



22  
reasons  
to visit

Borders may be closed for now but the pleasure is in the planning. **LEE TRAN LAM** explores 22 essential experiences in Tokyo.

Photography **BENITO MARTIN**





# IN 2022



**Y**es, you'll find exceptional ramen, sushi, yakitori and tea in Tokyo - but you can enjoy the world's best pizza there, too. That's how next-level the dining scene is in Japan's capital. Its wood-fired slices outshine what you'll find in Naples (just ask verified fans such as Momofuku's David Chang, Fratelli Paradiso's Gio Paradiso, Provenance's Michael Ryan and Pizzeria Beddia's Joe Beddia). Tokyo doesn't just have the biggest haul of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world, it has an unshakeable commitment to food: where else can you eat six different scoops of sesame ice-cream in one go (like at Gomaya Kuki) or find a kilometre-long strip dedicated purely to cooking utensils (like Kappabashi Street)? The city is also home to outstanding architecture, memorable galleries, blossom-filled parks and significant sites of worship. Here are just a few ideas to fuel your travel dreams of Tokyo. ►





# 1



## 1. COCKTAIL HOUR

Takuo and Sumire Miyanohara's Bar Orchard Ginza has a charming concept: single out a piece of seasonal fruit – whether it's yuzu, dragon fruit or the “king” of Japanese strawberries (Amaou from Fukuoka) – and this bartending couple will transform it into a craft cocktail for you. It might be served in a toy bathtub with a rubber duck, which is part of the fun. Nearby is another acclaimed bar: Mixology Salon, which is recommended by Kuro's Wanaka Teramoto.

“They do amazing tea-tails, which are like cocktails – but tea is the main ingredient and they are served in big burgundy glasses,” she says. Quay's Taka Shino, meanwhile, is a fan of Tokyo Whisky Library in Omotesando: “The line-up of whiskies exceeds 1000 bottles from around the world, with some being from defunct distilleries never to be produced again.”

## 2. TEMPLE TIME

Sensō-ji is Tokyo's oldest temple. It was built in honour of Kannon, the goddess of mercy, and was originally completed in the year 645. Another site of worship worth visiting? The Meiji Shrine, dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shōken, who helped modernise Japan.

## 3. TREAT YOURSELF

Tokyo is famous for its top-level restaurants, from the whimsical Den to the hyper-local L'Effervescence. For Juan's Anna Ishiguro, Hakkoku – Ginza's sushi temple – is a must-visit. “I always go here when I go to Japan,” she says.

## 4. SMOKIN' HOT

It's hard to resist the smoky appeal of Fuku Yakitori. Its menu offers the customary charred chicken skewers, as well as more unexpected off-the-grill specialties (like smoked cheese with crackers, and blistered Hokkaido potatoes jammed with generous wedges of butter).





Clockwise from far left:  
 Renzo Piano's Maison  
 Hermès in Ginza; Bar  
 Orchard Ginza's cocktail in  
 a toy bathtub with a rubber  
 duck; Meiji Shrine; a street  
 scene in Tokyo at night;  
 Tsukiji Outer Market;  
 preparing noodles at Shin  
 Udon. PREVIOUS PAGES  
 Left: Sensō-ji. Right: an  
 Udon restaurant in Nakano  
 Broadway; historic Yanaka.



## 5. GO FISH

After key parts of Tsukiji's old fish market relocated to Toyosu, the Tsukiji Outer Market is what remains – and is still worth visiting. Even if you're not interested in seafood, this food hub's many stalls have appeal: this site is home to Takashi Sano's favourite knife shop (Nenohi Tsukijiten) and you can find everything from tamagoyaki (rolled omelettes) to green tea here. But people keep returning to Tsukiji's sushi and seafood specialties for obvious reasons.

## 6. OODLES OF NOODLES

Shin Udon is a tiny noodle house with a big fan base. Its *cacio e pepe* udon inspired cookbook author Hetty McKinnon to create a tribute recipe in her *To Asia, With Love* cookbook. There's often a long queue of people waiting to try this eatery's soy-splashed version of the Italian pasta, which is served with bacon tempura.

## 7. SANDO TO GO

The egg sandwich stocked at Japanese convenience stores has inspired many chefs, from Andrew McConnell to Monty Koludrovic. Tokyo's best take on this is actually served at Camelback Sandwich & Espresso, as perfected by former sushi chef Hayato Naruse: he adds a genius sting of wasabi to the pillowy egg "sando".

## 8. UNDERGROUND SNACKS

In Tokyo, you can eat magnificently in a train station: grab an eki (railway) bento for bullet-train trips or ultra-regional food souvenirs in between platforms. Ramen Street in Tokyo Station's basement houses Rokurinsha, which is famous for its tsukemen (dipping-style ramen) – as well as Soranoiro, which serves steaming vegan and gluten-free noodle soups. ▶

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### 9. SHOPPABLE FEAST

Head to the basement of any department store, and you'll discover a glorious food hall. Among the aisles, you might see casual meals, premium tea, remarkable food souvenirs and yes, those \$200 melons you've heard about.

### 10. MARKET APPEAL

Tokyo's most prominent farmers market takes place every weekend in front of the United Nations University headquarters and showcases flavours from Tokyo and beyond – like sorbet made with Nagano's Kawanakajima white peaches. You'll also see stalls stocked with raw honey, cloudy apple juice, pickled maitake mushrooms and rice cakes.

### 11. GRAB A SLICE

Everyone from David Chang to top pizzeria owners (Joe Beddia and Carlo Mirachi) will testify to how world-class Tokyo's pizza is. Azabujuban's Savoy serves the city's greatest version of this Naples staple, but Pizza Studio Tamaki and Seirinkan offer incredibly strong competition.

### 12. ART ATTACK

Remove their art collections and Tokyo's galleries would still be fascinating. 21 21 Design Sight is co-founded by fashion designer Issey Miyake and housed in a highly angular building by Tadao Ando. Mori Art Museum offers a brilliant view of the city from its 52nd floor, while the National Art Center's exterior resembles a giant glass wave. Exit via its gift shop: Souvenir From Tokyo is full of luggage-filling gems.

### 13. CASUAL EATS

Just as Spain has tapas bars, Japan has izakayas. They evolved from sake shops that originally offered snacks with the on-sale booze. Former Tokyo resident, Chat Thai's Palisa Anderson singles out Kan in Meguro as a favourite. It's where she had her first date with husband Matt. "We took the kids there on our 10th anniversary and it was still amazing." Its casual plates include roasted onions with miso, bamboo shoots with fried prawns, and monaka desserts. ➤

Clockwise from top left: Tokyo skyline; pizza at Savoy; an apartment building with a zigzag staircase; Tokyo's vibrant streetscape. Opposite: pickled vegetables from Doremi Farm at the Farmers Market at the United Nations University; the diamond-like façade of Prada's Tokyo flagship.



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## 14. TEA TIME

Settle in for an unforgettable tea ceremony at Sakurai. Shinya Sakurai spent 14 years becoming a tea master and extracts so much from his loose-leaf selection – whether smoking it for a heady brew or fashioning it into an elegant dessert. He can take one scoop of gyokuro tea and turn it into an umami-rich drink, then a citrus-infused cocktail and, finally, present it like spinach leaves you eat with a dipping sauce.

## 15. SKY HIGH

Tokyo's skyline is marked by spectacular architecture, from the ultra-futuristic Shinjuku Ruriko-in Byakurenge-do temple to the twisted, angular ballet of the Yasuyo Building. Look out for Prada's diamond-like boutique in Aoyama and Renzo Piano's glowing Maison Hermès design, inspired by Japanese lanterns. Kenzō Tange's Metropolitan Government Building's towers have been compared to a modern Notre-Dame and are worth visiting for the observation decks' stunning views.

## 16. COFFEE BREAK

You can get your caffeine hit from third-wave specialists like About Life Coffee Brewers and Koffee Mameya, but you'll want to head to a traditional kissaten, too. These Shōwa-era (1926-1989) cafés are retro wonders. Coffee Shop Ace has been run by the same brothers since 1971 and their nori toast, seasoned with soy sauce, is the city's best bargain breakfast.

## 17. SWEET TREATS

For dreamy soft-serve, there's Daily Chico in Nakano Broadway – which Attica's Kylie Staddon and Ben Shewry consider a standout. "You can get six amazing colours on top of each other," he says. "It was the best we've ever had." Or go to Gomaya Kuki, which specialises in scoops of sesame ice-cream you customise with rich sesame oil and scattered sesame seeds. For exceptional blocks of single-origin chocolate – and the best chocolate ice-cream you might ever try – drop by Minimal Bean to Bar.

## 18. GARDEN VARIETY

In Tokyo when cherry-blossom-viewing season is on Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden is a superior spot for admiring sakura: it's home to 1100 cherry trees that showcase 65 different varieties. The scenic gardens are worth a visit any time. ➤

# 15

Clockwise from top left: tea master Shinya Sakurai; street signs; Coffee Shop Ace; Shinjuku Ruriko-in Byakurenge-do temple. Opposite: Nakano Broadway's Daily Chico soft-serve; cherry blossoms at Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden; bustling Shibuya.



# 16



# 17



Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden is a superior spot for admiring sakura: it's home to 1100 cherry trees that showcase 65 different varieties.



# 18







Kappabashi Street's countless kitchenware shops have supplied Tokyo's restaurants for more than a century and sell everything from sesame grinders to traditional pottery.



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### 19. KAPPABASHI STREET

“We always go as chefs. It’s like Toys ‘R’ Us,” says Sokyō’s Chase Kojima. Its countless kitchenware shops have supplied Tokyo’s restaurants for more than a century and sell everything from sesame grinders to traditional pottery. Sokyō’s Takashi Sano bought his hand-crafted sushi brushes here (from third-generation artisan Kumiko Miyagawa), while Kojima gets his knives from Kamata. Don’t miss the “sampurū” stores that display plastic food so realistic-looking, it belongs in a museum (a wave of fried rice emerging from a wok, mid-toss, is particularly impressive).

### 20. SUPERIORITY COMPLEX

New York’s beloved Superiority Burger gets a thoroughly Japanese remix in Tokyo. Its “Superiority Water” is tap water brightly spiked with yuzu juice; yuba (tofu sheets) are served with “frizzled” onions, while focaccia is topped with caramelised sweet potato and enoki mushrooms. It’s not just one of the city’s top vegan-friendly spots, it’s brilliant, period.

### 21. SWEET SURRENDER

Yanaka, Tokyo’s “old town”, is a beautiful and historic part of the city. Take a peaceful walk through the cemetery and visit Vaner, where Tsukasa Miyawaki makes exceptional cinnamon and cardamom rolls and other pastries you’ll want to order.

### 22. SLEEP IN STYLE

Tokyo has exceptional places to stay. The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho is worth booking just for the five-star views from your window. (You’ll want to slow-gaze at the glittery skyline in the cocktail bar, too.) The ANA InterContinental Tokyo offers good reasons to dodge the snooze button: it has a Pierre Gagnaire bakery on its second floor and a breakfast menu by the legendary French chef (whose Michelin-starred restaurant on the 36th floor features his signature Cocktail de Poche dish inspired by memories of eating kaiseki during his first Japanese visit in the 1980s). ●



Clockwise from above: the old town of Yanaka; sushi chef Michio Sato at The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho; and the view from the hotel. Opposite: Nakano Broadway’s shopping district; striking architecture in Tokyo; a kitchenware store on Kappabashi Street.

