

# TOKYO, JAPAN

## *Trip Itinerary*

### OVERVIEW OF TOKYO

Being in Tokyo is like being in another world. If you've ever dreamed of being in a totally different environment and culture, then this beautiful place should be on your bucket list if it isn't already (and who are we kidding, I'm preaching to the converted).

From the high fashion and luxury lifestyle of Ginza, to cozy izakaya in back alleys with some of the best drinks (and best times) and everything in between, Tokyo has something you'll want to return for.

In this itinerary, you'll see a list of some of the more "tourist-y" things that I would say are a must do, but with a **healthy dose of under the radar obscuras and curiosities** that can be hard to dig out.

So if you're looking for fun, food, and a frenzy of a weird time, then let's get down into the nitty gritty of why Tokyo should be next on your travel agenda.

### NOT TO BE MISSED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

1. Sesno-ji Temple in Asakusa
  - a. Asakusa makes for a fun area to walk around during the day - the buildings around the area are urban and beautiful
2. Robot Restaurant in Shinjuku
  - a. Shinjuku is great to walk around at night with all the hustle and bustle
3. Golden Gai
  - a. If you're around after Robot Restaurant, Golden Gai is right around the corner and is jam packed with tiny bars (izakaya). Some have cover or don't allow foreigners, so watch the signage.
4. Teamlabs Borderless and Teamlabs Planets
  - a. WORTH IT to go to both, but book a ticket in advance for a morning spot
5. Studio Ghibli Museum
  - a. Book your ticket ahead of time and watch for slots to go fast

6. Meiji Jingu Shrine
  - a. And the nearby park is a must
7. Imperial Palace tour
8. Edo Tokyo Museum
9. Toyomi Fish Market
  - a. Also great for sushi lovers

## UNDER THE RADAR ATTRACTIONS

1. Day trip to Yokohama
  - a. Made famous in the hit Japanese TV series Terrace House, Yokohama is an adorable city about a 45 minutes train from Tokyo. They have a lively Chinatown market.
2. Arcade photoboosts
  - a. Arcades are definitely worth it to scope out anyway, but keep an eye out for the photoboosts. You won't be disappointed.
3. NAOJ Mitaka Stargazing
  - a. Check the observatory calendar 10 days before you want to reserve your spot at the telescope. It's free, BUT it books up quickly and only 100 people are allowed in one evening.
4. Tsutaya Books Daikanyama
  - a. Really cute and extensive bookstore with Japanese and English books. Very close to Coffee Elementary School for a leisurely afternoon.
5. Baseball Games
  - a. Baseball is huge in Japan. One of their teams, the Yomiuri Giants, are at the same fandom level as the Yankees. [Check here](#) for their English schedule to book tickets.
6. Sumo wrestling
  - a. There are 3 major tournaments around Tokyo in January, May, and September. Get yourself tickets early because the seats fill up fast!
7. Shinbashi (also known as Shimbashi)
  - a. The grittier entertainment district of the city where salarymen flock to. Note: do not take photos in pachinko parlours.
8. Nagakin Capsule Tower
  - a. Although it's a residential tower and you can't enter, it's an architectural wonder and rare example of Japanese Metabolism.

## MUST HAVE FOODS

1. Udon
  - a. Kamachiku Tokyo
  - b. The best sliced udon you will ever eat.
2. Kaiten sushi
  - a. Also known as conveyor belt sushi. Genki Sushi is a chain that does a good, cheap, no fuss sushi, but I would recommend going to really any kaiten sushi in a mall.
3. Ramen
  - a. Ichiran Ramen (many locations) is a one of a kind dining experience. Order from a vending machine and eat delicious ramen in individual booths.
4. Yakitori
  - a. Grilled meat with an adventurous spin. Gizzards are common and offered almost tapas style during a few rounds of drinks.
5. Tempura (pronounced ten-PURA)
  - a. The best will be around Tskiji Fish Market. Tempura shrimps, vegetables, and fish is abundant.
6. Fluffy pancakes
  - a. Mind numbingly sweet and cloud-like pancakes are abundant around Tokyo. I recommend Flipper's - they're delicious, budget friendly, and the area is nice to walk around. Served with tapioca and matcha!
7. Coffee
  - a. Coffee is an art form in urban Tokyo. Find Coffee Elementary School for a cute shop with chill vibes and amazing coconut caramel lattes.

## NOTABLE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

1. Golden Week
  - a. A series of holidays (4 main ones) that occur all within a week. Falling in May, it's one of the country's busiest times of the year, but there are a number of festivals and holiday events that take place during this week.
2. Chinese New Year
  - a. There's a beautiful and lively Chinatown in Yokohama and a lantern festival during CNY.
3. Beer and sake festivals

- a. Tokyo is a happening place that loves to drink. Check your area for events like all you can drink sake tastings or Odaiba Oktoberfest (May).
4. Plum Festivals (Bunkyo or Setagaya among others)
  - a. Tokyo is known for its cherry blossoms, but plum blossoms often take the backseat even though they are just as beautiful. The season starts mid February and can last until the cherry blossoms are in full swing.

## DRINKS AND BARS

1. Deathmatch in Hell (izakaya)
2. Yanaka Beer Hall
  - a. There's a cemetery and park nearby that's worth checking out too.
3. Vowz
  - a. A cozy bar run by actively practicing Buddhist monks. No, they don't drink, but they will mix you up "Infinite Hell" and serve it with a side of chanting.
  - b. This whole area is filled with tiny izakayas that are worth checking out.
4. Kiha Train Bar
  - a. It's frowned upon to drink in public, but not on this train car/bar.
5. Science Bar
  - a. Don your labcoat and watch the mixologists concoct your drinks in a beaker. Complete with newt (as a resident, not as a drink).

## OTHER NOTES

1. Tokyo has some lovely unwritten **etiquette** rules.
  - a. On escalators, walk on the left, stand on the right.
  - b. No eating or drinking in public places like the train or walking down the sidewalk.
  - c. Keep quiet on the metro. It can be a long commute for a lot of people and often they will take that time to chill (or sleep).
2. Unless you're already familiar with **bowing culture**, try not to imitate it. Ask questions and be curious! It's a deep culture with a ton of convention.
3. **Don't get sucked into the "JR" pass phenomenon.** The JR is one of very many rail companies that run throughout Tokyo and Japan. Do your research ahead of time to see which metro will take you where you need to go before purchasing a JR pass outright. You won't be able to use it on all trains and only some JRs will take you to certain areas.

- a. A **Suica card or Pasma** will be much more effective for inner city travel, since you can load it with Yen and it's good for all rail companies.
- 4. The city is incredibly spotless, but **trash cans** are hard to come by in public.
- 5. Japan is very **cash-based**. Larger establishments and many convenience stores will take credit, but most places are cash only.
  - a. ATMs are available at almost all Family Marts or Lawson's, so taking out money isn't terrible.
  - b. If the establishment has a small tray at the register, place your cash in there and receive your change from it (do not hand it to the cashier).