and personable than some of central Tokyo's more overwhelming districts.

One favourite is **Kichijōji**, about 10km west of Shinjuku and centred on Inokashira Park, which surrounds a large pond that feeds the Kanda River. If you have a ticket to the **Ghibli Museum** (p142), meander through the park on the way to your appointment with the Cat Bus. On weekends, there's an impromptu arts-and-crafts market and bands playing around the lake. The road leading from station to park is packed with little cafés, shops and bars, making it a wonderful getaway for a few hours, or an entire day and evening. To get there, take the JR Chūō or Sōbu line to Kichijōji and take the park exit. Walk to the Marui department store and hang a left on the road to its right. This road leads down to the park.

Similarly stocked with second-hand shops, bars, cafés and an artsy vibe is **Shimo-Kitazawa**, about 2.5km from Shibuya. Take the Keiō Inokashira line from Shibuya to Shimo-Kitazawa and make a circle through the neighbourhood. From the north exit, turn right and wander the boutique-and-café-filled alleys before heading back towards the train tracks. Cross the tracks to check out more shops, lively restaurants, tiny clubs and bars. Once you've travelled your loop, find the south entrance to the station on that side of the tracks.

MUSEUM OF MARITIME SCIENCE

船の科学館

This ship-shaped **museum** (Fune-no-Kagakukan; Map p122; ☎ 5500-1111; www.funokagakukan.or.jp; 3-1 Higashi-Yashio, Shinagawa-ku; adult/child ¥1000/600; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Yurikamome line to Fune-no-Kagakukan) has four floors of excellent displays dealing with every aspect of ships and shipping, with loads of highly detailed models. The 4m-long version of the largest battleship ever built, the *Yamato*, is stunning in detail and craftsmanship. There are also lots of hands-on exhibits that kids will love.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF EMERGING SCIENCE & INNOVATION 日本科学未来館

Also known as the **Miraikan** (Map p122; ☎ 3570-9151; www.miraikan.jst.go.jp; 2-41 Aomi, Kōtō-ku; adult/under 18 ¥500/200, children on Sat free; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Mon; 📍 Yurikamome line to Fune-no-Kagakukan or Telecom Center), this is undoubtedly Japan's best science museum and terrific for kids. Its hands-on exhibits are fun, as well as genuinely educational, whether you're 'driving' a virtual horse around Odaiba, building your own robot, or fathoming how Medaka riverfish could copulate in zero gravity aboard the space shuttle.

ŌEDO-ONSEN MONOGATARI

大江戸温泉物語

Modelled on an old Edo town, this **onsen** (Map p122; ☎ 5500-1126; www.oeodoonsen.jp in Japanese; 2-57 Aomi, Kōtō-ku; adult ¥1575-2827, child ¥840-1575; 🕒 11am-9am, last entry at 2am; 📍 Yurikamome line to Telecom Center)

pipes in natural mineral water from 1400m beneath Tokyo Bay. Though it sounds a little hokey, the park is attractively designed, with lovely mixed-gender (clothes required!) outdoor pools as well as traditional baths. Admission fees cover the rental of *yukata* and towels, and there are old-style restaurants and souvenir shops for a postbath bite and browse. Additional charges apply on weekends and holidays if you arrive after 6pm and stay for more than four hours.

TOYOTA MEGA WEB トヨタメガウェブ

Car fiends and kids can get behind the wheel of hybrid and electric cars at **Toyota Mega Web** (Map p122; ☎ 3599-0808; www.megaweb.gr.jp/english; Palette Town, Aomi 1-chôme, Kōtō-ku; admission free; 🕒 11am-9pm; 📍 Yurikamome line to Aomi), one of Toyota's company showrooms. Some attractions close at 8pm and the whole place closes on varying days each month, so consult the website before cruising by.

Elsewhere in Tokyo MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

For a more complete listing of museums and galleries in Tokyo, get hold of the TIC's *Museums & Art Galleries* pamphlet. Better still, look for *Tokyo Museums – A Complete Guide* (1993) by Thomas and Ellen Flannigan, which covers everything from the Tombstone Museum to the Button Museum.

You'll have to book several months before your trip if you want to get into the **Ghibli**

Museum (Map pp112-113; ☎ information 0570-000-777; www.ghibli-museum.jp/ticket/overseas.html; 1-1-83 Shimo-Renjaku, Mitaka-shi; adult ¥1000, child ¥100-700; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 JR Chūō line to Mitaka, south exit). This wonderful land from *anime* master Miyazaki Hayao's Studio Ghibli is geared towards children, but anyone who fell in love with *Howl's Moving Castle* or *Spirited Away* should try to visit. Each ticket contains an original animation cel from a Studio Ghibli film. Visit the website for ticket-purchase information and directions. You can also access the museum via Inokashira Park in Kichijōji (see the boxed text, p141).

The **Edo-Tokyo Museum** (Map pp112-113; ☎ 3626-9974; www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp; 1-4-1 Yokoami, Sumida-ku; adult/child ¥600/free, student ¥300-450; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Thu-Fri; 🚶 JR Sōbu line Ryōgoku or Toei Ōedo line to Ryōgoku, exit A4) is a gem, with a model of the bridge at Nihombashi dividing this vast display of re-creations of Edo-period and Meiji-period Tokyo. It's just behind Ryōgoku Sumō Stadium & Museum.

Near the main entrance of Ryōgoku Sumō Stadium, the **Sumō Museum** (Map pp112-113; ☎ 3622-0366; www.sumo.or.jp; 1-3-28 Yokoami, Sumida-ku; admission free; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; 🚶 JR Sōbu line Ryōgoku or Toei Ōedo line to Ryōgoku, exit A4) features interesting displays with sumō memorabilia, although there's no interpretive signage in English. During the grand tournaments in January, May and September the museum is open daily, but only to those attending the tournament.

The **Meguro Parasitological Museum** (Map p121; ☎ 3716-1264; 4-1-1 Shimo-Meguro, Meguro-ku; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 JR Yamanote, Namboku, Toei Mita lines to Meguro, west exit) is not for arachnophobes, but kids will find it irresistible. The crowning glory here is the preserved 8.8m-long tapeworm removed from the gut of a 40-year-old Yokohama man – if this doesn't give you the heebie-jeebies, step right up. Walk west along Meguro-dōri and find it about 400m past the Meguro River.

AMUSEMENT PARKS

Tokyo Disneyland (Map pp112-113; ☎ 045-683-3777; www.tokyodisneyresort.co.jp; 1-1 Maihama, Urayasu-shi, Chiba; one-day ticket adult/youth/child ¥5800/5000/3900; 🕒 vary; 🚶 JR Keiyō line to Maihama) is a near-perfect replica of the original in Anaheim, California, from Space Mountain to Pirates of the Caribbean. As at the original Disneyland, there are often long queues at popular rides. The resort

is open year-round except for about a dozen days a year (most of them in January), and opening hours vary seasonally, so check the website before heading out. To get there, catch the JR Keiyō line from Tokyo station.

Kōrakuen Amusement Park (Map pp126-7; ☎ 5800-9999; Tokyo Dome City, 1-3-61 Kōraku, Bunkyo-ku; adult/child ¥1200/600, most rides ¥600, unlimited rides adult/child ¥3300/2600; 🕒 10am-10pm; 🚶 JR Chūō, Sōbu lines to Suidobashi or Marunouchi line to Kōrakuen, Kōrakuen exit) is of the old shake-rattle-and-roll school, and is popular precisely for that reason. The Ultra Twister roller coaster is a thriller; Geopolis is a hi-tech addition to the amusement park. If you don't want to buy a day pass, you can pay per ride (¥400 to ¥1000).

ACTIVITIES

Sentō & Onsen

A good soak at a *sentō* (public bath) or *onsen* (mineral hot-spring spa) is a great way to relax after a day pounding the pavements of Tokyo. For a primer on bath etiquette, see p75.

Azabu-Jūban Onsen (Map p119; ☎ 3404-2610; 3rd fl, 1-5-22 Azabu-Jūban, Minato-ku; admission ¥1260; 🕒 11am-9pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 Namboku, Toei Ōedo lines to Azabu-Jūban, exit 4) is accustomed to foreign visitors (and tattoos) and has some helpful English signage. The dark, tea-coloured water here is scalding hot, and there's a lovely *rotemburo* (outdoor bath). Sunday afternoons mean live traditional music in the tatami tearoom. Downstairs, there's a less expensive, more bare-bones *sentō*. The nondescript building has a small sign in English; it's on the corner of Kurayamizaka and Azabu-Jūban-dōri.

Jakotsu-yu Onsen (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3841-8645; www.jakotsuyu.co.jp in Japanese; 1-11-11 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; admission ¥400; 🕒 1pm-midnight Wed-Mon; 🚶 Ginza line to Tawaramachi, exit 3) One of the hottest in town, with mineral-rich dark water at 45°C. This *onsen* has a small *rotemburo* with a garden setting. From Kokusai-dōri, make a right into the second alley north of Kaminarimon-dōri, then slip into the first narrow alley on the right.

In the same neighbourhood, near Sensō-ji, **Asakusa Kannon Onsen** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3844-4141; 2-7-6 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; admission ¥700; 🕒 6.30am-6pm Thu-Tue; 🚶 Ginza line to Asakusa, exits 1, 3 & 6) is a large old bathhouse with lots of room and historic ambience appropriate for a contemplative soak. Look for its ivy-covered exterior.

Kitsch-seekers should head straight for Ōedo-Onsen Monogatari (p141) in Odaiba. Some bigger *sentō* include the following:

Finlando Sauna (Map p116; ☎ 3209-9196; 1-20-1 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission noon-5pm ¥1900, 5pm-midnight ¥2100, midnight-noon ¥2600; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) A huge complex of baths and steam rooms in the middle Kabukichō, for men only.

Green Plaza Ladies Sauna (Map p116; ☎ 3207-5411; 9th fl, 1-29-2 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission 6am-10pm ¥2700, 10pm-6am ¥3300; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) Another spot in Kabukichō, this one's for the ladies, with the added novel bonus of a rooftop *rotemburo*.

WALKING TOUR

If you've only a day or two in Tokyo, east Shinjuku is a great place to sample a taste of Tokyo's cheery sensory overload. From inside Shinjuku station, follow the east exit or Kabukichō exit signs. Once you've passed through the ticket gates, take the 'My City' exit. As you surface, directly ahead of you is the **Studio Alta Building (1)** and its enormous video screen.

Continue walking east down Shinjuku-dōri past the bargain men's clothing and shoe shops. A little further on is **Kinokuniya bookshop (2)**; p106), with its superb collection of English books on the 7th floor. Continue walking and you'll pass **Mitsukoshi department store (3)**; p179) on the right and on the left, the Art Deco **Isetan Building (4)**; p179), which contains fashionable boutiques and the Isetan Art Gallery on the 5th floor. The gallery hosts a variety of art exhibits by Japanese artists; hours vary and admission is free.

Turn left at Isetan and walk down to Yasukuni-dōri. A lane on the opposite side of the road leads to **Hanazono-jinja (5)**; p136), which nestles so close to Tokyo's most infamous red-light district that its clientele can make for some interesting people-watching. The shrine has a reputation for bringing success to business ventures – both legitimate and otherwise.

Exit Hanazono-jinja onto **Golden Gai (6)**; p163), a tiny network of alleyways devoted entirely to small, stand-up watering holes. Traditionally the haunt of bohemian Tokyoites, it's a safe area to take a walk, even by night (by day it's usually deserted). If you decide to stop for a drink, keep in mind that some bars serve regulars only. It's rumoured that this little maze is gradually being bought up by Seibu department store, but for now the Golden Gai hangs on.



WALK FACTS

Distance: 2km
Duration: two hours

Continue in the same direction along the alleyways that run parallel to Yasukuni-dōri and you'll reach **Kabukichō** (p136), Tokyo's notorious red-light district. Despite its reputation, it's a relatively safe area to walk around. Most of what goes on in these environs is pretty much inaccessible to foreigners, though single men are likely to be approached by touts offering to take them to one of the 'pink cabarets'.

Continue along the perimeter of Kabukichō and look for the enormous **Koma Theatre (7)**, which started off as a cinema, but quickly switched to stage shows. It still hosts performances of a more mainstream variety than those elsewhere in Kabukichō. The square facing the Koma is ringed by cinemas and is also a popular busking spot at night, though *yakuza* (mafia) are usually quick about moving anyone too popular along. Take any of the lanes radiating off the square to see Kabukichō at its best.

From this point wander back to Yasukuni-dōri and take one of the lanes that connect it with Shinjuku-dōri.

COURSES

A Taste of Culture (☎ 5716 5751; www.tasteofculture.com; courses from ¥5500) Perhaps your last meal has inspired you to learn how to assemble beautiful, balanced

ben-tō (boxed meals) yourself? These folks can teach you how. Courses run by English-speaking culinary pros include informative tastings, cooking classes and market tours. Check out the website for current classes on offer; customised courses can also be arranged.

Sōgetsu School of Ikebana (Map p119; ☎ 3408-1151; www.sogetsu.or.jp/english/index.html; Sōgetsu Kaikan Bldg, 7-2-21 Akasaka, Minato-ku; courses ¥4850; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to 8pm Fri; 📍 Ginza, Hanzōmon, Toei Ōedo lines to Aoyama-itchōme, exit 4) If you're interested in the art of *ikebana*, this offers courses taught in English. The avant-garde Sōgetsu School was founded on the idea that there are no limits to *ikebana*, nor to where or when it can be practised. Call ahead for information about classes; prices include flowers and tax.

TOKYO FOR CHILDREN

Tokyo is a dangerous place to take children, as they'll be doted upon, find sources of stimulation from all sides, and get accosted by a never ending parade of novel distractions and tempting treats.

Great museums for rainy days include the **National Museum of Emerging Science & Innovation** (p141), the **Meguro Parasitological Museum** (p142) and the **Ghibli Museum** (p142). Showrooms like the **Sony Building** (p132) and **Toyota Mega Web** (p141) have terrific interactive activities. Fair-weather jaunts could include **Ueno Zoo** (p134), weekends at **Yoyogi Park** (p138) and Tokyo's **amusement parks** (p142).

Tokyo's toy shops are always a huge hit, notably **Hakuhinkan Toy Park** (p180) and **Kid-lyland** (p180).

TOURS

The best way to get under the skin of any city is to have a local show you around, and in Tokyo you can meet up with someone to do just that, gratis.

Mr Oka (www.homestead.com/mroka; half-day from ¥2000) A wonderful, well-informed English-speaking guide who conducts walking tours around the city.

Tokyo Free Guide (www.tokyofreeguide.com) A group of volunteer tour guides who will tailor walking tours according to your interests. You'll have to pay for any admission and transport fees and your own meals. Guides' language skills may vary, but it's a great way to get around and get to know a friendly Tokyoite. Book before you arrive in town.

Several reliable bus companies offer a wide variety of Tokyo tours, from all-day, city-wide affairs to shorter, half-day tours or evenings taking in *sukiyaki* dinners and performances

at Kabuki-za (p132). All of the following companies provide English-speaking guides and most tours pick up guests at various major hotels around town.

Hato Bus Tours (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3435-6081; www.hato-bus.com; World Trade Center Bldg, 2-4-1 Hamamatsuchō, Minato-ku; ☎ 9am-7pm) Among its variety of tours, the Panoramic Tour (¥9800) takes in most of Tokyo's major sights and includes lunch and a Tokyo Bay cruise. Some tours depart from Hamamatsuchō bus terminal.

Japan Gray Line (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3595-5939; fax 3595-5948; www.jgl.co.jp/inbound/traveler/traveler.htm; 1-4-2 Toranomon, Minato-ku; ☎ 9am-6pm) Gray Line tours are slightly more limited than JTB's in choice but similar in scope.

JTB's Sunrise Tours (Map pp112-13; ☎ 5796-5454; www.jtbgmt.com/sunrisetour; 2-3-11 Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku; ☎ 9am-6pm) Sunrise's general sightseeing tours are nearly identical to the Hato Bus offerings. Half-day morning or afternoon tours go for ¥5000.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

There is a festival of one sort or another every day in Tokyo. Call or visit the JNTO's TIC for up-to-date information. Some of the major celebrations:

Ganjitsu At New Year, Tokyoites head to Meiji-jingū (Map p117), Sensō-ji (Map pp130-1) or Yasukuni-jinja (Map pp126-7).

Hanami (Cherry Blossom Viewing) Chaotic at Ueno-kōen (p133), peaceful at Shinjuku-gyoen (p137); early to mid-April.

Sanja Matsuri A massive festival on the third weekend of May, where 100 *mikoshi* (portable shrines) are paraded through Asakusa.

Samba Matsuri Asakusa's famous wild summer samba extravaganza in late August.

Bōnen-kai Season This last one isn't an official festival at all, but the late-December period leading up to New Year, when the Japanese hold their drink-and-be-merry year-end parties.

SLEEPING

In Tokyo you can choose from the whole range of Japanese accommodation, from capsule hotels to ryokan, but budget accommodation in Tokyo is a bit pricier than elsewhere. Hotels are expensive, and prices quoted here are exclusive of the additional 5% consumption tax as well the accommodation tax of ¥100/200 per person per night on hotel rates over ¥10,000/15,000. Higher-end accommodations add insult to financial injury with service charges of 10% to 18%. Top-end establishments typically accept credit

cards, but many midrange hotels do not – best to check beforehand. Booking online usually nets well-discounted rates, especially at higher-end hotels.

Most midrange hotels in Tokyo are business hotels and are reasonably priced. Always check what time your hotel locks its doors before heading out at night – though some hotels stay open all night, many lock up at midnight or 1am.

If you can make a few concessions to Japanese etiquette, ryokan and *minshuku* (Japanese equivalent of a B&B) are quite inexpensive, with rates from around ¥4500 per person. In Tokyo, unlike elsewhere in Japan, ryokan may offer meals for an extra fee and may not supply basic amenities like towels or toiletries.

At youth hostels and so-called '*gaijin* houses' (foreigner houses) you can get single rates down to ¥3500 per person (about as low as it gets in Tokyo). But youth hostels impose an early-evening curfew, and *gaijin* houses typically require minimum stays of one month.

The **Welcome Inn Reservation Center** (www.itc.jp; Narita Airport Terminals 1 & 2; ☎ 8am-8pm), with another location at the TIC (p109) in central Tokyo, is a free service that will make reservations for you at hotels and ryokan in the Japan Welcome Inn hotel group.

If you absolutely must find inexpensive accommodation, book before you arrive. Flying into Narita – particularly at night – without accommodation lined up can be hellish. For hotels near Narita airport, see p230.

For more detailed information on capsule hotels, *gaijin* houses, hostels and love hotels, see p784.

Tokyo International Youth Hostel (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3235-1107, fax 3267-4000; www.tokyo-ih.jp; 1-1 Kagurakashi, Shinjuku-ku; dm ¥3860; ☎ 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 JR Sōbu line to Iidabashi, west exit or Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō, Toei Ōedo lines to Iidabashi, B2b exit) No membership is required here, credit cards are accepted and you can book ahead online. The hostel is on the 18th floor of the Ramla Building, which towers next to Iidabashi station. Check-in is 3pm to 10pm, and breakfast/dinner costs a paltry ¥450/900. The Narita airport TIC (see p109) has a step-by-step instruction sheet on the cheapest way to get from airport to hostel.

Sakura Hostel (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3847-8111, fax 3847-8112; www.sakura-hostel.co.jp; 2-24-2 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; dm from ¥2940; ☎ 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 Ginza line to Tawaramachi, exit 3)

Run by the friendly and eminently helpful Sakura House folks who also run an empire of *gaijin* houses, this cheery hostel requires no membership and includes amenities like laundry facilities, bike rentals and kitchen. Bonus: no curfew. See the website for a map and detailed directions from the airport.

Central Tokyo 東京中心部

Along with Akasaka, Ginza is home to the thickest concentration of elite hotels in Tokyo. Prices here reflect the desirable real estate and proximity to Tokyo station, great shopping, good restaurants, all manner of theatre, and the political and financial districts of the city.

BUDGET

Sakura Hotel (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3261-3939, fax 3264-2777; www.sakura-hotel.co.jp; 2-21-4 Kanda-Jimbōchō, Chiyoda-ku; dm/s/d ¥3780/7140/8200; ☎ 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 Hanzōmon, Toei Mita, Toei Shinjuku lines to Jimbōchō, exits A1 & A6) Email ahead for reservations at this reliable, sociable spot in the bookshop district. The helpful staff is bilingual, the bar-café is open 24 hours and there's a coin-operated laundry. From the A6 exit, walk south and turn right at the *kōban* (police box); the hotel is 200m on the right. Check-in is at 1pm.

MIDRANGE

All of the hotels listed in this section accept credit cards, unless indicated otherwise.

Hotel Villa Fontaine Shiodome (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3569-2220, fax 3569-2221; www.villa-fontaine.co.jp/eng/shiodome/index.html; 1-9-2 Higashi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku; s/d/tw from ¥10,000/14,000/18,000, all incl breakfast; ☎ 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 Toei Ōedo line to Shiodome, exit 10) This place is a superb midrange deal with an upscale feel. Lighting in lobby areas is dim and subtly spooky, but the rooms are comfortable and modern, with internet-TV and high-speed LAN. No great views here, but it does offer the rarity of a complimentary buffet breakfast. Check-in 3pm.

Yaesu Terminal Hotel (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3281-3771, fax 3281-3089; www.yth.jp; 1-5-14 Yaesu, Chūō-ku; s/d from ¥11,340/16,590; ☎ 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 JR Yamanote line to Tokyo, Yaesu north exit or Ginza line to Nihombashi, exit B3) Near Tokyo station, this business hotel sports clean lines. Rooms are quite small, but prices are good for this area and it feels a touch classier than your typical business hotel. The in-house restaurant's wall of plate-glass windows looks onto streetside treetops. Check-in is 1pm.

MISSING THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN

Cinderellas who've stayed out partying past midnight and found that their last train has turned into a *kabocha* (Japanese pumpkin) needn't fret. If dancing the night away doesn't appeal, and an astronomically priced taxi ride doesn't compute, give the capsule hotel a miss and try a *manga kissa* instead.

Kissaten (coffee shops) have long been mainstays for socialising away from home, but the next-generation versions offer a place for watching DVDs, getting some Playstation action, catching up on email or catching some Zs. *Manga kissa* have libraries of DVDs and manga, bottomless cups of coffee and soft drinks, inexpensive food, and have staff making regular rounds to assure safe surfing and sleeping.

Overnight rates – typically around ¥2500 for eight hours – are a bargain. Check in at the reception desk, prepay for your stay and while away the wee hours in a cosy private cubicle. Try one of these if you're stranded:

Aprecio (Map p116; ☎ 3205-7336; www.aprecio.co.jp in Japanese; B1 fl, Hygeia Plaza, 2-44-1 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; 1st 30min ¥300, 10min thereafter ¥100; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) This clean, comfortable spot in Kabukichō offers all the usuals in smoking and nonsmoking wings, plus massage and beauty services, billiards and darts.

Bagus Gran Cyber Cafe (Map p117; ☎ 5428-3676; www.bagus-99.com/netcafe in Japanese; 6th fl, 28-6 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; per 8hr ¥1500; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) This popular chain has branches all over Tokyo.

Manga Hiroba (Map p119; ☎ 3497-1751; 2nd fl, Shuwa Roppongi Bldg, 3-14-12 Roppongi, Minato-ku; 1st hr ¥380, 30min thereafter ¥150; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Along Gaien-higashi-dōri, this one's handy for pre- or post-party surfing but is always crowded.

GINZA NIKKŌ HOTEL (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3571-4911; fax 3571-8379; www.ginza-nikko-hotel.com/english/index.html; 8-4-21 Ginza, Chūō-ku; s/d/tw from ¥13,960/29,075/27,920; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi, Ginza exit or Ginza, Marunouchi line to Shimbashi, exit 5) In a prime location right on Sotobori-dōri between Ginza and Shimbashi, this is a quality business hotel with cosy rooms and decently sized bathtubs. Check-in is at 1pm.

Tokyo Green Hotel Ochanomizu (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3255-4161; fax 3255-4962; www.greenhotel.co.jp/en/hotel_list/ochanomizu.html; 2-6 Kanda-Awajichō, Chiyoda-ku; s/d/tw ¥8400/13,000/14,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 JR Chūō line to Ochanomizu, Hijiribashi exit or Marunouchi line to Awajichō, exit A5) Though the neighbourhood offers little of interest, this clean, thoughtfully renovated business hotel is the nicest in Kanda. Its visual appeal makes it a lovely oasis within the surrounding monotonous concrete jungle, with comfortable and spotless rooms and a friendly staff. Look for the hotel's bamboo-covered entryway along Sotobori-dōri.

Mitsui Urban Hotel Ginza (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3572-4131; fax 3572-4254; www.mitsuiunko.co.jp/english/map/m_htm/gjn.htm; 8-6-15 Ginza, Chūō-ku; s/d ¥14,500/25,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi, Ginza exit or Ginza, Marunouchi line to Shimbashi, exit 3) Everything about this place is shiny, shiny. Rooms here

have an elegant feel and the usual amenities; this is a solid choice for comfortable accommodation at this end of Ginza. The ground-floor café has nice rounded windows for scoping the street over your morning cuppa. Check-in is at 1pm.

Ryokan Ryumeikan-Honten (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3251-1135; fax 3251-0270; www.ryumeikan.co.jp/honten_e.htm; 3-4 Kanda-Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku; s/d incl breakfast from ¥10,000/17,000; 🕒 🚶; 🚶 JR Chūō line to Ochanomizu, Hijiribashi exit or Chiyoda line to Shim-Ochanomizu, exit B3) Near Akihabara, this little spot is a good choice for its Japanese-style rooms, offered at rates comparable to most Western-style accommodations, including a continental breakfast. Find it across the boulevard from the Sumitomo Mitsui Insurance building; check-in is at 2pm.

TOP END

Hotel Seijo Ginza (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3535-1111; fax 3535-1110; www.seijo-ginza.com; 1-11-2 Ginza, Chūō-ku; r ¥45,000-223,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Ginza, Yūrakuchō lines to Ginza-itcho, exit 7) For an extravagant experience of over-the-top service in impossibly dignified surroundings, book in advance at this exclusive retreat. With only 77 rooms, the Seijo Ginza is the only hotel in Tokyo providing 24-hour personal butler service for

each guest. Check-in is at 2pm; find it on the corner of Chūō-dōri and Sakura-dōri.

Palace Hotel (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3211-5211; fax 3211-6987; www.palacehotelstokyo.com; 1-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku; s/d/tw ¥24,000/33,000/38,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Chiyoda, Hanzōmon, Marunouchi, Tōzai, Toei Mita lines to Ōtemachi, exit C13b) Directly alongside the Imperial Palace East Garden, this hotel has an classic, old-fashioned atmosphere and arguably the best location in Tokyo. Many rooms here command impressive views over the palace. The service is wonderful, as are the hotel's restaurants. Check-in is at noon.

Imperial Hotel (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3504-1111; fax 3504-9146; www.imperialhotel.co.jp; 1-1-1 Uchisaiwaichō, Chiyoda-ku; s/d from ¥35,700/40,950; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Chiyoda, Hibiya, Toei Mita lines to Hibiya, exit A13) One of Tokyo's grand old hotels, the Imperial is within easy walking distance of the Ginza sights and Hibiya-kōen. It has all the amenities of its standard, and rooms are large and tastefully appointed. Check-in is at noon.

Conrad Hotel (Map pp124-5; ☎ 6388-8000; fax 6388-8001; tokyoinfo@conradhotels.com; 1-9-1 Higashi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥52,000/57,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Toei Ōedo line to Shiodome, exit 10) It's Big. Whether you choose city or garden views, you'll find varnished hardwoods and cushy elegance. Enormous bathrooms boast rainshower fixtures, freestanding tubs and floor-to-ceiling glass walls facing the window (automated blinds shut for privacy). Intra-hotel cell phones, a gym overlooking the 25m pool and huge plasma TVs are some of the superlative perks.

our pick Mitsui Garden Hotel Ginza (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3543-1131; fax 3543-5531; www.gardenhotels.co.jp/eng/ginza.html; 8-13-1 Ginza, Chūō-ku; s/d from ¥16,800/25,200; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi, Ginza exit or Ginza, Marunouchi lines to Shimbashi, exit 1) Semiorganic urban décor characterises this sleek new hotel. Hardwood details and a minimalist aesthetic meet a glass-walled toilet for, er, two-way views (for very intimate guests). High-tech luxuries include flat-screen TVs and Bose sound systems. Six universal rooms accommodate wheelchair users. Check-in is at 3pm.

Ueno 上野

Ueno may be a bit of a trek from the bright lights, but it's a great sightseeing base – especially for museum buffs – and there are several budget ryokan in the area.

The ryokan here are better value, but if they're all full, the business hotels in the

neighbourhood are generally cheaper than those in other areas around Tokyo.

BUDGET

Happily, all of these budget spots accept major credit cards.

Annex Katsutarō Ryokan (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3828-2500; fax 3821-5400; www.katsutaro.com; 3-8-4 Yanaka, Taitō-ku; s/d/tr with bathroom from ¥6300/10,500/14,700; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Chiyoda line to Sendagi, exit 2) All of the bright, Japanese-style rooms at the spotless Annex have Western-style baths attached. Each room has LAN access, but with free internet and free coffee in the lobby, why not browse downstairs to chat with the cheery proprietress? Call ahead for directions in English. Credit cards accepted; check-in is at 3pm.

Ryokan Katsutarō (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3821-9808; fax 3821-4789; 4-16-8 Ikenohata, Taitō-ku; s/d/tr without bathroom ¥5200/8400/12,300, d/tr with bathroom ¥9600/13,200; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Chiyoda line to Nezu, exit 2) A pleasant ramble from Ueno Zoo and Ueno Park museums, this tiny, quaint ryokan is run by the friendly brother of the Annex's manager. Western breakfasts cost an extra ¥500. Call for directions from the station or download a map from the website.

Sawanoya Ryokan (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3822-2251; fax 3822-2252; www.tctv.ne.jp/members/sawanoya; 2-3-11 Yanaka, Taitō-ku; s without bathroom ¥4940-5250, d/tr with bathroom ¥9870/14,175; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 Chiyoda line to Nezu, exit 1) A cosy, family-run ryokan, Sawanoya is a good choice if you're looking for a home-like atmosphere. Call for walking directions from the station, or download a map from the website. If you're coming from Narita airport, it's inexpensive and easiest to catch a taxi from Ueno station. Check-in is at 2pm.

Sakura Ryokan (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3876-8118; www.sakura-ryokan.com; 2-6-2 Iriya, Taitō-ku; s with/without bathroom ¥6600/5500, d with/without bathroom ¥11,000/10,000; 🕒 🚶; 🚶 Hibiya line to Iriya, exit 1) One stop from Ueno, the modest, family-run Sakura Ryokan is a good base for those interested in staying in contemporary working-class Shitamachi. Definitely opt for a Japanese-style room. Print out a map and directions from the website; check-in is at 3pm. Both Japanese and Western breakfasts cost a reasonable ¥840.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Parkside (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3836-5711; fax 3831-6641; www.parkside.co.jp; 2-11-18 Ueno, Taitō-ku; s/d from ¥9200/15,500, Japanese style d ¥18,000; 🕒 🚶 🚶; 🚶 JR

Yamanote line to Ueno, Shinobazu exit) Overlooking the gigantic lily pads of Shinobazu Pond, the Parkside is a great choice in this neighbourhood, particularly if you can get a room with a view on the 4th floor or above. It's clean, recently renovated and centrally located, with Japanese-style rooms available. Check-in is at 2pm.

Suigetsu Hotel Ōgaisō (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3822-4611; fax 3823-4340; www.ohgai.co.jp/index-e.html; 3-21 Ikenohata, Taitō-ku; Western-style s ¥8000, Japanese-style d ¥25,000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Nezu, exit 2) On the western side of the park, this hotel combines typical business-hotel comforts with Japanese-style ambience. Though set up like a Western hotel, it offers tatami rooms, several large Japanese-style baths and a lovely garden in the centre of the complex. Check-in is at 3pm.

Hotel Green Capital (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3842-2411; fax 3842-2414; www.thehotel.co.jp/en/green_capital/index.php; 7-8-23 Ueno, Taitō-ku; s/d ¥7875/13,125; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ueno, Iriya exit) Quite close to Ueno station, this plain-jane business hotel has polite staff and slightly bigger-than-average rooms to recommend it. The rooms are clean and new, and the prices competitive. Check-in is at 3pm.

Asakusa 浅草

If you don't mind sacrificing central location for unpretentious Shitamachi atmosphere, Asakusa (Map pp130-1) is a fine place to stay, with some of Tokyo's best budget accommodations.

BUDGET

Unless otherwise specified, all of the places listed here require payment in full upon check-in, are BYOT (bring your own towel) and none accept credit cards.

Khao San Guesthouse (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3842-8286; www.khaosan-tokyo.com; 2-1-5 Kaminarimon, Taitō-ku; dm/d ¥2200/5000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Ginza, Toei Asakusa lines to Asakusa, exits 4 & A2b) Very friendly, remarkably inexpensive and home-like in feel, the Khao San is a warm intro to Tokyo. Located on the bank of the Sumida River, it's central to Asakusa bustle and has a pleasant rooftop terrace. Check-in is at 3pm.

our pick K's House (Map pp130-1; ☎ 5833-0555; fax 5833-0444; http://kshouse.jp/tokyo-e/index.html; 3-20-10 Kuramae, Taitō-ku; per person dm/s/d from ¥2800/3900/3400; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Toei Asakusa, Toei Ōedo lines to Kuramae, exits A2 & A6) This new guesthouse is spotless, with homey common areas and kitchen.

There's also a coin-operated laundry and even a rooftop terrace overlooking the Sumida River. Check room availability online and book in advance. Credit cards are accepted and it provides towels. Check-in is at 3pm.

Tokyo Ryokan (Map pp130-1; ☎ 090-8879-3599; www.tokyoryokan.com; 2-4-8 Nishi-Asakusa, Taitō-ku; per person with shared bathroom ¥3000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Ginza line to Tawaramachi, exit 3) With only three rooms in this immaculate, intimate little ryokan, book well ahead through the website (which contains a detailed map and directions). The English-speaking manager here is helpful and open, and always happy to chat. Check-in is at 11am.

Taitō Ryokan (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3843-2822, 090-5321-3599; www.libertyhouse.gr.jp; 2-1-4 Nishi-Asakusa, Taitō-ku; per person with shared bathroom ¥3000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Ginza line to Tawaramachi, exit 3) The tiny, creaky Taitō is good value, run by sociable English speakers. It can be noisy, and palatial it ain't, but who cares at this price. Solo travellers should expect to share a room when demand is high. The website has a map containing detailed directions.

Capsule Hotel Riverside (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3844-5117; fax 3841-6566; www.asakusa-capsule.jp/english; 2-20-4 Kaminarimon, Taitō-ku; capsules ¥3000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Ginza, Toei Asakusa lines to Asakusa, exits 3 & 4) Within stumbling distance from Asakusa station, this is one capsule hotel that accepts women (the 8th floor is women only). Capsules are a bargain at this cosy place, including *yukata* and use of the bath facilities. Look for the entrance around the back of the building. Check-in is at 3pm.

MIDRANGE

our pick Ryokan Shigetsu (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3843-2345; fax 3843-2348; www.shigetsu.com; 1-31-11 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; Western-style s/d ¥7700/14,700, Japanese-style s/d from ¥9450/16,800; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ Ginza, Toei Asakusa lines to Asakusa, exits 1 & 2) Perfectly situated off Nakamise-dōri, Ryokan Shigetsu comes close to the true ryokan experience. Most rooms have en suite bathrooms, but bathing in the communal baths is a must – both the black granite bath and the Japanese cypress one have unique, stunning views. Lovely Japanese breakfasts cost ¥1300. Check-in is at 3pm.

TOP END

Asakusa View Hotel (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3847-1111; fax 3842-2117; www.viewhotels.co.jp/asakusa/english/index.html; 3-17-1 Nishi-Asakusa, Taitō-ku; s/d/tw from ¥15,000/28,000/28,000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺; ㊤ Ginza line to Tawaramachi, exit 3) The ritziest joint in the neigh-

bourhood isn't called the Asakusa View for nothing. While rooms aren't particularly striking, they're spacious and, as the name suggests, have floor-to-ceiling windows with smashing vistas. Try to swing a room on a higher floor for the best views of Sensō-ji or Ueno Park. Check-in is at 1pm.

Ikebukuro 池袋

Ikebukuro, though a convenient stop on the Yamanote line, is not one of Tokyo's sexiest neighbourhoods – but this older district does have its attractions and a certain unflashy appeal.

BUDGET

Kimi Ryokan (Map p114; ☎ 3971-3766; fax 3987-1326; www.kimi-ryokan.jp; 2-36-8 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d ¥4500/6500-7500; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) Kimi Ryokan is one of Tokyo's best budget accommodations, with clean Japanese-style rooms and a convivial lounge area decorated with the wonderful owner's changing *ikebana*. Shared bathrooms have both showers and a Japanese-style bath. Be sure to book ahead, and print a helpful map from the website. Check-in is at 3pm.

House Ikebukuro (Map p114; ☎ 3984-3399, 3984-3999; www.housejp.com.tw/englishindex.htm; 2-20-1 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; d/tr ¥6000/9000, ste from ¥11,000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) Also in west Ikebukuro, this house has a variety of smallish tatami rooms, all with shared bathroom and a common kitchen. Better, however, are the apartmentlike suites in the annexe, with kitchenettes and en suite bathrooms. Again, book ahead. Check-in is at 3pm; find directions and maps on the website.

MIDRANGE

There are innumerable business, love and capsule hotels in the Ikebukuro area. Be aware that the local capsule hotels are not as accustomed to foreign guests as their counterparts in Akasaka and Shinjuku.

Hotel Strix Tokyo (Map p114; ☎ 5396-0111, fax 5396-9815; www.strix.jp in Japanese; 2-3-1 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d from ¥15,000/20,000; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) The most central and stylish option in the neighbourhood, the Strix was recently renovated by a new hotelier. Retro-inspired rooms (and beds) are quite spacious by the usual standard for business hotels. Look for its teal-coloured dome on the corner two blocks from the west exit. Check-in is 2pm.

Hotel Grand City (Map p114; ☎ 3984-5121, fax 3984-5127; www.grand-city.gr.jp in Japanese; 1-30-7 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d/tw ¥8400/10,500/14,700; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit) On the east side of Ikebukuro, this is a standard but friendly business hotel with relatively inexpensive rates and even a ladies-only floor. Rooms are on the decidedly small side, and light sleepers should note its location next door to an entertainment complex featuring late-night batting cages. Check-in is at 2pm.

Hotel Sunroute Ikebukuro (Map p114; ☎ 3980-1911, fax 3980-5286; www.sunroute-ikebukuro.com in Japanese; 1-39-4 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d from ¥10,395/15,750; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, north exit) Just along the street from the main Bic Camera store, this place has pleasant, clean rooms and a friendly staff, some of whom speak English. Though beds are a bit on the hard side, rooms feel less spartan than the standard. Check-in is at 2pm.

Toyoko Inn (Map p114; ☎ 5960-1045, fax 5960-1046; www.toyoko-inn.com/eng; 2-50-5 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d & tw ¥6800/8800, all incl breakfast; ❶ ❷ ❸ wi-fi; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, north exit) The Toyoko Inn is one of the most appealing of the cheaper business hotels around here. Rooms are tidy, if tiny, and Japanese-style rooms are available. Room rates even include a Japanese breakfast. Check-in is at 4pm.

More of Ikebukuro's midrange options:

Hotel Theatre (Map p114; ☎ 3988-2251, fax 3988-2260; www.theatres.co.jp/hotel in Japanese; 1-21-4 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d/tw from ¥9135/12,600/15,750; ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit) Located along Sunshine 60-dōri, this is centrally located and clean. Check-in is at 2pm.

Ark Hotel (Map p114; ☎ 3590-0111, fax 3590-0224; http://tokyo.ark-hotel.co.jp; 3-5-5 Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; s/d/tw from ¥9240/16,800/17,850; ❶ ❷) Another comfortable place with clean rooms and a polite staff; check-in is at 3pm.

Shinjuku 新宿

Shinjuku (Map p116) is full of business hotels accustomed to foreign guests, and the competition keeps prices reasonable. Near massive Shinjuku station, a hub for nearly every rail line snaking in and around Tokyo, this area makes a great base camp and has its own dizzying myriad of attractions.

BUDGET

Green Plaza Shinjuku (Map p116; ☎ 3207-4923; www.hgshinjuku.jp/hotel in Japanese; 1-29-2 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-

ku; capsules ¥4300; ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) If you have a Y-chromosome, you can spend the night in a curtain-cordoned capsule with 100 snoring salarymen passed out from drinking with colleagues. Capsules are only available to men, but women can crash here at the 9th-floor sauna (p143). Check-in on the 3rd floor after 3pm.

MIDRANGE

Shinjuku Park Hotel (Map p116; ㊤ 3356-0241; fax 3352-2733; shinjukuparkhotel.co.jp; 5-27-9 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku; s/d/tw from ¥7900/13,800, Japanese-style r ¥24,800; ㊤ ㊤ wi-fi; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, new south exit) Just south of the Takashimaya Times Sq complex, this pleasant business hotel has larger rooms than most. Solo travellers should spend up for a B-type single for the bigger bed, but everyone should try booking a room with a park view of Shinjuku-gyoen. Check-in is at 3pm.

Hotel Sunlite Shinjuku (Map p116; ㊤ 3356-0391; fax 3356-1223; www.sunlite.co.jp; 5-15-8 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d/tw from ¥8715/12,075/14,175; ㊤; ㊤ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit (7) At the lower end of the midrange price scale, the clean and comfortable Sunlite won't break the budget, and it even accepts credit cards. Small rooms are well maintained and cosy, and its central location in east Shinjuku puts you near Shinjuku-gyoen, nocturnal life in Kabukichō and Shinjuku shopping. Check-in is at 3pm.

City Hotel Lornstar (Map p116; ㊤ 3356-6511; fax 3350-9505; www.thehotel.co.jp/en/lornstar/index.php; 2-12-12 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d/tw ¥7350/9450/10,500; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit (8) The modestly proportioned rooms here are a good choice for budget travellers; though it's no frills, it exudes a bit of personality and is probably the most queer-friendly place in Tokyo. Credit cards are accepted and a simple continental breakfast is provided. Check-in is at 2pm.

Shinjuku Washington Hotel (Map p116; ㊤ 3343-3111; fax 3342-2575; www.wh-rsv.com/english/shinjuku/index.html; 3-2-9 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d/tw from ¥9400/15,000/16,000; ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, south exit) This efficient business hotel has tonnes of room and lots of in-house restaurants. Rooms and windows are small, but views from the upper floors are great. There's also a ladies-only floor. Check-in is at 2pm. From Shinjuku station, take the south exit to Kōshū-kaidō, turn right on Gijido-dōri and take the first left after that.

More midrange options in Shinjuku:

Shinjuku New City Hotel (Map p116; ㊤ 3375-6511, 3375-6535; www.newcityhotel.co.jp; 4-31-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d/tw from ¥9450/15,750/14,700; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit A4) Some rooms have pretty park views of Chūō-kōen, and staff is friendly. Check-in is at 3pm.

Star Hotel Tokyo (Map p116; ㊤ 3361-1111; fax 3369-4216; www.starhotel.co.jp/city/tokyo/guest/e-standard.html; 7-10-5 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d from ¥9975/14,700; ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit) In west Shinjuku, this rather average hotel is very conveniently located. From Shinjuku station, cross Ōme-kaidō and turn left on Yasukuni-dōri. Check-in is at 1pm.

TOP END

Park Hyatt Tokyo (Map p116; ㊤ 5322-1234; fax 5322-1288; tokyo.park.hyatt.com; 3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; r/ste from ¥55,650/68,250; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, south exit) Views here are legendarily stunning, day and night, and appear to be part of another world from these serene heights. Dignified but relaxed, the stylishly understated rooms are done in naturally finished wood, fabric and marble. Staff is gracefully, discreetly attentive and the restaurants are among Tokyo's best.

Keiō Plaza Hotel (Map p116; ㊤ 3344-0111; fax 3345-8269; www.keioplaza.com; 2-2-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; s/d ¥22,000/26,000, Japanese-style ste ¥80,000; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤ ㊤) The Keiō Plaza has 47 floors and a simple, refined style. Rooms provide excellent views over west Shinjuku and there's a wealth of restaurants in the hotel. Check-in is at 1pm.

Hotel Century Southern Tower (Map p116; ㊤ 3354-0111; fax 3354-0100; www.southerntower.co.jp; 2-2-1 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku; s/d from ¥16,000/24,000; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, new south exit) Graced with expansive views, this Shinjuku monolith is very reasonably priced for the intangible sense of space the windows reveal. If it weren't so central and convenient, the views would be this place's winning hand. Find reception on the 20th floor of the Odakyū Southern Tower Building. Check-in is at 2pm.

Shibuya 渋谷

MIDRANGE

Pickings are slim in Shibuya for midrange hotels. Less expensive business hotels in Ueno, Ikebukuro and even Shinjuku represent much better value for money, but then you're not in as fun a spot as in Shib.

Shibuya City Hotel (Map p117; ㊤ 5489-1010; fax 5489-1030; www.shibuya-city-hotel.com in Japanese; 1-1

Maruyamachō, Shibuya-ku; s/d from ¥9450/18,900; ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Night owls will love this hotel, strategically located on the lower slope of Love Hotel Hill and a short downhill roll from good live-music venues and clubs. For such a prime location, the prices are a fabulous deal. It has comfortable, spacious rooms, including one tricked-out wheelchair-friendly room (¥14,800).

Shibuya Tōbu Hotel (Map p117; ㊤ 3476-0111; fax 3476-0903; sby.shukuhaku@tobuhotel.co.jp; 3-1 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; s ¥13,960-16,370, d ¥17,294-25,610; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) One of Shibuya's nicest business hotels on the upscale end, the rooms here are stylish, clean and relatively spacious. Common areas are pleasant and sparkly, and the friendly, attentive staff speaks English. Check-in is at 2pm.

Shibuya Tōkyū Inn (Map p117; ㊤ 3498-0109; fax 3498-0189; www.tokyuhotels.co.jp/en/TI/TI_SHIBU/index.shtml; 1-24-10 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku; s/d/tw from ¥13,650/21,420/21,840; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, east exit) At a similar standard to the Shibuya Tōbu Hotel, the vaguely mod nonsmoking rooms are probably the best of the bunch. They also feature women-only rooms outfitted with nightgowns, special toiletries and humidifiers. Check-in is at 3pm; the hotel is right on Meiji-dōri.

TOP END

Creston Hotel (Map p117; ㊤ 3481-5800; fax 3481-5515; www.crestonhotel.co.jp/shibuya/index.html; 10-8 Kamiyamachō, Shibuya-ku; s/d from ¥15,115/22,145; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) About a 10-minute walk from the station, the unassuming chic Creston is tucked away in a quiet corner of Shibuya. With a laid-back, classy ambience, it's a sweet deal for this neighbourhood. Find a map to the hotel on its website; check-in is at 3pm.

our pick Cerulean Tower Tōkyū Hotel (Map p117; ㊤ 3476-3000; fax 3476-3001; www.ceruleantower-hotel.com; 26-1 Sakuragaokachō, Shibuya-ku; s/d from ¥28,875/40,425; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, south exit) Sprawl out on huge beds and drink deeply of the big views of the glittery city, because there's room to breathe in these enormous quarters. The sleek lobby opens onto a garden view, an organic complement to the clean modern aesthetic of this place. Arts fiends take note: quality *nō* and jazz performances take place at the impressive in-house theatre and jazz club. Big spenders might consider booking one of the two

gorgeous, enormous Japanese-style rooms (¥77,385).

Roppongi & Akasaka 六本木・赤坂

Akasaka (Map pp124-5, has a high concentration of luxury hotels due to its great location: there are loads of good restaurants nearby, the political and business centres are within walking distance, and Roppongi's nightlife is just down the road. Of course, if nightlife features prominently on your agenda, Roppongi has several convenient digs.

BUDGET

Capsule Hotel Fontaine Akasaka (Map pp124-5; ㊤ 3583-6554; www.fontaine-akasaka.co.jp; 4-3-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku; capsules men/women Mon-Fri ¥4800/4500, Sat & Sun ¥4500; ㊤; ㊤ Ginza, Marunouchi lines to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) This upmarket capsule hotel is one of the few in Tokyo that accepts women. It also happens to be one of the more luxurious, featuring lovely bath and sauna facilities, and comfortable, bright sitting areas. Check-in is at 5pm.

MIDRANGE

Arca Torre (Map p119; ㊤ 3404-5111; fax 3404-5115; www.arktower.co.jp/arcatop01new1.html; 6-1-23 Roppongi, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥11,550/14,700; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Excellently placed yet reasonably priced, the cosy Arca Torre is made for hard partiers and heavy sleepers. Rooms at the back are considerably quieter than those facing the street. Beds are on the hard side, but even standard singles are furnished with semidoubles. Check-in is at 3pm.

Hotel Sunroute Akasaka (Map pp124-5; ㊤ 3589-3610; fax 3589-3619; www.sunroute.jp; 3-21-7 Akasaka, Minato-ku; s/tw ¥14,400/19,500; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ Ginza, Marunouchi lines to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) A bright, friendly spot with well-designed rooms all equipped with high-speed internet access, this is conveniently located near several subway stations and is a 15-minute walk from Roppongi Crossing. Though there's no restaurant, the coffee shop downstairs can serve up your morning caffeine and pastry. Check-in is at 2pm.

Hotel Ibis (Map p119; ㊤ 3403-4411; fax 3479-0609; www.ibis-hotel.com; 7-14-4 Roppongi, Minato-ku; s/d/tw from ¥13,382/19,866/22,145; ㊤ ㊤ ㊤; ㊤ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 4a) Just this side of noir, the interior of the Ibis suggests some dark drama lurking underneath. Aesthetics notwithstanding, it's a clean, modern hotel just steps from

Roppongi Crossing. Rooms are small, and solo travellers should skip the cramped single rooms in favour of larger semidoubles. Check-in is at 1pm.

Asia Center of Japan (Map p119; ☎ 3402-6111; fax 3402-0738; www.asiacenter.or.jp; 8-10-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥8200/10,800; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Ginza, Hanzōmon, Toei Ōedo lines to Aoyama-itchōme, exit 4) Down a narrow road in a quiet Akasaka neighbourhood, the Asia Center attracts many long-term stayers. As it's often fully booked, call ahead. Old-annexe rooms have wood-panelled walls and an airy, simple charm. Internet access, laundry facilities and ¥795 breakfasts are among the offerings. Find a map on the website. Check-in is at 2pm.

Akasaka Yōkō Hotel (Map p119; ☎ 3586-4050; fax 3586-5944; www.yokohotel.co.jp; 6-14-12 Akasaka, Minato-ku; s/tw from ¥9345/14,700; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Chiyoda line to Akasaka, exit 7) All the rooms are nonsmoking and internet access is free at this reasonably priced, basic business hotel. The modest rooms are clean and comfortable and the staff is friendly. From here, you're close enough to walk to Roppongi for a wild night out, but far enough to snooze peacefully afterwards. Check-in is at 3pm.

TOP END

Hotel Ōkura (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3582-0111, 3582-3707; tokyo.okura.com; 2-10-4 Toranomon, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥34,125/42,000; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Ginza line to Tameike-sannō, exit 13) A preferred landing place for visiting dignitaries and businesspeople, the unpretentious but graceful Hotel Ōkura exudes old-school elegance. The inviting feel of the hotel's décor and low-lying architecture is complemented by a beautiful Japanese garden. Personable staff, excellent business facilities and top-notch restaurants complete the picture. The hotel grounds also house the Ōkura Shūkōkan (p140). Check-in is at 2pm.

our pick Grand Hyatt Tokyo (Map p119; ☎ 4333-1234; fax 4333-8123; tokyo.grand.hyatt.com; 6-10-3 Roppongi, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥50,400/55,650; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exits 1c & 3) Set in uber-contemporary Roppongi Hills, the Grand Hyatt gleams with polished refinement. Though the look is decidedly urban, the interior makes liberal use of natural materials, lending an earthy feel to this modern hotel with details like rain-shower fixtures and mahogany walls. Book the west side for views of Mt Fuji; check-in is at 3pm.

These other top-end hotels are also recommended:

ANA Hotel Tokyo (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3505-1111; fax 3505-1155; www.anahotel.tokyo.jp/e; 1-12-33 Akasaka, Minato-ku; s/d & tw from ¥31,185/40,425; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Namboku line to Roppongi-itchōme, exit 3) Midway between Akasaka and Roppongi, an excellent choice for those seeking straightforward, businesslike glam. Check-in is at 1pm.

Akasaka Prince Hotel (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3234-1111; fax 3262-5163; www.princehotelsjapan.com/akasaka-princehotel; 1-2 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku; Western-style s/d from ¥26,500/32,000, Japanese-style ste ¥92,400; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Chiyoda, Hanzōmon, Namboku, Yūrakuchō lines to Nagatachō, exits 5, 7 & 9) Designed by the late Tange Kenzō, this landmark hotel retains a '70s retro appeal with unusually spacious rooms for Tokyo. Check-in is at 2pm.

Hotel New Otani (Map p119; ☎ 3265-1111; fax 3221-2619; www.newotani.co.jp/en/tokyo/index.html; 4-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku; s/d ¥36,005/41,980; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Hanzōmon, Namboku, Yūrakuchō lines to Nagatachō, exits 5, 7 & 9) Renowned for the four-century-old Japanese garden around which it is constructed, this hotel is immense. Check-in is at 2pm.

Odaiba お台場

Although it's not the most convenient neighbourhood for exploring Tokyo, you do have breathing room in Odaiba. If it's here you choose to stay, be sure to book a room with a view of Tokyo Bay.

TOP END

Hotel Nikkō Tokyo (Map p122; ☎ 5500-5500; fax 5500-2525; www.hnt.co.jp/index_en.html; 1-9-1 Daiba, Minato-ku; r/ste from ¥38,515/92,800; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Yurikamome line to Daiba) What with its spacious real estate on Odaiba, the Hotel Nikkō can afford to splash out on a spa (¥3150), an outdoor hot tub and a sauna. Large rooms are decorated in a low-key palette. Deluxe rooms feature bathrooms with tub views of the Rainbow Bridge. Check-in is at 2pm.

Le Méridien Grand Pacific Tokyo (Map p122; ☎ 5500-6711; fax 5500 4507; grandpacific.lemeridien.com; 2-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku; s/d from ¥31,000/36,000; ㊦ ㊧ ㊨; ㊩) Yurikamome line to Daiba) Moderately baroque and polished to a high shine, Le Méridien is plushly outfitted with luxuries like boutiques, an art gallery and a florist, in addition to a pool and gym. It's large and lovely and has all the amenities you would expect from a hotel of this standard.

EATING

No city in Asia can match Tokyo for the sheer variety and quality of its restaurants. As well as refined Japanese cuisine, Tokyo covers the pan-continental spectrum with great international restaurants. One thing to keep in mind is that Japanese food tends to be cheaper than international food. For ¥750 you can get a good bowl of noodles in a *shokudō* (all-round eatery); the same money will buy you a plate of spaghetti in one of Tokyo's many cheap Italian places, though it's a pale imitation of the real stuff. If you fancy international food, be prepared to pay a little extra for a more authentic version.

Whatever you choose to eat, you rarely have to look far for sustenance. Check out the upper floors of the big department stores for *resutoran-gai* (restaurant 'streets'), which invariably have a good selection of Japanese, Chinese and Italian restaurants with inexpensive lunchtime specials. Department stores usually also have *depachika* (food halls) in the basement floors selling *bentō* (boxed meals) amid groceries and gourmet gifts. Train stations are home to *rāmen* shops, *bentō* and *onigiri* (rice ball) stands and *kareraisu* (curry rice) restaurants.

During the day the best eating areas are the big shopping districts like Shibuya, Shinjuku, Harajuku and Ginza. By night try Aoyama and Roppongi for some of the city's best restaurants. For something more traditional, try an *izakaya* or Yakitori Alley in central Tokyo, or the down-at-the-heel eating arcade of Omoide-yokochō in Shinjuku.

If you'll be in Tokyo for some time, pick up a copy of John Kennerdell's *Tokyo Restaurant Guide* (Yohan) or Rick Kennedy's *Good Tokyo Restaurants*. Alternatively, check out the **Tokyo Food Page website** (www.bento.com/tokyofood.html) for its gigantic database of restaurant reviews; it's so huge that listings sometimes go stale, so always go forth and dine with a plan B in mind.

For quick, cheap eats, or a cup of coffee in an air-conditioned (albeit smoky) café, chain coffee shops like Doutor, Excelsior and Starbucks dot the city landscape and usually offer sandwiches and snacks at budget prices.

Vegetarian food is less common than you might expect in Tokyo. Luckily, many places that aren't strictly vegetarian – such as Japanese noodle and tofu (bean curd) shops – serve a good variety of no-meat and no-fish

dishes. For more information, pick up the TIC's *Vegetarian & Macrobiotic Restaurants in Tokyo* handout. It lists strictly vegetarian restaurants, wholefood shops, *shōjin-ryōri* (Buddhist-temple fare) restaurants and Indian restaurants that offer a good selection of vegetarian dishes.

Central Tokyo 東京中心部

On weekdays, colourful little lunch trucks set up shop in the tree-shaded plaza of the Tokyo International Forum (p111). Cheap eats of an international variety range from falafel to tacos, and most takeaway costs less than ¥1000.

Lunch deals are competitive in and around Ginza; roam the *resutoran-gai* in the Ginza Palmy Building, or in department stores like Matsuzakaya (p179), Matsuya (p179) and Takashimaya (p179). Alternatively, head down to the basement food halls to pick up a *bentō* for later. In the evenings, convivial, atmospheric *yakitori* (charcoal-broiled chicken kebabs, and other meats or vegetables) restaurants can be found under the railway tracks in Yūrakuchō's Yakitori Alley (Map pp124-5).

Sakata (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3563-7400; 2nd fl, 1-5-13 Ginza, Chūō-ku; dishes from ¥850; ㊦ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat; ㊦; ㊩) Yūrakuchō line to Ginza-itchōme, exit 4) You may have to wait for a seat at peak hours at Sakata, widely recognised as Tokyo's best noodle spot. Apart from the sublime *tempura udon* (¥900), Sakata-san is an incredibly gracious host despite the language barrier.

Torigin Honten (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3571-3333; 5-5-7 Ginza, Chūō-ku; meals from ¥840; ㊦ 11.30am-10pm; ㊦ E; ㊩) Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi lines to Ginza, exit B5) A block south of Harumi-dōri, this place is hidden away down a very narrow back alley, but signposted in English (there's a yellow sign with a chicken on it). This authentic, very popular little place does excellent *yakitori*, and the steamed-rice dish known as *kamameshi*.

Sushi Zanmai (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3541-1117; 4-11-9 Tsukiji, Chūō-ku; dinner from ¥1500; ㊦ 24hr; ㊦ ㊧ E; ㊩) Hibiya line to Tsukiji, exit 1) After the sunrise fish auctions, it serves weary fishermen; then tourists and townfolk, office workers and retirees. In the evening, it remains open to bar and restaurant trade, and the ladies of the floating world. Zanmai serves up some of the freshest sushi you'll ever sample.

Mikuniya (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3271-3928; 2-5-11 Nihombashi, Chūō-ku; meals ¥1800-3000; ㊦ 11am-4pm Mon-Sat; ㊦; ㊩) Ginza, Tōzai, Toei Asakusa lines to Nihombashi, exit B4)

in; it doesn't cover the cost of food. We recommend the 'healthy' Kyūshū-based Temujin, which serves its dumplings in a yuzu citrus, vinegar-soy sauce dip.

Yamabuki (Map p114; ☎ 3971-1287; 1-27-8 Minami-Ikebukuro; lunch/dinner ¥1280/1600; ☎ 11am-8.45pm; ☎; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, east exit) Call on Yamabuki for that wonderful Japanese delicacy, *unagi*; it serves *unadon* (*unagi* over rice; ¥980), and there's a picture menu. Down a narrow alley off Meiji-dōri across from the east exit, look for all the eel in the window.

Tonerian (Map p114; ☎ 3985-0254; www.tonerian.net/english.htm; 1-38-9 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; meals ¥3500; ☎ 5-11.15pm) One of Ikebukuro's many *izakaya*, this is a busy place with a friendly staff. Turn up here to learn about good *jizake* (regional sake) – the master, who speaks English, will be glad to make suggestions on food pairings. Just look for the empty sake bottles piled up outside.

Akiyoshi (Map p114; ☎ 3982-0601; 3-30-4 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; meals ¥3000; ☎; ☎ 5-11pm; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) If in the mood for *yakitori*, Akiyoshi's open grill at centre stage ignites a festive, sociable atmosphere. Chefs work quickly to move traffic along, but that doesn't mean you can't sit comfortably through several courses and at least one conversation. Ordering is simple with the picture menu.

Sushi Kazu (Map p114; ☎ 3590-4884; 2-10-8 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; meals from ¥3500; ☎ 11.30am-5am Mon-Sat; ☎; ☎ Marunouchi line to Ikebukuro, exit C6) Off the main boulevards of west Ikebukuro, this good, standard-issue sushi bar is definitely a step up from the *kaiten-zushi* in the neighbourhood. Formal Japanese-style dining rooms are also available for larger groups. It's best to sit at the counter, where you can choose your sushi from the picture menu.

Sasashū (Map p114; ☎ 3971-6796; 2-2-6 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; meals from ¥6000; ☎ 5-10pm Mon-Sat; ☎; ☎ Marunouchi line to Ikebukuro, exit C5) Sasashū's Japanese-style facade is easy to pick out between the modern concrete strip joints nearby. This dignified *izakaya* is renowned for its high-quality sake selection and traditional hearths. Some Japanese-language ability (or a Japanese friend) would be helpful for ordering here, but consider trying the *kamonabe* (duck stew; ¥3150) or *salmon yaki* (grilled salmon; ¥840).

Malaychan (Map p114; ☎ 5391-7638; www.malaychan.jp/NewFiles/contents_E.html; 3-22-6 Nishi-Ikebukuro,

Toshima-ku; meals ¥2000; ☎ dinner Mon, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun; ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) With its sweet location on a corner across from Nishi-Ikebukuro Park, Malaychan is one of Tokyo's few Malaysian restaurants and serves a huge breadth of dishes spanning the country's multiethnic background. The *nasi lemak* (rice with assorted dishes) is a filling introduction to Malaysian food.

Shinjuku 新宿

For a taste of Occupation-era Tokyo, meander through Omoide-yokochō (aka 'Piss Alley'), where tiny restaurants are packed shoulder to shoulder beside the JR tracks just northwest of Shinjuku station. Here, local workers stop off for *yakitori*, *oden* (fishcakes, tofu, vegetables and eggs simmered in a kelp-flavoured broth), noodles and beer before braving the trains back home. Most places serve similar things and few have names, so pick one that appeals to you. What they serve will be piled on the counters; just point to order, and expect to pay about ¥2000 per person. Omoide-yokochō is slated to be razed in late 2008 to make way for new development, but catch it if you can.

Kinkantei (Map p116; ☎ 3356-6556; 2-17-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; meals ¥1000; ☎ 7pm-4am Mon-Sat; ☎; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C7) Hemmed in by sex shops and serving the nocturnal life of Shinjuku-sanchōme, Kinkantei has been serving *soba* for longer than some countries have existed. *Tempura soba* (buckwheat noodles served with tempura; ¥1800) is a safe bet, while the unique textures and flavour of *yaki nattō* (fried fermented soybeans; ¥1000) is for the adventurous. From the station, turn right at the first alley, continue to its end, turn right again and look for the green sign.

Court Lodge (Map p116; ☎ 3378-1066; 2-10-9 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku; lunch from ¥800; ☎; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, south exit) In this cramped, clean, bustling restaurant, the super-friendly and efficient staff serves tasty Sri Lankan food. You don't have to go inside if you're claustrophobic or in a hurry; it sells takeaway out the front. While there's no English menu, the staff speak good English and is happy to explain the menu.

Keika Kumamoto Rāmen (Map p116; ☎ 3354-4591; 3-7-2 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; meals ¥800; ☎ 11am-10.45pm; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C4) This is the place to try authentic *rāmen* in Shinjuku-sanchōme. The noodles are dis-

tinctively chewy and the broth is rich. Try the *chashūmen* (*rāmen* with roast pork; ¥830). You order and pay as you enter; navigate towards the kooky, multicoloured mural of a chef and pigs on the exterior.

Ibuki (Map p116; ☎ 3352-4787; 3-23-6 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; sukiyaki course ¥2205, shabu-shabu ¥2970; ☎ 5-11.30pm; ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) An excellent *suki-yaki* and *shabu-shabu* restaurant in Shinjuku, Ibuki gets a lot of foreign trade. This friendly place offers a traditional atmosphere and sociable dining experience, and even accepts credit cards.

Tsunahachi (Map p116; ☎ 3352-1012; 3-31-8 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☎ ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) Tsunahachi keeps them coming with its reasonably priced, tasty tempura. Sit at the counter for the pleasure of watching the efficient chefs fry each course of your dinner and place it on your dish. From Shinjuku-dōri as you face Mitsukoshi department store, go down the small street to its left; Tsunahachi will be on your left.

Tokyo Dai Hanten (Map p116; ☎ 3202-0121; 4th fl, Oriental Wave Bldg, 5-17-13 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; meals ¥2000; ☎ 11.30am-10pm; ☎; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit B3) Established in 1960, Tokyo Dai Hanten is one of your few possibilities for yum cha (dim sum). For Sunday brunch it serves dim sum à la Hong Kong, rolling it by on trolleys for you to flag down at will.

Canard (Map p116; ☎ 3200-0706; www.jlccjapan.com; B1 fl, 5-17-6 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; lunch/dinner courses from ¥1600/2800; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) Tucked into a tiny alley near Hanazono-jinja, an equally tiny Canard serves homemade, seasonal French food in intimate surroundings. With wine the bill adds up, but the meal is worth every yen. Find a map on the website.

Kurumaya (Map p116; ☎ 3352-5566; 3-21-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; mains ¥1200; ☎ 11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, to 11.30pm Sun; ☎ ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) Kurumaya's seafood and steak sets are good value and it's one of east Shinjuku's classier spots. Highly recommended is the *ise ebi* (Japanese lobster). It's on the corner across from Kirin City beer hall.

Tōfuro (Map p116; ☎ 3204-7772; 7th fl, Oriental Wave Bldg, 5-17-13 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; meals ¥4000; ☎ E; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit B3) Even if you're not a fan of tofu, there's lots to eat in this upscale, Edo-style *izakaya*. Small, private rooms are good for groups, who can

order set meals consisting of several courses. The traditional cuisine includes homemade tofu and a full menu of grilled meats, fish, soups and *oden*.

New York Grill (Map p116; ☎ 5323-3458; meals ¥6000; ☎ lunch & dinner, brunch 11.30am-2.30pm Sun; ☎ ☎ E; ☎ Toei Ōedo line to Tochōmae, exit A4) On the 52nd floor of the Park Hyatt Tower (p150) this is power dining at its best – hearty portions of steak and seafood and drop-dead delicious views. One treat worth indulging in is Sunday brunch (¥5800); the price includes a flute of champagne.

If you can't find anything to your liking on the streets, try the *resutoran-gai* of the big department stores. The Isetan Building has eight floors of restaurants. **Takashimaya Times Square** (☎ 5361-3301; 5-24-2 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm) has a *resutoran-gai* on its 12th to 14th floors.

Harajuku & Aoyama 原宿・青山

Harajuku and Aoyama have more bistros, cafés and trattorias than most small European towns. The artery feeding it all is the promenade of Tokyo's young and beautiful: Omote-sandō. A few Japanese eateries are worth seeking out among the French and fad-dish restaurants.

Tokyo Apartment Café (Map p117; ☎ 3401-4101; 1-11-11 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; meals from ¥600; ☎ 11-4am; ☎ E; ☎ Chiyoda line to Meiji-jingūmae, exit 5 or JR Yamanote line to Harajuku, Omote-sandō exit) A popular, inexpensive option opposite Condomania, the Apartment Café is a good afternoon refuge for snacks like spring rolls, a glass of wine or even Fruits Conscious Frozen. In the evening it transforms into sort of a cocktail lounge.

Bape Cafe!? (Map p117; ☎ 5770-6560; 3-27-22 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; lunch specials from ¥800; ☎ 10.30am-11pm; ☎ ☎ E; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Harajuku, Takeshita exit) One more link in the empire established by Nigo, the underground genius behind A Bathing Ape, Bape Cafe!? serves up well-executed Japanese café comfort food, such as *kareiraisu*. Join the hungry hipsters here, and resist the temptation to pocket the logo-printed glasses.

Pure Café (Map p117; ☎ 5466-2611; 5-5-21 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; lunch ¥1100; ☎ 8.30am-10.30pm; ☎ ☎ V E; ☎ Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit B1) This little haven of vegan dining shares a space with nature-friendly Aveda in Aoyama. Using seasonal ingredients, the café creates flavourful, pure food to balance and

east exit) Fujii is a homey and comfortable place to sample fresh, handmade *udon*. We recommend the *tempura udon* for ¥1500. It's in the corner shop with an electric sign out the front, with a running LED message in Japanese.

Nanaki Soba (Map p121; ☎ 3496-2878; 1-13-2 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; meals ¥650-1600; ☎ 11.30am-1.50pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat; ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) One of the best little *soba* shops in the area, this wooden shopfront near Ebisu-jinja may not look like much, but these buckwheat noodles are the pinnacle of tenderness. If you're feeling adventurous, try the goeey *yamakake soba* (grated yam over *soba*).

Ippūdō Rāmen (Map p121; ☎ 5420-2225; 1-3-13 Hiro-o, Shibuya-ku; meals ¥900; ☎ 11am-4pm; ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, east exit) This *rāmen* shop on Meiji-dōri is nationally famous for its Kyūshū-style *rāmen* into which you can grate fresh garlic cloves. You'll have to queue at peak periods – and as at any busy *rāmen* shop, you shouldn't linger longer than 20 minutes to eat – but it's worth every slurp.

Kazuki Rāmen (Map p121; ☎ 3496-6885; 1-10-8 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; dishes ¥800; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun; ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Don't feel the need to dress your *rāmen* with too many sauces and spices at your elbow – these are professionals who've laboured over the broth, after all. Choose from a picture menu or go for the *chashūmen* (¥1000).

Gazebo Café (Map p121; ☎ 3461-4348; 1-33-15 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; meals ¥900; ☎ 8.30-midnight; ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Halfway between Ebisu and Daikanyama along Komazawa-dōri, Gazebo Café has outdoor seating and a good selection of teas. The sandwiches and pizzas are pretty good, and the pastry counter contains a few temptations to have with your Earl Grey. Or put your feet up with a beer and people-watch.

Yuuan (Map p121; ☎ 5793-7351; 6th fl, Atré Ebisu, 1-5-5 Ebisu-Minami, Shibuya-ku; set lunch/dinner ¥1050/2500; ☎ 11am-9.30pm; ☎ ☎ V ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, Atré exit) Names of the tofu-centric specials displayed outside are in English, but descriptions are not. Whatever you choose to eat, go for the tastier brown rice. Strict vegetarians should note that in this, as in most tofu-based restaurants, fish, eggs or meat-derived ingredients may be used.

Mushroom (Map p121; ☎ 5489-1346; 2nd fl, 1-16-3 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; lunch/dinner from ¥2300/5000; ☎ ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Chef Yamaoka's obsession with the taming of the

'shroom has sprouted this very cosy little French bistro, whose décor is dominated by a fungus motif, of course. Three-course *setto* (set lunches; ¥2500) showcasing mushrooms are amazing value and will transport you – without mind-altering side effects. A little Japanese or French is useful here.

Shunsenbō (Map p121; ☎ 5469-9761; 1st fl, Ebisu Prime Square Tower, 1-1-40 Hiro-o, Shibuya-ku; lunch/dinner ¥1500/3500; ☎ lunch-dinner; ☎ V ☎ E; ④ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, east exit) Specialising in *tōfu kaiseki* (multicourse dinners) and *shabu-shabu*, Shunsenbō is a bargain considering the quality of the food and the classy surroundings. The excellent, smooth tofu is made in-house.

Roppongi 六本木

It's only logical that there be an abundance of international restaurants in Roppongi, Tokyo's foreign-nightlife playground. From inexpensive burger joints to high-end sushi bars, whatever food you fancy is here. Japanese restaurants tend to be expensive but very accessible to *gaijin*, making it the perfect area for any long-awaited, lavish Japanese meal. But there are also heaps of cheap spots if you just need a quick bite before hitting the bars.

J's Kitchen (Map pp112-13; ☎ 5475-2727; 5-15-22 Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku; meals around ¥1000; ☎ 11am-11.30pm Mon-Sat, to 4.30pm Sun; ☎ ☎ V ☎ E; ④ Hibiya line to Hiro-o, exits 1 & 3) Macrobiotic eating is gaining a foothold in Tokyo, and one little organic gem is the bright, friendly J's Kitchen amid the restaurant row on Gaien-nishi-dōri. Vegan delights include a *tempeh*-and-green-veggie wrap, pumpkin soup and tofu 'cheesecake'. Turn right from exit 1 or left from exit 3.

Bengewang Solo (Map p119; ☎ 3408-5698; 1st fl, Kaneko Bldg, 7-18-13 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals ¥1100; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ V ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2) On Roppongi-dōri, this Indonesian eatery has been around for ages. The indifferent interior isn't much, but the food, importantly, is terrific. The *gado gado* (salad with peanut sauce) lunch is a bargain, and the beef in coconut cream is dreamy. Food models are displayed outside.

Havana Café (Map p119; ☎ 3423-3500; 4-12-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals ¥1000; ☎ 11.30am-5am Mon-Fri, noon-5am Sat & Sun; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 6) One of the best places to start your evening, the casual Havana Café serves respectable grub like burritos and sandwiches for less than ¥1000, and it does a mean burger. It also has good happy-hour drink specials,

which you can enjoy in the large-windowed dining room or outside, on the Roppongi backstreet.

Bikkuri Sushi (Map p119; ☎ 3403-1489; 3-14-9 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals from ¥1000; ☎ 11am-5am; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) A long-time favourite for Roppongi revellers, this late-night *kaiten-zushi* place has seen it all. *Bikkuri* means 'surprise' in Japanese, but unless you're picking up dishes blindfolded, there shouldn't be many of those.

Gonpachi (Map p119; ☎ 5771-0170; 1-13-11 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥2000/4000; ☎ 11.30am-5am; ☎ ☎ ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2) The Edo-village décor and urban buzz in the air makes Gonpachi a great place for celebratory dinners, but do you need a reason to thrill your palate with a dozen new-to-you Japanese morsels? Upstairs you can order everything on the menu, plus sushi. Book ahead.

Erawan (Map p119; ☎ 3404-5741; 13th fl, Roi Bldg, 5-5-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals ¥3000; ☎ dinner; ☎ ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) An Asian restaurant that's been on the block for years is Erawan, where spicy curries and green papaya salad are served in a setting reminiscent of an outdoor Thai café on some southern shore... except here, you get a glittering urban view from this top-floor dining venue.

1830 (Map p119; ☎ 3402-1830; 9-6-28 Akasaka, Minato-ku; meals ¥2000; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ ☎ E; ④ Chiyoda line to Nogizaka, exit 3) Pizza catering to Japanese tastes can be found all over Tokyo, but the real beast – with wood-fired crust hand tossed by an Italian *pizzaiolo* – is more elusive. If you must have pizza, then do it right by coming here. Other authentic treats like tender gnocchii, melt-in-your-mouth tiramisù and a strong wine list also await.

Monsoon Café (Map p119; ☎ 5467-5221; 2-10-1 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; meals ¥3500; ☎ 11.30am-3.30am; ☎ ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2) Across from Aoyama Cemetery along Gaien-nishi-dōri, Monsoon serves its takes on Southeast Asian basics like Vietnamese spring rolls, Thai coconut soup and chicken satay. With indoor-outdoor café-style seating, big rattan chairs and an attentive staff, it's a nice place to chill with a fruity drink.

Namban-tei (Map p119; ☎ 3402-0606; 4-5-6 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals ¥6000; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Sat; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 6) Namban-tei is something of a local institution, known for its excellent *yakitori* in pleasant, traditional

Japanese surroundings. It won't be cheap but it will be delicious. Look for its unassuming wood shopfront on the alley corner.

Inakaya (Map p119; ☎ 3408-5040; 5-3-4 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals from ¥10,000; ☎ 5-11pm; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Once you're bombarded with greetings at the door, the action doesn't stop at this old-guard *robatayaki* (rustic bar-restaurant serving charcoal-grilled food that goes beautifully with booze). Point at what you'd like to eat and it will be grilled for you. It's boisterous and joyous – the attitude one must have when the bill arrives.

Kisso (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3582-4191; B1 fl, Axis Bldg, 5-17-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals around ¥10,000; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Doubtless the most accessible *kaiseki ryōri* (aesthetically presented multicourse meals) in Tokyo, Kisso is the perfect place to experience this quintessentially Japanese gourmet cuisine. Courses are served on gorgeous lacquerware and ceramics in artistically arranged surroundings. Order *omakase* (chef's choice; ¥10,000) and then let the chef's creativity shine.

Fukuzushi (Map p119; ☎ 3402-4116; 5-7-8 Roppongi, Minato-ku; meals around ¥10,000; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Some of the best sushi in town is served here, in an upscale atmosphere that's decidedly more relaxed than some of the more traditional places in Ginza and Tsukiji. The fish here is fresh, the portions are large and there are cocktails. It's in the alley beyond the Hard Rock Café, and has a picture menu.

Seryna (Map p119; ☎ 3402-1051; 3-12-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥6000/15,000; ☎ noon-11pm; ☎ E; ④ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 5) Seryna is the go-to stalwart for those wishing to try Kobe beef. With several eateries under its roof, you can try *shabu-shabu* and *sukiyaki*, or opt for a slab of steak and *teppanyaki* (table-top grilling). The restaurant surrounds a pretty rock garden.

Akasaka 赤坂

Along with nearby Roppongi, Akasaka is one of Tokyo's more cosmopolitan neighbourhoods. While most of the evening action shuts down on the early side, a stroll through the narrow streets just west of Akasaka-mitsuke subway station will turn up a number of good lunch bargains.

Sunaba (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3583-7670; 6-3-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku; meals ¥1100; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat;

☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka, exit 6) Sunaba has some of the city's finest buckwheat noodles. It invented tempura *soba*, and serves it in an exquisite, dense, smoky *tsuyu* (dipping sauce) – sublime. It's next to the Kokusai Shin-Akasaka building, and it has a sister shop in Nihombashi.

Moti (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3582-3620; 2nd fl, 3-8-8 Akasaka, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥800/2000; ☎ 11.30am-11pm; ☺ V E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka, exit 2) Part of Tokyo's best Indian chain, Moti has two branches in Akasaka, each just a few minutes' walk from Akasaka or Akasaka-mitsuke subway stations. Lunch sets include curry and *lassi* or coffee.

Jangara Rāmen (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3595-2130; 2-12-8 Nagatachō, Minato-ku; meals from ¥580; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka, exit 2) Near the entrance to Hie-jinja, Jangara is a popular place for a great, inexpensive bowl of *rāmen*. Live a little and order the *zenbu-iri rāmen* (all-in *rāmen*; ¥1000) and it'll come topped with hard-boiled egg, slices of pork and fish cake (among other goodies).

Umaya (Map pp124-5; ☎ 6229-1661; 4-2-24 Akasaka, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner from ¥1100/4000; ☎ 11am-1.30pm & 5pm-1am Mon-Sat; ☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) This lovely, traditionally styled restaurant serves a variety of Japanese dishes, incorporating free-range chicken and house-made tofu. There's no lunch menu in English, but servers can explain the seasonally changing *teishoku*. To find it from Hitotsugi-dōri, head for Akasaka-fudōson-jinja but turn left just inside the shrine gate.

Vietnam Alice (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3588-5020; 2nd fl, Belle Vie, 3-1-6 Akasaka, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥1500/3000; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) Dressed up to look like a French-colonial villa, Vietnam Alice delivers a respectable rendition of gourmet Vietnamese food in romantic surroundings. Lunch specials are a good deal, and it does a good *pho*.

Sushi-sei (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3582-9503; 3-11-14 Akasaka, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥1500/4000; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-11.30pm Mon-Sat; ☺ V; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) This branch of the famous Tsukiji sushi chain won't disappoint. Lunch sets (choose from a picture menu) are priced very reasonably for the quality, and with its reputation, you can be sure you're eating some of the freshest fish around. The low-profile shop is set back slightly from the street.

Kushinobō (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3581-5056; 3rd fl, Akasaka Tōkyū Plaza, 2-14-3 Nagatachō, Minato-ku; dinner courses from ¥2500; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka-mitsuke, Belle Vie exit) Sometimes it's necessary to give in to those dark cravings for something deep fried, and because these lunches are fairly inexpensive, you can at least console yourself with your budgetary virtue. Come to Kushinobō at times like these for *kushiage* (skewers of deep-fried meat, seafood and vegetables) and *kushi-katsu*, this place's speciality.

Asterix (Map p119; ☎ 5561-0980; B1 fl, 6-3-16 Akasaka, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner from ¥1500/3000; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Akasaka, exit 7) A French lunch here is a smashing deal, but dinner has its own merits – not as rushed, so you can linger over your wine. Portions are large but the dining room is tiny, so reservations are advised. The menu is in French; servers can translate into English if needed.

Shunju (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3592-5288; 27th fl, Sannō Park Tower, 2-11-1 Nagatachō, Chiyoda-ku; lunch/dinner from ¥1200/6300; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ ☺ E; ☺ Chiyoda line to Nishi-Shinjuku, exit 7) A great choice for a modern take on traditional Japanese cuisine, Shunju also happens to boast a fabulous view. Lunches are very reasonably priced, as are the dinner sets, which offer a little bit of everything.

Odaiba お台場

Odaiba makes a beautiful stage for enjoying a romantic meal, as most of the restaurants have good views of Tokyo Bay. For fun – and a little dim sum (yum cha) – check out the array of Hong Kong-style eateries at Daiba Little Hong Kong on the 6th and 7th floors of Decks Tokyo Beach.

Soup Stock Tokyo (Map p122; ☎ 3599-2333; 3rd fl, Venus Fort, Aomi-itchoe, Kōto-ku; meals from ¥580; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☺ V E; ☺ Yurikamome line to Odaiba Kaihin-kōen, main exit) With its emphasis on wholesome, additive-free soups, Soup Stock Tokyo feeds the health conscious – and those in need of comfort – all across Tokyo. Soup sets come with fresh bread and a drink (¥950), and there are usually around 10 different varieties on offer, from borscht to garlic soup with *onsen tamago* (hot-spring boiled eggs).

Khazana (Map p122; ☎ 3359-6551; 5th fl, Decks Tokyo Beach, 1-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku; lunch/dinner ¥1000/2000; ☎ 11am-11pm; V ☺ E; ☺ Yurikamome line to Odaiba Kaihin-kōen, main exit) Khazana's Odaiba outpost is a welcoming perch for taking in the bay

views and tucking into some spicy samosa. The staff is warm and the environment pleasantly laid-back.

Tsukiji Tama Sushi (Map p122; ☎ 3599-6556; 5th fl, Decks Tokyo Beach, 1-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku; meals ¥2000-4000; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☺ E; ☺ Yurikamome line to Odaiba Kaihin-kōen, main exit) Settle yourself near the windows and sip from a huge, earthy cup of green tea while you wait for your sushi, which will come immaculately presented and perfectly fresh. The menu also includes set meals and *udon*, if you prefer.

DRINKING

Bar and club life being what it is, the venue of the moment might be passé come tomorrow morning. The following is a rundown on bars and clubs that have proven popular enough to stick around for the past few years and were still going strong at the time of writing. For up-to-the-minute listings, check the websites noted on p107.

For a true Japanese drinking experience, round up a few people and check out an *izakaya*; chains like **Tsubohachi** (Map p117; ☎ 3464-1129; 26-4 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; meals ¥3500; ☎ 4pm-midnight Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; ☺ E; ☺ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) have branches all over Tokyo and huge picture menus to choose what to eat with your *nama-biiru*. During the summer, many of the large department stores like Keiō (p179) in Shinjuku or Matsuya (p179) in Ginza open up their rooftop beer gardens, a treat on hot summer evenings. Join the salaried after work and hoist a few on these open-air terraces.

Ueno & Asakusa 上野 浅草

Yawn – definitely not the neighbourhoods for a wild night out.

In Asakusa, try the beer halls in the Asahi Breweries complex (look up and follow the Flamme D'Or – aka the 'Golden Turd' – to the east side of the Sumida River).

Kamiya Bar (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3841-5400; 1-1-1 Asakusa, Taitō-ku; ☎ 11.30am-10pm Wed-Mon) Spend an evening at this long-standing bar, which opened in 1880 and is said to be the oldest Western-style bar in Japan. There's a smoky beer hall on the ground floor, where you order and pay for beer and food as you enter. Upstairs, unremarkable Western and Japanese food is served.

Warrior Celt (Map pp130-1; ☎ 3836-8588; www.warriorcelt.com; 3rd fl, Ito Bldg, 6-9-22 Ueno, Taitō-ku;

☎ 5pm-5am; ☺ JR Yamanote line to Ueno, south central exit) If you do find yourself hanging round old Shitamachi at night, head to this pub in Ueno, where drinks are only ¥500 from 5pm to 7pm. It's a fun, friendly place with a good selection of English and Irish brews, as well as free live music several nights a week.

Ikebukuro 池袋

There are lots of *izakaya* (sans English menus) buried amid the sex shops and strip bars on both sides of Ikebukuro station. Sake fans should seek out the excellent *izakaya* Sasashū, run by a former WWII kamikaze pilot. If you're more in the mood for a pint of Guinness, the following little pubs tend to draw both Japanese and international folks.

Bobby's Bar (Map p114; ☎ 3980-8875; 3rd fl, Milano Bldg, 1-18-10 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 6pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat; ☺ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, west exit) On the western side of the station is this late-night option, with cocktails from ¥300 and lots of Belgian beers. There's table soccer, darts and good pub grub. Early birds will enjoy the happy hour, 6pm to 8pm Monday to Thursday.

Dubliners (Map p114; ☎ 5951-3614; B1 fl, Sun Glow Bldg, 1-10-8 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☺ E; ☺ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, Metropolitan exit) This is a small, standard-issue Irish-style pub offering Kilkenney and Guinness draught; if you're lucky, you'll show up on a night when it has live music.

Shinjuku 新宿

Gaudy Shinjuku is awash with nightspots of every shape and size, many of which fall into the sordid category and don't cater to foreigners. That said, there's still plenty to do here at night if you have the energy to face the madness of an evening on Shinjuku streets.

The Golden Gai is one of the city's most interesting night zones. Even if you don't feel like a drink, take an evening stroll through this maze of tightly packed little establishments, just to soak in the low-slung moodiness – the whole place seems suspended in a time warp. Many of these minuscule bars do not welcome *gaijin* and/or non-Japanese speakers and may charge you a hefty cover for entering, but the first three establishments listed here are friendly to strangers. An easy way to get there is to find Hanazono-jinja and then walk around to the steps at the back of the shrine, which lead right into the Golden Gai.

La Jetée (Map p116; ☎ 3208-9645; 1-1-8 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission ¥700; ☎ 7pm till late Mon-Sat; ☉ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit B5) A favourite among cineastes (and run by one), this little haven is the namesake for a film much admired by its French-speaking proprietor and a good introduction to these alleys.

Bon's (Map p116; ☎ 3209-6334; 1-1-10 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission ¥900; ☎ 7pm-5am; ☉ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit B5) Drinks start at ¥700 at this sure-fire spot in the Golden Gai. Look for its corner location with 'Old Fashioned American Style Pub' painted across its exterior wall.

Bar Plastic Model (Map p116; ☎ 5273-8441; 1-1-10 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission ¥700; ☎ 8pm-5am Mon-Sat, 6pm-midnight Sun; ☉ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit B5) There's a new generation of creative bar owners converting old Golden Gai bars into incarnations of their own visions. This is one such concoction, decorated with tchotchkes c 1980, and sometimes with a DJ spinning beats.

Rolling Stone (Map p116; ☎ 3341-6741; B1 fl, Q-Flat Bldg, 5-4-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; admission ¥2000; ☎ 7pm-late; ☉ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C7) This place has been around since the dawn of time, but it's now upgraded to a basement location complete with disco ball and rotating lineup of DJs. There's no admission from 7pm to 9pm, and the admission charge includes two drinks. The stairwell is next door to the Freshness Burger on Yasukuni-dōri.

Garam (Map p116; ☎ 3205-8668; 7th fl, 1-16-6 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission from ¥1500; ☎ 8pm-5am; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) A club that feels like a bar, this is a small, friendly place, where the master DJ spins a range of hip-hop, dub and roots reggae. The admission charge includes one drink.

Harajuku & Shibuya 原宿

These adjoining areas are a good option when the Roppongi crush is too much to bear. Harajuku and Aoyama are all about cafés, and you can spend an evening drinking beer and wine in them rather than mashing yourself into a smoky basement bar. Las Chicas (p158) is a great escape; but check ahead to see if it's reopened yet.

Den Aquaroom (Map p117; ☎ 5778-2090; B1 fl, 5-13-3 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; admission ¥500-1000; ☉ Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit

B1) Darting fish within the walls of back-lit, blue aquariums make a visual counterpoint to the bop of jazz basslines. Even prettier than the dark décor is the chic clientele floating around here.

Insomnia 2 (Map p117; ☎ 3476-2735; B1 fl, 26-5 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 6pm-5am; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Insomnia is that rare Shibuya find: a bar for grown-ups. Good food, low music and a cosy red interior make it the kind of place to come when you want to hear your conversation. The kitchen's open late, and the oddly eyeballesque mirrored wall behind the bar will induce insomnia if you're not already feeling it.

Hub Pub (Map p117; ☎ 3770-4524; 25-9 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) A generally English ambience, pub food and a decent selection of beers attract a mixed crowd of 20-somethings, especially on weekends. The Hub has branches all over the city, though this is probably the most comfortable of the lot.

Ebisu & Daikanyama 恵比寿・代官山

These two neighbourhoods are excellent choices for a night out in Tokyo, striking the perfect balance between hip and casual.

What the Dickens (Map p121; ☎ 3780-2099; www.whatthedickens.jp; 4th fl, Roob 6 Bldg, 1-13-3 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 5pm-late Tue-Sat, to midnight Sun; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Live music, British beers, pub grub and a good time in Ebisu – a combo that works, as the happy crowd will attest. The bands span a variety of styles, and live music happens almost every night.

Enjoy! House (Map p121; ☎ 5489-1591; 2nd fl, Kokuto Bldg, 2-9-9 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 1pm-2am Sun & Tue-Thu, to 4am Fri-Sun; ☉ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) A multilayered world of sparkly, '70s retro funkiness awaits inside the fairly innocuously named Enjoy! House. The freespirted dude who runs this fun spot will elevate your mood.

Munch-yu (Map p121; ☎ 5722-1333; 1-10-23 Naka-Meguro, Meguro-ku; ☎ noon-3pm & 5pm-late; ☉ E; ☉ Hibiya line to Naka-Meguro) This friendly bar in hip Naka-Meguro serves beer and wine, as well as Japanese small plates, for ¥500 a pop – an easy way to have sort of an *izakaya* experience without leaving you yenless. From the exit, turn right on Yamate-dōri, make a left on Komazawa-dōri and follow the road next to the river.

(Continued on page 173)

(Continued from page 164)

Roppongi & Akasaka 六本木・赤坂

Roppongi is not part of Japan – it's a multinational twilight zone that feels like Mardi Gras blew over on a hurricane from New Orleans, where *gaijin* get together with adventurous locals to boozily schmooze until the first trains at dawn. Because of this, many long-term locals avoid it like the plague, leaving it for punters fresh off the plane, military goons and riff-raft out trolling for local talent. This is the place, above all others in Japan, where you're most likely to get hustled, so just be wary of pushy club promoters and hostess types. Nonetheless, Roppongi still rocks, and you'll want to check it out at least once.

Meet up in front of that pink-painted pastry purveyor, Almond (everyone knows it; you can't miss it), and then jump in.

Heartland (Map p119; ☎ 5772-7600; www.heartland.jp; 1st fl, Roppongi Hills West Walk, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 11am-5am; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exits 1b & 3) At the foot of Roppongi Hills, Heartland is far enough removed from Roppongi Crossing to not be full of sloshed randos. This crowd has a familiar foreign-male-to-Japanese-female ratio, but these specimens are more natively dressed than the ones down the road.

Mogambo (Map p119; ☎ 3403-4833; www.mogambo.net; 1st fl, Osawa Bldg, 6-1-7 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6pm-6am Mon-Fri, 7pm-6am Sat; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) A small shot bar with a long list of cocktails, Mogambo attracts an international crowd with its campy jungle theme. Mogambo is on the southern side of Roppongi-dōri, a block south of Almond.

Agave (Map p119; ☎ 3497-0229; B1 fl, 7-15-10 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6.30pm-2am Mon-Fri, to 4am Sat; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2). This amiable spot is more about savouring the subtleties of its 400-plus types of tequila rather than tossing back body shots of Cuervo. Mariachi musicians will woo you as you sip *añejo* (aged tequila). Walking west from Roppongi Crossing, find it on the small alley on the north side of the street.

Castillo (Map p119; ☎ 3475-1629; 3rd & 4th fl, Win Roppongi Bldg, 3-15-24 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 7pm-late Mon-Sat; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Still playing its '70s and '80s soul, pop and disco classics in a new venue, Castillo attracts a good mix of locals and foreigners to dance or just kick it for a few drinks between stops on a club crawl.

Propaganda (Map p119; ☎ 3423-0988; 2nd fl, Yua Roppongi Bldg, 3-14-9 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6pm-dawn; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Propaganda is the decorating scheme, but the deal is transparent – above Bikkuri Sushi, this is an inexpensive shot bar with half-price happy-hour specials (around ¥400). It's open late and there's no admission, so it's a reliable place to stumble back to if you close another bar.

Motown House 1 (Map p119; ☎ 5474-4605; www.motownhouse.com; 2nd fl, Com Roppongi Bldg, 3-11-5 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6pm-5am; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Steps from Roppongi Crossing, Motown House plays soul, funk, hip-hop and pop, as well as standard rock and roll. Drinks at the long bar start at ¥800.

Motown House 2 (☎ 5474-2931; B1 fl, Roppongi Plaza Bldg; ☎ 8pm-5am Sun-Thu, to 8am Fri & Sat) On the next block, the second branch has a similar setup to the first.

Gas Panic Bar (Map p119; ☎ 3405-0633; www.gaspanic.co.jp; 2nd & 3rd fl, 3-15-24 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6pm-5am; ☉ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) This concatenation of three ominously named bars forms one of Roppongi's rowdier *culs-de-sac*. All three are cheap places to drink, so they get crammed with all sorts of sloppy amateurs. You're only welcome as long as you've got a drink in hand.

Akasaka can be an expensive and staid place to drink, especially considering Roppongi is just a 20-minute walk away. But those in search of high-rise views to go with their cocktails can find swish bars at the top of the neighbourhood's luxury hotels. **Top of Akasaka** (Map p124-5; ☎ 3234-1121; drinks from ¥1500; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5pm-2am Mon-Fri, noon-2am Sat, to 11pm Sun) in the Akasaka Prince Hotel and **Bar** (Map p119; ☎ 3265-1111; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun) in the New Otani tower are both 40th-floor bars.

ENTERTAINMENT

Tokyo is very much the centre of the Japanese arts world, with the best of everything. On the nightlife front, there are those who maintain that Osaka is more cutting edge, but then Osaka offers nowhere near the diversity of entertainment options available in Tokyo – everything from kabuki to avant-garde theatre, cinemas, live houses, pubs and bars. See p59 for more information on Japanese theatre.

Cinemas

Shibuya and Shinjuku are Tokyo's cinema centres, but you'll find cinemas near any

GAY & LESBIAN TOKYO

If you're in Tokyo during the summer, the **Tokyo International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival** (www.tokyo-igff.org) hits screens in July.

Tokyo's gay and lesbian enclave is Shinjuku-nichōme, the area east of Shinjuku sanchōme station's C8 exit. There are lots of little bars here, and though some can be rather daunting to enter, the following venues have been around awhile and are friendly. For more options, check out www.utopia-asia.com or weekly Cityscope Nightlife listings in *Tokyo Journal* (www.tokyo.jp).

Arty Farty (Map p116; ☎ 5362-9720; www.arty-farty.net; 2nd fl, 2-11-7 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 7pm-4am Mon-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat, 5pm-3am Sun; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C8) Arty Farty is a long-standing place to meet people, with fabulous all-you-can-drink specials and a mixed crowd. It's a good place to start your evening and find out about the area's other possibilities.

Kinswomyn (Map p116; ☎ 3354-8720; 3rd fl, 2-15-10 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; cocktails ¥750; ☎ 7pm-4am Mon-Sat; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C8) Another well-established and welcoming bar, Kinswomyn is a cosy, women-only spot for Japanese and foreign women alike. The bar mistress Tara is friendly, as are the ladies hanging out here.

Advocates Bar (Map p116; ☎ 3358-8638; B1 fl, 7th Tenka Bldg, 2-18-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 8pm-4am; ☎ Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C8) Advocates Bar is so small that as the crowd gets bigger during the course of an evening, it becomes more like a block party and takes to the streets. Family of all genders are welcome here.

major train station. Check the *Japan Times*, *Metropolis* or the *Tokyo Journal* to see what's on; imported films are usually subtitled in Japanese, so the sound tends to be in the original language. Discounted tickets are sold in the basement of the Tokyo Kōtsū Kaikan (Map p109) building in Ginza, Shinjuku's Studio Alta building (Map p116; 5th floor), Hara-juku's Laforet building (Map p117; 1st floor) and Shibuya's 109 Building (Map p117; 2nd floor). We've listed some of Tokyo's most accessible cinemas here:

Cinema Rise (Map p117; ☎ 3464-0051; www.cinema-rise.com in Japanese; 13-17 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; adult ¥1500; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Screening international and Japanese indie cinema.

Virgin Toho Cinemas Roppongi Hills (Map p119; ☎ 5775-6090; www.tohotheater.jp/theater/roppongi/index.html; 6-10-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku; adult ¥1800-3000, child ¥1000, 1st day of month ¥1000, women on Wed ¥1000; ☎ 10am-midnight Sun-Wed, to 5am Thu-Sat; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) You can book on the internet up to two days in advance for reserved seats at this nine-screen mainstream multiplex with luxurious reclining seats.

Yebisu Garden Cinema (Map p121; ☎ 5420-6161; Yebisu Garden Place, 4-20-2 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku; adult/child ¥1800/1000, 1st day of month ¥1000; ☎ 10am-11pm; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, east exit to Skywalk) This small, comfortable movie house screens mainstream and independent films. Tickets are numbered as they're sold and theatregoers are called in by number, preventing competition for seats.

Music

In Tokyo, you might have the luxury of seeing up-and-coming performers playing in intimate venues. Check the latest issue of *Metropolis* or *Tokyo Journal* or pick up some flyers at record shops (p180) in Shibuya to see who's playing around town. Ticket prices generally range from ¥5000 to ¥8000, depending on performer and venue.

DANCE CLUBS

You'll find the greatest concentration and diversity of clubs in Roppongi.

Muse (Map p119; ☎ 5467-1188; 4-1-1 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; admission ¥1000-2000; ☎ 7pm-4am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exits 1b & 3) With a friendly, international crowd, multilevel Muse has something for everyone – packed dance floor, several bar areas, cosy alcoves big enough for two – but also pool tables, darts and karaoke. Women usually don't pay a cover, which includes a drink or two. Near the Hobson's on the corner of Nishi-Azabu Crossing there's a neon 'Bar' sign marking the entrance.

Club 328 (Map p119; ☎ 3401-4968; www.3-2-8.jp; B1 fl, Kotsu Anzen Center Bldg, 3-24-20 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; admission ¥2000-2500; ☎ 8pm-5am; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exits 1b & 3) DJs at San-ni-pa spin a quality mix, from funk to reggae to R&B. With its refreshing un-Roppongi feel and a cool crowd of Japanese and *gaijin*, 328 is a good place to boogie 'til the break of dawn.

Admission includes two drinks. It's on Roppongi-dōri just off Nishi-Azabu Crossing.

Space Lab Yellow (Map p119; ☎ 3479-0690; www.club-yellow.com; B1 & B2 fl, Cesaurs Bldg, 1-10-11 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; admission ¥2000-3500; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2) Yellow is one of the best places in Tokyo to head for electronica. It's an inky basement space featuring everything from acid jazz to samba. Look for the glowing yellow sign next to a coin parking lot. Admission includes a drink or two.

Salsa Sudada (Map p119; ☎ 5474-8806; 3rd fl, La Palette Bldg, 7-13-8 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 6pm-6am; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Experienced salsa dancers can kick up their heels here for hours, while beginners can take lessons offered on Sunday nights. International dancers flock regularly to this place from Tokyo and beyond for salsa and merengue.

Bul-Let's (Map p119; ☎ 3401-4844; www.bul-lets.com; B1 fl, Kasumi Bldg, 1-7-11 Nishi-Azabu, Minato-ku; admission from ¥1500; ☎ from around 7pm; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 2) Near Yellow, this mellow basement space plays worldwide trance and ambient sounds for barefoot patrons. Beds and sofas furnish this carpeted club, but don't get the wrong idea – it's not all tranquillity and deadbeats.

Vanilla (Map p119; ☎ 3401-6200; www.clubvanilla.com; TSK Bldg, 7-14-30 Roppongi, Minato-ku; admission from ¥2000; ☎ 9pm-late; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 4) Aimed more towards a Japanese clientele, Vanilla harbours fewer *gaijin* drunkards than nearby bars. Three floors of dance space are filled with different beats and crowds of peeps. From Roppongi station, head west on Roppongi-dōri, pass Mizuho Bank and turn right down the next alley.

Lexington Queen (Map p119; ☎ 3401-1661; www.lexingtonqueen.com; B1 fl, Gotō Bldg, 3-13-14 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 8pm-5am; ☎ Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) The Lex was one of Roppongi's first discos and is still the place where visiting celebrities end up. Entry starts around ¥2000 unless you've had your visage on the admission of *Vogue* or *Rolling Stone*. But even noncelebs get a free drink with admission.

In Shibuya, you could follow the *kogyaru* ('gals' of Shibuya subcultures) to a 'para-para' club where everyone dances in surreal, mechanical sync, though this will make you feel like a complete alien. If you're over the age of, say, 20, try these clubs for a start.

Ruby Room (Map p117; ☎ 3780-3022; www.rubyroom.tokyo.com; 2F, Kasumi Bldg, 2-25-17 Dōgenzaka, Shibuya-

ku; admission ¥2000; ☎ 9pm-late; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) This dark, sparkly cocktail lounge is on a hill behind the 109 Building. The Ruby Room hosts both DJed and live music (admission includes a free drink), and is a fun place for older kids hanging in Shibuya.

Club Asia (Map p117; ☎ 5458-2551; 1-8 Maruyamachō, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥2500; ☎ 11pm-5am; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) This massive techno-club is popular with those on the younger end of 20-something. Events here are usually jam-packed no matter what night it is. There's also an OK restaurant serving Southeast Asian food.

Womb (Map p117; ☎ 5459-0039; www.womb.co.jp; 2-16 Maruyamachō, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥1500-4000; ☎ 8pm-late; ☎ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) 'Oomū' (as pronounced in Japanese) plays house, techno and drum 'n' bass, and the four floors get crowded on weekends. If you bring a flyer – make the rounds of Shibuya record shops beforehand, or print one from the website – you'll get ¥500 to ¥1000 off the admission. Picture ID required at the door.

Ageha (Map pp112-13; ☎ 5534-1515; www.ageha.com; 2-2-10 Shin-Kiba, Kōtō-ku; admission ¥2000-3000; ☎ 10pm-5am Tue-Sat; ☎ Yūrakuchō line to Shin-Kiba, main exit) This ginormous club on the water rivals any you'd find in LA or Ibiza. International and Japanese DJs appear here, and counterbalancing the thumping beats are chillout rooms and a small pool area. Free shuttles (ID required) run about every half-hour between the club and Shibuya station's east side bus terminal on Roppongi-dōri.

KARAOKE

Karaoke is ever popular in the land of its birth, and Tokyoites love belting out a few tunes at their local karaoke bars. There's no shortage of places to yowl out your favourites, and most offer at least a limited selection of songs in English and even a few in Spanish, French and Chinese. Oh, by the way, it's not 'carry-okay' in this country, so watch your pronunciation if you're asking the way to kah-rah-oh-kay.

Smash Hits (Map pp112-13; ☎ 3444-0432; www.smashhits.jp; B1 fl, M2 Bldg, 5-2-26 Hiro-o, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥3000; ☎ 7pm-3am Mon-Sat; ☎ Hibiya line to Hiro-o, exit B2) You're spoilt for choice at Smash Hits, where it has thousands of songs to choose from. There's no time limit on karaoke. Entry includes two drinks.

Lovenet (Map p119; ☎ 5771-5511; www.lovenet-jp.com; 3rd-4th fl, Hotel Ibis, 7-14-4 Roppongi, Minato-ku;

rooms per hr from ¥4800; ☎ 6pm-5am; ② Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 4a) If you're going for a more unique, upmarket experience, you can rent one of the gajillion themed rooms at Lovenet – one even has a hot tub from which you can warble.

LIVE MUSIC

Tokyo's homegrown live music scene has turned out some good live acts, often found playing around Shibuya and Ebisu.

Crocodile (Map p117; ☎ 3499-5205; B1 fl, New Sekiguchi Bldg, 6-18-8 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; admission from ¥2000; ☎ 6pm-2am; ② Chiyoda line to Meiji-jingūmae, exit 4) Crocodile has live music seven nights a week, with enough room for dancing if the music moves you – though you may be the only one. Tunes cover the gamut from night to night, be it jazz, reggae or rock and roll. Admission includes one drink. It's right on Meiji-dōri, in Harajuku.

Milk (Map p121; ☎ 5458-2826; www.milk-tokyo.com; B1 fl, Roob 6 Bldg, 1-13-3 Ebisu-Nishi, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥1000-3000; ☎ 8pm-4am; ② JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) Beneath What the Dickens, Milk has live music on Thursday and Friday nights. Check out the kitchen – there's no food but it's a great place to chat and sip a cocktail between sets. There's a good mix of musical genres here, from dub and hip-hop to electronica.

La.mama (Map p117; ☎ 3464-0801; info@lamama.net; B1 fl, Primera Dogenzaka Bldg, 1-15-3 Dōgenzaka, Shibuya-ku; admission from ¥2000; ☎ 6pm-late; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) For a dose of current local-centric music, this is a good bet for catching live, mainstream-Japanese acts who've arrived or are rocking their way up. The room is fairly spacious, and even when the place gets crowded you'll never be far from the stage.

Eggman (Map p117; ☎ 3496-1561; 1-6-8 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥1000-3000; ☎ 6.30pm-late; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Follow the spiral staircase down to this basement spot to hear blues, rock or light jazz. A smaller venue compared with Shibuya's bigger clubs, Eggman features mostly local, rock-and-roll bands.

Loft (Map p116; ☎ 5272-0382; www.loft-prj.co.jp/LOFT/index.html; B2 fl, Tatehana Bldg, 1-12-9 Kabukichō, Shinjuku-ku; admission from ¥1000; ☎ 5pm-late; ② JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, east exit) Had they been Japanese, the Rolling Stones would have played here long before they cut their first single. This Shinjuku institution is smoky, loud and lots

of fun on a good night. Head into Kabukichō and find Loft a block east of the Koma Theater complex.

Cavern Club (Map p119; ☎ 3405-5207; 1st fl, Saito Bldg, 5-3-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku; admission ¥1500; ☎ from 6pm; ② Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) Eerily flawless renditions of Beatles covers have to be heard to be believed, sung by four Japanese mop-heads at this club named for the place the originals first appeared in Liverpool. Re-serve a table ahead of time.

These bigger Shibuya clubs draw brighter stars, so you'll need to book tickets in advance, rather than turning up in the hope of getting in on the night of a show:

Club Quattro (Map p117; ☎ 3477-8750; 4th & 5th fl, Club Quattro Bldg, 32-13 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; admission from ¥3500; ☎ from 6pm; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit)

O-West (Map p117; ☎ 5784-7088; www.shibuya-o.com/o-west.html in Japanese; 2-3 Maruyamachō, Shibuya-ku; admission from ¥3000; ☎ from 5.30pm; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit)

O-East (Map p117; ☎ 5458-4681; www.shibuya-o.com/o-east.html in Japanese; 2-14-8 Dōgenzaka, Shibuya-ku; admission from ¥3500; ☎ from 6pm; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit)

JAZZ

People in this city take their jazz seriously. For listings of performances, check the latest issue of *Tokyo Journal* or *Metropolis*.

Blue Note Tokyo (Map p119; ☎ 5485-0088; www.bluenote.co.jp; Raika Bldg, 6-3-16 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; admission ¥6000-10,000; ☎ from 5.30pm Mon-Sat; ② Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit B3) Tokyo's big-name jazz venue in Minami-Aoyama allows aficionados the opportunity to listen up close and personal to the greats of jazz. From Aoyama-dōri walking west, make a left on Kotto-dōri, and make another left when you see Papas Café.

STB 139 (Sweet Basil; Map p119; ☎ 5474-1395; http://stb139.co.jp; 6-7-11 Roppongi, Minato-ku; admission ¥3000-7000; ☎ 6-11pm Mon-Sat; ② Hibiya, Toei Ōedo lines to Roppongi, exit 3) This is a large, comfortable space that draws big-name domestic and international acts, with performances covering the gamut of jazz genres. Call for reservations between 11 am and 8 pm.

Shinjuku Pit Inn (Map p116; ☎ 3354-2024; www.pit-inn.com; B1 fl, Accord Shinjuku Bldg, 2-12-4 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; admission ¥1300-3000; ☎ from 2pm; ② Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit C8) Shinjuku Pit Inn has been going strong for

around 40 years now, and is an intimate space hosting performances during the day and evening.

Theatre

BUNRAKU

Kokuritsu Gekijō (National Theatre; Map pp126-7; National Theatre; ☎ 3230-3000; www.ntj.jac.go.jp/english/index.html; 4-1 Hayabusachō, Chiyoda-ku; admission ¥1500-9200; ☎ reservations 10am-6pm; ② Namboku, Yūrakuchō lines to Nagatachō, exit 4) Performances are staged several times a year, even though Osaka is the home of *bunraku* (classical puppet theatre). Check the English-language website for a performance schedule.

KABUKI

Kabuki-za (Map pp124-5; ☎ 5565-6000; www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater/index.html; 4-12-5 Ginza, Chūō-ku; admission ¥2500-17,000; ☎ 11am-9pm; ② Hibiya, Toei Asakusa lines to Higashi-Ginza, exit 3) Of the places in Tokyo to see kabuki, historic Kabuki-za is the best theatre overall. Performances and times vary from month to month, so consult the website or contact the theatre directly for programme information. Audio guides providing commentary in English are available for ¥650 plus ¥1000 deposit.

Kabuki performances can be quite a marathon, lasting from four to five hours. If you're not up to it, you can get tickets for the 4th floor from ¥600 to ¥1000 and watch only part of the show (ask for *hitomakumi*). Audio guides are not available for the 4th floor, but tickets can be bought on the day of the performance. There are generally two performances, starting at around 11 am and 4 pm.

Kokuritsu Gekijō (above), Japan's national theatre, also has kabuki performances, with a range of seat prices. Audio guides are available. Check with the theatre for performance times.

NŌ

Nō (classical Japanese dance-drama) performances are held at various locations around Tokyo. Tickets cost between ¥2100 and ¥15,000, and it's best to get them at the theatre itself. Check with the appropriate theatre for times.

Kanze Nō-gakudō (Map p117; ☎ 3469-6421; 1-16-4 Shōtō, Shibuya-ku; tickets from ¥3000; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) One of the oldest and most highly respected schools of *nō* in Tokyo, Kanze Nō-gakudō is about a 15-minute walk

west from Shibuya station. Call the theatre or TIC to find out if performances are on while you're in town.

Kokuritsu Nō-gakudō (National Nō Theatre; Map p117; ☎ 3423-1331; 4-18-1 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku; admission ¥2800-5600; ☎ reservations 10am-6pm; ② JR Chūō, Sōbu lines to Sendagaya, main exit) The National Nō Theatre stages its own productions (for which written English synopses are provided), but also hosts privately sponsored *nō* performances. To get there, exit Sendagaya station with Shinjuku to your left and follow the road that hugs the railway tracks. The theatre is on the left.

Tea Ceremonies

A few hotels in Tokyo hold tea ceremonies that you can see and occasionally participate in for a fee of ¥1000 to ¥1500. Call ahead to make reservations.

Hotel New Ōtani (see p152; ☎ 3265-1111; tea ceremony ¥1050; ☎ ceremonies 11am-4pm Thu-Sat)

Hotel Ōkura (see p152; ☎ 3582-0111; tea ceremony ¥1000; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Sat)

Imperial Hotel (see p147; ☎ 3504-1111; tea ceremony ¥1500; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat)

Sports

BASEBALL

Although soccer has made some headway in recent years, baseball remains Japan's most popular team sport. Of the two professional leagues – the Central and the Pacific – several teams are based in the Tokyo area. Within Tokyo, the Yomiuri Giants and Yakult Swallows are crosstown rivals. Taking in a ballgame is a uniquely Japanese spectator-sport experience, what with its teams of cheerleading fans, beer girls with kegs strapped to their backs and the polite crowd bursting into song. Baseball season runs from April through the end of October. Check the *Japan Times* to see who's playing while you're in town. The cheapest unreserved outfield seats start at ¥1500.

Tokyo Dome (The 'Big Egg'; Map pp126-7; ☎ 5800-9999; 1-3-61 Kōraku, Bunkyo-ku; ② JR Chūō, Sōbu lines to Suidobashi, west exit or Marunouchi line to Kōrakuen, Kōrakuen exit) Home to Japan's favourite baseball team, the Yomiuri Giants, Tokyo Dome is next to Kōraku-en Amusement Park (p142). Though it's a covered dome, a little dirigible floats around inside.

Jingū Kyūjō (Jingū Stadium; Map p119; ☎ 3404-8999; 13 Kasumigaoka, Shinjuku-ku; ② Ginza line to Gaienmae, north exit) Jingū Baseball Stadium was originally

built to host the 1964 Olympics, and is where the Yakult Swallows are based.

SUMŌ

Travellers who visit Tokyo in January, May or September should not miss their chance to attend a Grand Tournament at Tokyo's **Ryōgoku Kokugikan Stadium** (Map pp112-13; ☎ 3623-5111; www.sumo.or.jp; 1-3-28 Yokoami, Sumida-ku; ☎ 10am-4.30pm; JR Sōbu line to Ryōgoku, west exit or Toei Ōedo line to Ryōgoku, exit A4). The best seats are all bought up by those with the right connections, but if you don't mind standing, you can get in for around ¥500. Tickets can be purchased up to a month prior to the tournament, or you can simply turn up on the day (you'll have to arrive very early, say 6am, to be assured of seats during the last days of a tournament).

If you can't attend in person, NHK televises sumō from 3.30pm daily during each tournament. And if you aren't in town during a tournament, you could pick up a handbook at the stadium and take a self-guided walking tour of the neighbourhood, which houses several *heya* (sumō stables).

SHOPPING

Tokyo is a notoriously expensive city, but of course there are bargains to be bagged. The best one-stop shopping options are the department stores, which stock virtually everything, but unless a major sale is on they're pricey places to shop.

Antiques & Vintage Goods

Hanae Mori building (Map p117; 3-6-1 Kita-Aoyama, Minato-ku; ☎ 11am-7pm; ② Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit A1) One great place to look for antiques and eccentric souvenirs is in the basement of this Harajuku building, which has more than 30 antique shops hawking everything from over-the-hill kewpie dolls to antique obi ornaments.

Kurofune (Map p119; ☎ 3479-1552; www.kurofune-antiques.com; 7-7-4 Roppongi, Minato-ku; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; ② Toei Ōedo line to Roppongi, exit 7) Kurofune, run for the past quarter-century by a friendly American collector, carries an awesome treasure-trove of Japanese antiques. Correspondingly impressive amounts of cash are necessary for acquiring some of these items, like painstakingly constructed antique *tansu* (Japanese chests of drawers), but it's a nice place to window-shop.

Clothes

Harajuku (Map p117) has reached iconic proportions internationally, becoming synonymous with Tokyo street fashion. While established houses of fashion like Chanel, Comme les Garçons and Gucci line Omote-sandō, Ura-Hara (the Harajuku backstreets) is where the small boutiques and studios represent independent designers. Wander the alleys snaking off either side of Omote-sandō – take the alley to the left of Kiddyland for a look at the south side, then backtrack to the pedestrian overpass across Omote-sandō and check out the boutiques and second-hand shops of the north side.

Department stores like **Laforet** (Map p117; ☎ 3475-0411; 1-11-6 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ② Chiyoda line to Meiji-jingūmae, exit 5) or the **109 Building** (Ichimarkyū; Map p117; ☎ 3477-5111; 2-29-1 Dōgenzaka, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10.30pm Sat & Sun; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) are good places to dig up the latest hot look you're seeing on the chic young things strutting down Takeshita-dōri. Aoyama (Map p117) and Daikanyama (Map p121) are also good places to find slightly more sophisticated boutiques.

Bapexclusive (Map p117; ☎ 3407-2145; 5-5-8 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; ☎ 11am-7pm; ② Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit A5) A Bathing Ape (BAPE for short), the much-hyped, no-longer-underground label, adorns the backs of young hipsters cruising Harajuku and has perhaps a dozen 'secret' locations squirreled away around Aoyama. This one has a kaleidoscopic collection of trainers on the 2nd floor.

Evisu Tailor (Map p121; ☎ 3710-1999; www.evisu.com; 1-1-5 Kami-Meguro, Meguro-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ② Hibiya line to Naka-Meguro) In the early '90s, the detail-obsessed founder of Evisu began producing jeans the old-fashioned way using rescued looms and methods, helping to spawn the Japanese selvedge denim craze. Here, you can choose the pair you want and have the Evisu logo custom painted on; discreet denim-heads can opt to go logo-less.

Hysteric Glamour (Map p117; ☎ 3409-7227; www.hystericglamour.jp; B1 & 1st fl, 6-23-2 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ② JR Yamanote line to Harajuku, Omote-sandō exit) Certainly it isn't the last word on Harajuku fashion, but for many it's the first that comes to mind. Design junkies will favour the sinuous, futuristic interior of the newer Roppongi Hills branch.

Sou-Sou (Map p119; ☎ 3407-7877; www.sousou.co.jp; 2nd fl, From-1st Bldg, 5-3-10 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ② Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit A5) In the beautiful way that the old becomes new again, as with denim, the humble *tabi* (split-toed sock) is experiencing a renaissance. Sou-Sou designs whimsical, comfortable and practical *tabi*; it even makes sturdy, rubber-soled models to wear on the street.

Department Stores

Tōkyū Hands (Map p116; ☎ 5361-3111; Takashimaya Times Sq, 5-24-2 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-8.30pm; ② JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, new south exit) Even if you hate shopping, the one store everyone should hit is ostensibly a DIY home-improvement emporium. If you need lumber or nails, you can get it here; if you need a sheet of stick-on cubic zirconia to add bling to your mobile phone, you can get that here, too. There are two other branches in Ikebukuro and Shibuya.

Tokyo's big *depōto* (department stores) are worth a look for sheer scale and inventory, these opulent shrines to consumerism. Department stores close at least one day each month, usually a Monday or Wednesday. Some of the best things about them are not necessarily the wares, but the eats – with their rooftop beer gardens, *resutoran-gai* and elaborately stocked *depachika*.

Isetan (Map p116; ☎ 3352-1111; 3-14-1 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-8pm; ② Marunouchi, Toei Shinjuku lines to Shinjuku-sanchōme, exit A1) In addition to having a stunning food basement, Isetan offers a free service called I-club, matching English-speaking staff to visiting shoppers; the membership desk is on the 7th floor of the Isetan annex building.

Keiō (Map p116; ☎ 3342-2111; 1-1-4 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-8pm, closed some Thu; ② JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit) Opens its rooftop beer garden in the summer.

Loft (Map p117; ☎ 3462-3807; 21-1 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun; ② JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) The bias here is more towards fun rather than function, and it's a good place to look for cool housewares, gifts and toys for big kids.

Matsuya (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3567-1211; 3-6-1 Ginza, Chūō-ku; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm; ② Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi lines to Ginza, exits A12 & A13) Also opens its beer garden during the summer, and has a good *depachika*.

Matsuzakaya (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3572-1111; 6-10-1 Ginza, Chūō-ku; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 7.30pm Sun;

② Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi lines to Ginza, exit A4) Another spectacular *depachika*.

Mitsukoshi (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3562-1111; 4-6-16 Ginza, Chūō-ku; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun, closed some Mon; ② Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi lines to Ginza, exits A7 & A11) Look for the Mitsukoshi lion at the corner entrance.

Takashimaya (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3211-4111; 2-4-1 Nihombashi, Chūō-ku; ☎ 10am-7.30pm; ② Ginza, Tōzai, Toei Asakusa lines to Nihombashi, exit B1 & B2) This is one of the more venerable old establishments, where primly dressed, white-gloved attendants operate old-fashioned elevators; have a look at the rooftop patio. There's another branch in Ginza.

Electronics

Akihabara (秋葉原; Map pp126-7), or 'Akiba', is Tokyo's discount electronics neighbourhood – hence the nickname Denki-gai (Electric Town) – though it's also become something of a manga mecca. Nowhere in the world will you find such a range of electrical appliances or *otaku* (geeks). If you have a short attention span, spending half a day flitting from store to noisy store may well be your nirvana. Some larger stores (Laox and Sofmap are reliable options) have tax-free sections with export models of various appliances and gadgets for sale – remember to double-check that they're compatible with your home country's system, and bring along your passport to buy duty-free items.

While prices may be competitive with those in your home country, it's unusual to find prices that match those of dealers in Hong Kong or Singapore. To find the shops, take the Electric Town exit of the JR Akihabara station.

Handicrafts & Souvenirs

While toyshops and department stores sell fun, futuristic and only-in-Japan types of goodies, there's also a wealth of more traditional-style gifts and souvenirs to be found in Tokyo.

Kappabashi-dōri (Map pp130-1; ② Ginza line to Tawaramachi, all exits) is where to go if you're setting up a restaurant. You can get custom-made *noren* (doorway curtains) with your restaurant's name, cushions, crockery and, most importantly, your plastic food models. They are carefully crafted and not cheap, but they do make entertaining souvenirs for the fridge or kitchen table back home. Kappabashi-dōri is a five-minute walk northwest of Tawaramachi station.

Takumi Handicrafts (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3571-2017; ginza-takumi.co.jp in Japanese; 8-4-2 Ginza, Chūō-ku; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi, Ginza exit) Takumi offers an elegant selection of toys, textiles, ceramics and other traditional folk crafts from around Japan. The shop also encloses information detailing the origin and background of pieces you purchase.

Bingoya (Map pp112-13; ☎ 3202-8778; www.quasar.nu/bingoya; 10-6 Wakamatsuchō, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun; ⑨ Toei Ōedo line to Wakamatsu-Kawada) Regional ceramics, vibrant batik textiles, richly dyed *washi* (handmade paper), handmade glassware and tatami mats fill out the five floors of this wonderful handicrafts shop.

Japan Traditional Crafts Center (Map p114; ☎ 5954-6066; www.kougei.or.jp/english/center.html; 1st & 2nd fl, Metropolitan Plaza Bldg, 1-11-1 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku; ☎ 11am-7pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Ikebukuro, Metropolitan exit) Demonstrations and temporary exhibitions of handmade crafts, such as weavings, mosaics, bows and arrows, ceramics and *washi* are held on the 3rd floor of this centre. High-quality folk arts and handicrafts are available for purchase on the 1st and 2nd floors.

Kamawanu (Map p121; ☎ 3780-0182; 23-1 Sarugakuchō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11am-7pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Ebisu, west exit) In Daikanyama, this little shop specialises in beautifully dyed *tenugui*, those ubiquitous Japanese handtowels that you find in *sentō* and *onsen*. Designs come in a spectrum of colours, incorporating traditional abstract patterns and representations of natural elements.

Haibara (Map pp126-7; ☎ 3272-3801; 2-7-6 Nihombashi, Chūō-ku; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat; ⑨ Ginza, Tōzai, Toei Asakusa lines to Nihombashi, exits B8 & (3) East of Tokyo station, Haibara stocks a quality range of *washi* and paper handicrafts, such as wallets, handbound notebooks and cards. All the major department stores also have a section devoted to *washi*.

Oriental Bazaar (Map p117; ☎ 3400-3933; 5-9-13 Jūgūmae, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-7pm Fri-Wed; ⑨ Chiyoda, Ginza, Hanzōmon lines to Omote-sandō, exit A3) Oriental Bazaar is a good one-stop shop for gifts and souvenirs, with a wide range of items such as fans, folding screens, *yukata* and pottery – many at very affordable prices.

Kids Stuff

Japanese are particularly creative when it comes to finding things to keep their kids occupied, and Tokyo has some great toyshops.

Kiddyland (Map p117; ☎ 3409-3431; www.kiddyland.co.jp; 6-1-9 Jūgūmae, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-8pm, closed 3rd

Tue of each month; ⑨ Chiyoda line to Meiji-jūgūmae, exit 4) Prepare to overdose on the six floors of *kawaii* (cute), here on Omote-sandō in Harajuku. This store is stuffed with toys for kids from age zero onward. You might want to avoid it on the weekends, when teenagers descend in droves.

Hakuhinkan Toy Park (Map pp124-5; ☎ 3571-8008; www.hakuhinkan.co.jp; 8-8-11 Ginza, Chūō-ku; ☎ 11am-8pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shimbashi, Ginza exit) This multilevel toyshop along Chūō-dōri in Ginza is another great one, full of wacky distractions and objects of desire, with an 8th-floor theatre and two floors of child-friendly restaurants.

Manga & Anime

Along with electronics, Akihabara (see p179) also overflows with shops selling manga and anime.

Mandarake Shibuya (Map p117; ☎ 3477-0777; www.mandarake.co.jp; B2 fl, Shibuya Beam Bldg, 31-2 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ noon-8pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit); Nakano (Map p117; ☎ 3228-0007; 2nd-4th fl, Nakano Broadway Bldg, 5-52-15 Nakano, Nakano-ku; ☎ noon-8pm; ⑨ JR Chūō line to Nakano, north exit) Mandarake's Shibuya Beam branch carries a range of new manga and also boasts performances by real, live cosplay kids in full-on anime character drag. But the huge flagship store in Nakano, with three floors packed with all manner of new and used manga, anime, games and character-related collectibles, is a must-visit for avid fans.

Book Off (Map p117; ☎ 5775-6818; 1-8-8 Jūgūmae, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-9pm; ⑨ Chiyoda line to Meiji-jūgūmae, exit 5) Find a huge selection of new and gently used, barely bruised manga here. Budget collectors should head for the shelves of ¥105 (!) books – you could feasibly buy up entire series in good condition. This branch is on Meiji-dōri, north of Laforet.

Music

Shibuya (Map p117) is music central, and a great starting point to hunt for music. Udagawachō, the area northwest of Shibuya station, is home to several shops like Recofan and Disk Union, who stock rare and second-hand CDs.

Tower Records (Map p117; ☎ 3496-3661; 1-22-14 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 10am-11pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) There's a massive branch in Shibuya, with the most extensive range in Tokyo and lots of listening stations. The 7th-floor bookshop is worth a look for its

wide selection of foreign magazines. Tower Records, Virgin and HMV all have several branches in Tokyo.

For vinyl, rifle through the record stores in Shibuya. There's a high concentration of little shops around Udagawachō; here's a list of notables in the neighbourhood just to get you started.

Cisco Records (Map p117; ☎ 3462-0366; www.cisco-records.co.jp in Japanese; 2nd fl, 11-1 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-9pm Sun;

⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) This is the hip-hop and R&B branch, but Cisco has several other small shops scattered around this area, each specialising in a different genre.

Disk Union (Map p117; ☎ 3476-2627; http://diskunion.net in Japanese; Antenna 21 Bldg, 30-7 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Used and new records along Center-gai, with other branches in Shinjuku (Map p116) and elsewhere. Each floor specialises in a different genre.

Guinness Records (Map p117; ☎ 3464-7752; www.guinness-records.com in Japanese; 4th fl, 10-2 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 1-8.30pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Guinness specialises in hip-hop, but also carries soul, R&B and jazz.

Manhattan Records (Map p117; ☎ 3477-7737; 1st fl, 10-1 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ noon-9pm) Bounce into Manhattan for hip-hop and a glimpse of the Japanese B-boys.

Recofan (Map p117; ☎ 5454-0161; www.recofan.co.jp; 4th fl, Beam Bldg, 31-2 Udagawachō, Shibuya-ku; ☎ 11.30am-9pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shibuya, Hachikō exit) Of several branches around town, this place stocks a wide variety of music, including folk, soul, J-pop and reggae.

Ningyō (Japanese Dolls)

Next to JR Asakusabashi station, Edo-dōri (Map pp112–13) is the place for *ningyō*. Both sides of the road have large numbers of shops specialising in both traditional and contemporary Japanese dolls.

Yoshitoku (Map pp112-13; ☎ 3863-4419; 1-9-14 Asakusabashi, Taitō-ku; ☎ 9.30am-6pm; ⑨ JR Sōbu or Toei Asakusa lines to Asakusabashi, main exit or exit A2) The most famous; has been crafting exquisite *ningyō* since 1711 and is now owned by its 11th-generation descendant.

Photographic Equipment

Ginza's Harumi-dōri is one place to find photographic equipment – there are several good second-hand photographic shops where Japanese gear can often be bought at reasonable

prices. For new equipment, the west side of Shinjuku station harbours some of Tokyo's largest camera shops. Be sure to shop around for the best deals.

Bic Camera (Map p116; ☎ 5326-1111; 1-5-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-8.30pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit) Bic has infiltrated the entire city, selling not only cameras but also mp3 players, computers, and electronics of all kinds. Just try not to get the endlessly repeated Bic song stuck in your head.

Sakuraya Camera (Map p116; ☎ 3346-3939; 1-16-4 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 10am-8.30pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit) Sakuraya is one of the biggest camera shops in town, selling an incredible selection of lenses, digital cameras and photographic equipment at competitive prices.

Yodobashi Camera (Map p116; ☎ 3346-1010; 1-11-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm; ⑨ JR Yamanote line to Shinjuku, west exit) Yodobashi is one of Tokyo's most highly regarded camera shops, well stocked with photographic equipment. Bring your passport and the consumption tax will be waived.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

With the exception of China Airlines, all international airlines (p809) use Narita airport rather than the more conveniently located Haneda airport.

Immigration and customs procedures are usually straightforward, but they can be time consuming for non-Japanese. Note that Japanese customs officials are probably the most scrupulous in Asia; backpackers arriving from anywhere remotely third-worldish (the Philippines, Thailand etc) can expect some questions and perhaps a thorough search.

You can change money in the customs hall after having cleared customs, and in the arrival hall. The rates are the same as those offered in town.

Narita has two terminals, Nos 1 and 2. This doesn't complicate things much as both have train stations that are connected to JR and Keisei lines. The one you arrive at will depend on the airline you are flying with. Both terminals have clear English signposting for train and limousine bus services.

Be sure to check which terminal your flight leaves from, and give yourself plenty of time to get out to Narita – the train ride itself can take from 50 minutes to 1½ hours.

Boat

A ferry journey can be a great, relatively inexpensive way to get from Tokyo to other parts of the country. Prices given here are for 2nd-class travel. Though we've listed phone numbers, most lines are not staffed by English-speaking operators. It's easiest to book passage through a local travel agency or the JNTO.

From Tokyo is the long-distance **Ocean Tōkyū Ferry** (☎ 5128-0109) going to Tokushima (¥9000, 18 hours) in Shikoku and to Kitakyūshū (¥13,500, 34 hours) in Northern Kyūshū. **Oshima Transport** (☎ 3273-8911) goes to Naha (¥23,500, 44 hours) on Okinawa. Long-distance ferry services to Hokkaidō are no longer available from Tokyo; however, **Higashi Nihon Ferry** (☎ 0120-756-564) has departures from Ibaraki prefecture to Tomakomai in Hokkaidō (¥9500, 19 hours).

Bus

Long-distance buses are generally little or no cheaper than trains, but are sometimes a good alternative for long-distance trips to areas serviced by expressways.

There are a number of express buses running between Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. Overnight JR buses leave at 10pm from the Yaesu side of Tokyo station and arrive at Kyoto and Osaka between 6am and 7am the following day. They cost from ¥8000 to ¥8500 (if you're coming back, you'll save money by buying a return ticket). Tickets can be booked at one of the green windows at a JR station.

Buses also run from Tokyo station to Nara (¥8400, 9½ hours), Kobe (¥8690, 9½ hours), Hiroshima (¥11,600, 12 hours), Fukui (¥8300, eight hours), Nagano (¥4000, four hours), Yamagata (¥6420, 5½ hours), Takamatsu (¥10,000, 9½ hours), Sendai (¥6210, 5½ hours), Morioka (¥7850, 7½ hours) and Aomori (¥10,000, 9½ hours).

From Shinjuku station there are buses running to the Fuji and Hakone regions, including, for Mt Fuji climbers, direct services to the 5th station (see p200). The Shinjuku long-distance bus station is across from the west exit of Shinjuku station.

Train

All major JR lines radiate from Tokyo station; northbound trains stop at Ueno station, which, like Tokyo station, is on the convenient JR Yamanote line. Private lines – often cheaper and

quicker for making day trips out of Tokyo – start from various stations around Tokyo. With the exception of the Tōbu Nikkō line, which starts in Asakusa, all private lines originate somewhere on the Yamanote line.

For fares to major cities from Tokyo, see p822.

SHINKANSEN

There are three *shinkansen* (bullet train) lines that connect Tokyo with the rest of Japan: the Tōkaidō line, which passes through Central Honshū, changing its name along the way to the Sanyō line before terminating at Hakata in Northern Kyūshū; the Tōhoku line, which runs northeast via Utsunomiya and Sendai as far as Morioka, with the Yamagata branch heading from Fukushima to Yamagata and the Akita branch heading from Morioka to Akita; and the Jōetsu line, which runs north to Niigata, with the Nagano branch heading from Takasaki to Nagano-shi. All three *shinkansen* lines start at Tokyo station, though the Tōhoku and Jōetsu lines make a stop at Ueno station, and the Tōkaidō line now stops at Shinagawa station in south-central Tokyo.

Of these lines, the one most likely to be used by visitors to Japan is the Tōkaidō line, as it passes through Kyoto and Osaka. 'Nozomi' trains between Tokyo and Kyoto (¥13,520, 2½ hours) are fastest, as they make only a few stops. Buy tickets at the green JR windows; the way to *shinkansen* platforms in Tokyo station are clearly signposted in English.

PRIVATE LINES

The private lines generally service Tokyo's sprawling suburbia. The most useful are the Tōkyū Tōyoko line, running between Shibuya station and Yokohama; the Odakyū line, running from Shinjuku to Odawara and the Hakone region; the Tōbu Nikkō line, running from Asakusa to Nikkō; and the Seibu Shinjuku line from Ikebukuro to Kawagoe.

OTHER JR LINES

The regular Tōkaidō line serves the stations that the Tōkaidō *shinkansen* line zips through without stopping. Trains start at Tokyo station and pass through Shimbashi and Shinagawa stations on the way out of town. There are *kyūkyō* (express) services to Yokohama and to Izu-hantō via Atami, and from there trains continue – very slowly – to Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka.

Northbound trains start in Ueno. The Takasaki line goes to Kumagaya and, of course, Takasaki, with onward connections from Takasaki to Niigata. The Tōhoku line follows the Takasaki line as far north as Ōmiya, from where it heads to the far north of Honshū via Sendai and Aomori. Getting to Sendai without paying any express surcharges will involve changes at Utsunomiya and Fukushima. For those intent on saving the expense of a night's accommodation, there are also overnight services.

GETTING AROUND

Tokyo has an excellent public transport system, with everything of note conveniently close to a subway or JR station. Bus services are difficult to use if you don't read kanji, but the average visitor to Tokyo won't need the buses anyway.

To/From Narita Airport

Narita airport is 66km from central Tokyo, and is used by almost all the international airlines but only a small number of domestic operators. Travel to or from Tokyo takes from 50 minutes to over 1½ hours, depending on your mode of transport and destination in town.

Depending on where you're headed, it's generally cheaper and faster to travel into Tokyo by train than by limousine bus. However, rail users will probably need to change trains somewhere, and this can be confusing on a jetlagged first visit. Limousine buses provide a hassle-free direct route to a number of

Tokyo's top hotels, and you don't have to be a hotel guest to use the buses.

If you're seriously desperate or have money to burn, taxis from Narita will run you about a cool ¥25,000.

TRAIN

There are three rail services between Tokyo and both terminals at Narita airport: the private **Keisei line** (☎ 3621-2242; www.keisei.co.jp in Japanese); the **JR Narita Express N'EX** (☎ 050-2016-1603; www.jreast.co.jp/e/index.html for information, www.world.eki-net.com for reservations); and the JR 'Airport Narita' service. The Keisei service arrives at Nippori and Ueno, from either of which you can change to the Yamanote line for access to other neighbourhoods. N'EX and the 'Airport Narita' service arrives at Tokyo station (from where you can change to almost any line). N'EX also runs to Shinjuku, Ikebukuro and Yokohama.

The Keisei line has two services: the Keisei Skyliner, which does the trip between Narita and Ueno (¥1920, one hour); and the Keisei *tokkyū* (limited express; ¥1000, one hour and 11 minutes). Times and fares to and from Nippori are marginally less. *Tokkyū* services are much more frequent than the Skyliner, and what's another 11 minutes? If you're heading to Asakusa, it's probably most convenient to take a *tokkyū* train to Aoto station and transfer to the Toei Asakusa line to Asakusa station.

The N'EX services are fast, extremely comfortable, and include amenities like drink-dispensing machines and telephones. They

DAY-TRIPPING FROM NARITA

If you face a long layover at Narita airport, consider these alternatives to dazed, interminable hours in the terminals.

Assuming you have several hours to kill – including at least 2½ hours to get out, away and back into the airport – make a quick detour into Narita town. The town's highlight is its impressive temple, **Naritasan Shinsōji** (☎ 0476-222-111; 1 Narita, Narita-shi, Chiba-ken), surrounded by a pretty park laced with walking paths, trees and ponds. Along Omote-sandō, the main road leading from station to temple, explore the little shops and restaurants in town. To get there, take a limited express Keisei or JR train to Narita station (¥250, 10 minutes). Pick up a Narita map from the friendly TIC outside the east exit of the JR station.

If your layover is longer than eight hours, you can spend a couple of those hours in Tokyo. Hit the airport ATM for at least ¥10,000, check your bag through or stow it in a left-luggage locker, and catch the next JR Narita Express (above) or Keisei Skyliner (above) into Tokyo. To save time later, buy a round-trip ticket that departs from Tokyo at least three hours before your flight. Stick around one neighbourhood on the Yamanote line and don't miss your train back to the airport!

go to or from Tokyo station (¥2940, 53 minutes), to Shinjuku station (¥3110, 1½ hours), to or from Ikebukuro station (¥3110, one hour and 40 minutes) and to or from Yokohama station (¥4180, 1½ hours). N'EX services run approximately half-hourly between 7am and 10pm, but Ikebukuro services are infrequent; in most cases you're better off heading to Shinjuku and taking the Yamanote line from there. Seats are reserved only, but can be bought immediately before departure if they are available.

'Airport Narita' trains cost ¥1280 and take 1½ hours to or from Tokyo. Trains only run approximately once an hour.

The Keikyū rail line runs between Narita and Haneda airports (¥1560, two hours), but you'll have to transfer to or from the Keisei line at Aoto station.

LIMOUSINE BUS

Don't be misled by the name; they're just ordinary buses and take 1½ to two hours to travel between Narita airport and a number of major hotels around Tokyo. Check departure times before buying your ticket, as services are not all that frequent. The fare to or from hotels around Asakusa, to or from Ikebukuro, Akasaka, Ginza, Shiba, Shinagawa, Shinjuku or Haneda airport costs around ¥3000. There's also direct service between Narita airport and Yokohama (¥3500, two hours).

To/From Haneda Airport

Most domestic flights and China Airlines to/from Taiwan use the convenient Haneda airport.

Transport to or from Haneda airport is a simple matter, as the **Tokyo Monorail** (www.tokyo-monorail.co.jp) runs from 5.15am to 11.15pm between the airport and Hamamatsuchō station on the JR Yamanote line (¥470, 22 minutes, every 10 minutes).

Taxis from the airport to places around central Tokyo cost around ¥6000. Limousine buses connect Haneda with TCAT (¥900), Tokyo station (¥900), Ikebukuro and Shinjuku (¥1200), and several other destinations in Tokyo.

There is a direct bus service between Haneda and Narita airports (¥3000, two hours).

Bus

Pick up a copy of the free TOEI Bus Route Guide from the TIC. When using a bus, have

the name of your destination written in Japanese so you can either show the driver or match up the kanji with the route map yourself (there's very little English signposting on buses or at bus stops). It's a flat ¥200 for city destinations.

Car

For those who enjoy a challenge and who obtain an International Driving Permit before arriving in Japan. Three companies that usually have English speakers on hand are **Mazda Rent-a-Lease** (☎ 5286-0740), **Nippon Rent-a-Car** (☎ 3485-7196) and **Toyota Rent-a-Lease** (☎ 3264-0100). Typical rates for small cars are ¥8000 or ¥9000 for the first day, and ¥5500 to ¥7000 each day thereafter. On top of this there is a ¥1000-per-day insurance fee. Mileage is usually unlimited.

Taxi

Flagfall is ¥660, and if you don't speak Japanese, taxi drivers can plug a venue's telephone number into the GPS system to find its location.

Train

Tokyo has a crowded but otherwise awesome rail network. Between the JR and private above-ground and subway lines, you can get to almost anywhere in town quickly and cheaply. But night owls beware: it closes from around midnight until 5am or 6am.

Avoiding Tokyo's rush hour is not often possible, though things tend to quiet down from 10am to 4pm.

JR LINES

Undoubtedly, the most useful line in Tokyo is the JR Yamanote line, which does a 35km loop around the city, taking in most of the important areas. You can do the whole circuit in an hour for the ¥130 minimum charge – a great introduction to the city. Another useful aboveground JR route is the Chūō line, which cuts across the city centre between Shinjuku and Akihabara. Tickets are transferable on all JR lines.

The major JR stations (Tokyo, Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ikebukuro and Ueno) are massive places with thronging crowds and never enough English signposting. Just working out how to buy a ticket can drive a newcomer to the edge of madness. If it's a JR train you're taking, look for the JR sign (usually green)

and the rows of vending machines. If you don't know the fare, put in the minimum ¥130 and push the top left-hand button (the one with no price on it). When you get to your destination you can pay the balance at a fare adjustment machine, found near the ticket gates. English signposting points the way to the railway platforms.

If you'll be doing a lot of travelling on JR lines (even just the Yamanote line), we strongly suggest buying a JR 'IO' card. These work like debit cards that you can insert directly into automated ticket wickets (the correct fare will be deducted automatically). IO cards come in denominations of ¥1000, ¥3000 and ¥5000, and can be purchased from ticket machines marked with, er, a large watermelon and a penguin, or from JR windows.

Travellers planning to spend an extended period of time in Tokyo might consider getting a Suica smart card – the Suica card can be swiped over the wicket without being removed from a wallet, and they can be recharged. They can even be used to purchase items at convenience stores in the stations. Suica cards require a ¥500 deposit, refundable when you return it to a JR window.

For English-language train information, you can call the **JR English Information line** (☎ 3423-0111; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri).

SUBWAY LINES

Ticket prices start at ¥160 for short hops, but if your trip involves a change of train, it will probably cost upwards of ¥190. As with the JR system, if you're in doubt at all (there are still subway stations where the only pricing maps

are in Japanese), buy a ticket for ¥160 and upgrade if necessary at your destination.

There are 12 subway lines in Tokyo (13 if you include the Yūrakuchō New Line), of which eight are TRTA lines and four are TOEI lines. This is not particularly important to remember, as the subway services are essentially the same and have good connections from one to another; however, you'll need a special transfer ticket to switch between TRTA and TOEI subway lines. If you can't read Japanese, the easiest way to get around this is to buy a Passnet (or SF Metro) card. It comes in denominations of ¥1000, ¥3000 and ¥5000 and is inserted just like a ticket in the automatic ticket gates. It's good for travel on both subway systems and saves you time, money and confusion when switching between the two systems.

DISCOUNT TICKETS & TRAIN PASSES

There are no massively discounted tickets available for travel around Tokyo. The best deal is the Tokyo Combination Ticket (¥1580), which allows travel on any subway, tram, TOEI bus or JR train in the metropolitan area until the last train of the day. It's available from subway and JR stations and post offices.

Taxi

Taxis are so expensive that you should only use them when there's no alternative. Rates start at ¥660, which gives you 2km (1.5km after 11pm), after which the meter starts to clock an additional ¥100 for every 350m; you also click up ¥100 for every two minutes you sit idly gazing at the scenery in a Tokyo traffic jam.

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