

# Tokyo Outdoors

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45 WALKS, HIKES AND CYCLING ROUTES  
TO EXPLORE THE CITY LIKE A LOCAL

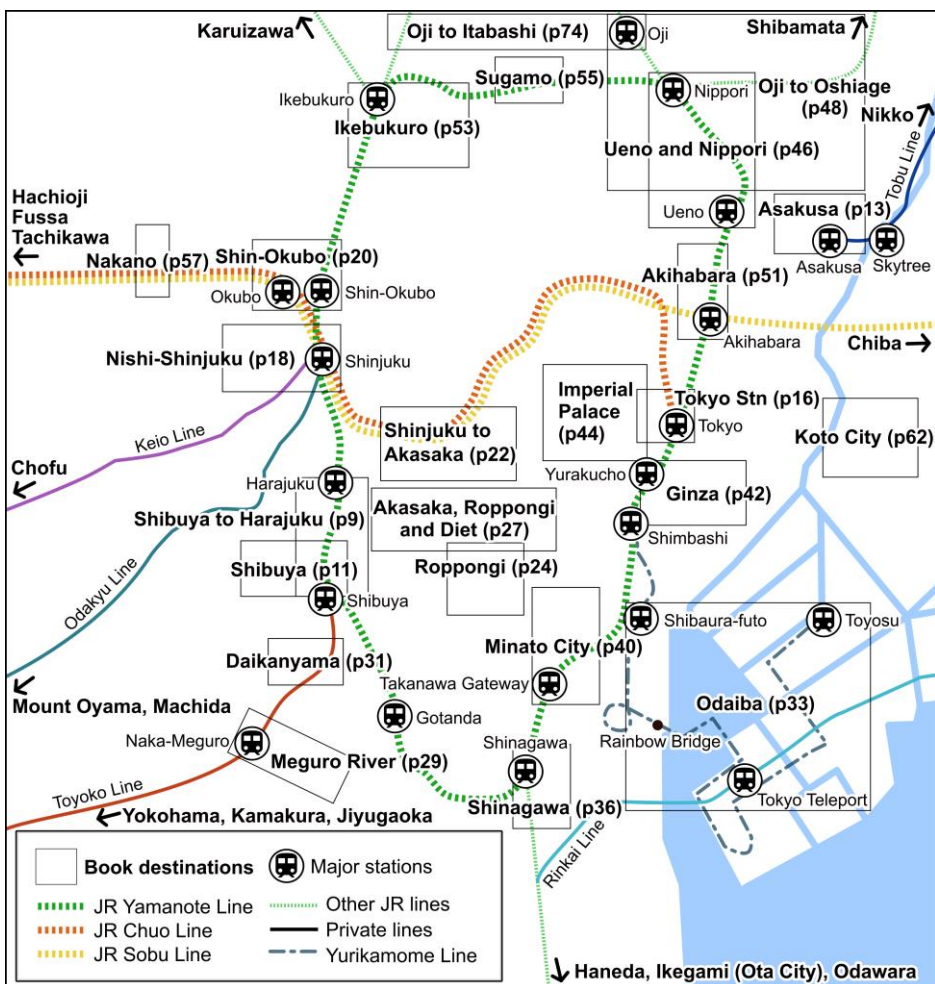
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Get the full book [here!](#)

# Welcome to Tokyo

The capital city of Japan is surely one of the most exciting cities in the world, a wonderful mixture of modernity and tradition. With a population of more than 35 million in the greater Tokyo region, it's known as a 'city of cities', and each has its own flavors. One moment you'll be seeking harmony in an ancient shrine, another nerding out in Akihabara, and another cycling alongside a peaceful river. Whether you are here just for a short holiday, or staying for years, Tokyo Outdoors will enable you to immerse yourself properly in the magic of Tokyo.

This guide is not your average travel book. After living in Tokyo for many years and having written several books and countless articles about the capital, plus walked, hiked and cycled countless hours across it, I have put together custom routes for all sorts of likes and interests. The emphasis of this book is interesting tours throughout and around the city, via not just the must-see attractions but also hidden spots that only locals know. Along the way your path will be enhanced with fascinating historical, cultural and architectural highlights.



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## Quick and easy ways to select your walk, ride or hike

### 1) Tokyo city map

Use the map (p3) to get your bearings, and see what routes are near your hotel or house. It'll provide ideas if you want to walk or cycle on a certain train line, plus a good overview of what places are near to each other.

### 2) Top walks, hikes and cycling rides (p103)

At the back of the book is a ranking of the most popular routes, plus suggestion lists for cherry blossoms, autumn colors, shopping, art and museums, history and culture, day hikes and long cycling rides.

### 3) Festivals and events calendar (p108)

Tokyo has frequent festivals and events, so if you would like to experience them alongside a walk, hike or cycling ride I have put together a handy calendar.

### 4) Chapter suggestions

Below the title of each chapter is a little hint, such as when to do the route, or if it's best to cycle, walk or hike. Additionally, combinations are suggested for many chapters.

### 5) Get in touch with me

Send me a message on my website ([matthewbaxter.jp](http://matthewbaxter.jp)), or message me on Instagram or Facebook via @MatthewBaxterJapan. I'll help you out with a personal suggestion!

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## About the online maps in this book



### QR code and link here in full edition

Most of the routes in this book also come with custom Google Maps, which can be opened on your smartphone or PC. They provide more detail on the routes and highlights along the way, plus additional recommendations for shops, cafes and tourist attractions that I will update when any changes occur. Use them with the GPS function on your phone to make navigating a breeze.

You can open them by scanning the QR code in each chapter. You can also use the QR code and link above to access them all in one list, which you can save for quick access later on your smartphone or tablet.

Free wi-fi is available at many spots in Tokyo if you want to access the online maps, but I would recommend getting internet access on your phone in Japan if you don't already have it. Visitors can pick up a reasonably priced data SIM or a wi-fi box from the airports or at electronics stores in the city, such as Bic Camera or Yamada Denki.

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### Map legend



**Main spots and attractions**



**Restaurants**



**Cafes and snack spots**



**Train stations**



**Bus stops**



**Bicycles for rent**



**Cherry blossoms**

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## Essential information before you start



*Tokyo has a fast, efficient transportation network*

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### Train passes

If you plan to do more than one chapter from this book on your trip, or plan to venture outside the city center, it'll probably save you money to get one of the below rail passes.

#### Tokyo Subway Ticket (foreign tourists only)

Unlimited use of the Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway for 24, 48 or 72 hours. With this pass you'll be able to get to almost all the central Tokyo spots in this book.

*800/1200/1500 yen • Available from tourist information centers in and outside of subway stations, major hotels and Bic Camera stores*

#### One-day subway passes (all passports)

Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway also have passes for 24 hours of unlimited use of their respective networks. If you only need to use one of them, it's cheaper than the above.

*Tokyo Metro 600 yen, Toei Subway 700 yen, combo pass 900 yen • Available from ticket machines at subway stations in Tokyo*

#### Enoshima Kamakura Free Pass

If you are doing the walk in Enoshima (p87) - and/or the cycling ride in Kamakura (p85) - then this one-day pass will cut out lots of hassle. It could also save you some money, especially if you need to additionally use the Enoden Line tram to reach, say, your hotel or hostel.

*1640 yen • Available from the vending machines and the service center at the Odakyu section of Shinjuku Station in Tokyo*

#### Tokyo Wide Pass (non-Japanese passports only)

Unlimited use of JR trains in Tokyo and the Kanto region, for three consecutive days. As JR is the main rail provider, you can get to spots in the city center via the Yamanote loop line and other connecting lines, and the pass includes use of the Shinkansen and Limited Express trains.

For the Tokyo side trips section (p78) of this book, it's perfect for Karuizawa (p89) and the nearby Apt Road (p91), Odawara Castle (p99), Mount Nokogiri (p97), Hachioji Castle Ruins (p93), Nikko (p82), and the Yokohama paths (p78, p80). Some might need to use a slightly longer route, or short supplementary ride on a non-JR line, but you should save lots of money!  
*15,000 yen • Available from the vending machines and service centers at the major JR stations in Tokyo (including Ueno, Shinjuku, Shibuya, Tokyo and Ikebukuro)*

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## A note about opening days

Many shops and tourist spots are closed on Mondays or Tuesdays. In most cases, if a national holiday falls on a day when a place is usually closed, then on this day it will open, but will close on the following day. Most attractions are also closed around New Year, so I would avoid these days or check official websites to confirm if they have decided to open or not.

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## Useful apps to use with this book

- Google Maps, then use your wi-fi to download the areas you'll be visiting for offline use.
  - Google Translate. Use it to translate text in real time via your phone's camera, which is convenient in restaurants, cafes and for Japanese signage on walking and hiking paths.
  - Japan Connected-Free Wifi, to easily find free wifi spots.
  - Tokyo Subway Navigation, the official app for navigating the Tokyo Metro.
  - Mymizu, for finding the locations of free water refill spots.
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## Getting around Tokyo on the train

Tokyo, and the surrounding Kanto region, has a highly developed railway and subway system, so all the routes in this book begin and end at a station. Trains tend to be on schedule, often to the second, and at central stations there are departures as quick as every few minutes or so.

There are two subway networks, the Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway, plus the national operator Japan Railways (JR) and private ones such as Odakyu and Tokyu. Most are connected by the Yamanote Line, the JR line that loops around central Tokyo. It might become difficult to navigate the various options, so use the tips below to help you on your journeys.

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## Airport transportation

From Narita Airport, Airport Bus TYO-NRT runs 1000 yen buses into the city (1 hour), and there are also Keisei line trains to Nippori, which is on the Yamanote loop line. If coming or leaving from the more central Haneda Airport, either take the Keikyu Line to Shinagawa or the Tokyo Monorail to Hamamatsucho, both of which are on the Yamanote Line. This book also has a handy walking path if you have some transit time at Haneda (p38).

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## IC cards

When you arrive in Tokyo, one of the first things you should do is get an IC card or the smartphone version of one. These prepaid passes can be used for public transport, as well as in many shops and restaurants, and prices for trains are a little cheaper with them. The two main IC cards, Suica from JR and Pasma from Tokyo Metro, both work on any bus or train network in Tokyo.

Due to a shortage of microchips, physical cards are in short supply, but there are two Suica smartphone apps, one for local residents and one for foreign tourists using foreign cards. Foreign tourists can sometimes get a 'Welcome Suica' card at Haneda Airport's Terminal 3 or Narita Airport's Terminal 3 stations, but it's certainly not guaranteed they will be available. *1000 yen (500 yen deposit, 500 yen put on card) • Welcome Suica card 1000 yen (no deposit)*

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## Custom subway map for your walks and cycling routes

The official Tokyo subway map can be rather overwhelming, so on the next page is a simplified map, highlighting the stations that you'll likely use. Full maps are also available for free at Tokyo Metro stations.



- |                                      |                          |   |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| ● <b>Major subway station (bold)</b> | <b>Tokyo Metro lines</b> | — Hanzomon Line                         | <b>Toei Subway lines</b> |
| ● Other subway station               | — Marunouchi Line        | — Hibiya Line                           | — Oedo Line              |
| — Major interchange                  | — Tozai Line             | — Ginza Line                            | — Shinjuku Line          |
| --- Short walk between stations      | — Yurakucho Line         | — Chiyoda Line                          | — Asakusa Line           |
|                                      | — Fukutoshin Line        | — Keio New Line (not covered by passes) | — Mita Line              |
|                                      | — Namboku Line           |   |                          |

## Planning your train journeys

Deciding how to get to places in Tokyo can be rather confusing at times, even for people living here. Google Maps usually works well for deciding which train to take, but doesn't include many options that help if you have a rail pass. If you want to customize your route more use the Japan Transit Planner by Jorudan, available online and as a smartphone app.

## Train travel tips when using this book

- Which exit to take is included in the text and map of each route when there is more than one. Follow signage from the station platforms to the exit, but don't be afraid to ask someone if you are lost in a bigger station. Japanese people are often very willing to help!
- Subway and JR stations and lines have now been designated with simple codes to help with navigation. They use a letter or two for the line, and a number for the station, such as JY17 for Shinjuku Station on the Yamanote Line.
- I've designed the routes in the book so that many end or start near to one another. This enables you to easily join routes together, and save money on transportation. Look for 'Combine with....' sections at the end of applicable chapters for my suggestions.
- Train stations, including all central JR and Toei Subway stations, have station stamps if you are interested in collecting them. The same can also be done for shrines and temples (p106).

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## Cycling in Tokyo



While most tourists prefer to use the subway, riding a bicycle can be a fun way to explore the city, and the suburbs, in more depth. You'll end up stumbling upon a few surprises as you see Japanese people in everyday life, plus you'll be able to quickly pop into quieter shrines, temples and other interesting spots that you'll come across.

There are two main bicycle rental systems in Tokyo and the surrounding Kanto region, Hello Cycling and NTT Docomo Bike Share. There are areas where only one of the systems has 'bicycle stations', but in the city center you'll probably have a choice. Convenient locations for these are shown on the maps in this book, including on the Google Maps that are linked to, but always use the official apps to check availability, and reserve your bike.

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### Hello Cycling

An excellent, easy to use system that generally appeals more to day trippers. While not the most extensive of systems when compared to some cities across the world, their bicycles are a good size for adults, sturdy and also have little motors if you want a boost on challenging uphill sections. All in all, it's a really impressive system.

There are a few ways to pay, including using a credit card (most foreign cards work fine). Doing the 12-hour pass with Hello Cycling is perfect for one of the longer rides in this book, and it's usually possible to reserve bikes 30 minutes in advance. Download the Hello Cycling app on your phone to find, reserve and return your bike.

*12-hour pass 1200-1800 yen, or from 100 yen for first 15 minutes, then 130 yen per 30 minutes*

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### NTT Docomo Bike Share

NTT's bicycle system has more rental points, particularly in the city center, so is often used by workers in the city to get around. One notable failing, though, is that the bikes have small wheels, with a frame that is almost as small as a portable bicycle. They are therefore not as comfortable to use as the ones from Hello Cycling, and I would not recommend them for longer routes.

Having said this, NTT Docomo Bike Share can be a little cheaper on a day pass, and there is more chance that the stations you start at will have available bikes, or the station you want to end up at will have space to park your bike. Head to <https://docomo-cycle.jp> to get started.

*Day passes 1650 yen, or first 30 minutes 165 yen, then 165 yen every additional 30 minutes*

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### A note about cycling in the city

Some of the main tourist spots in central Tokyo can get extremely crowded, and may have narrow streets packed with tourists. In these places it would be much easier, and safer to walk. When it's not a good idea to cycle somewhere, I have included a recommendation to walk the route at the top of each chapter.

# Sample chapters

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## 1. The best of Tokyo's youth culture – Shibuya to Harajuku

DISTANCE: 3 KM | BEST ON FOOT DUE TO CROWDED STREETS



*Shibuya Scramble Crossing*

Shibuya and Harajuku are the first ports of call for most to Tokyo, and for good reason. A treasure trove of youth fashion, music and art, you'll often see trends getting big here years before they make the big time abroad.

of the day, with young people showing off the latest designs and brands, you'll really feel like you've landed in modern Japan. While chains are somewhat on the rise here, you'll still come across plenty of eccentric little shops and some down-to-earth eateries.

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### Starting and ending points

From Shibuya Station, follow signs to the Hachiko statue to begin. Shibuya has a plethora of lines, such as the JR Yamanote and JR Shonan-Shinjuku lines, plus the Ginza, Hanzomon and Fukutoshin lines on the Tokyo Metro. You'll finish at Harajuku Station.

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### Places of interest

#### 1) Shibuya Center Gai

Head across the famous **Shibuya Scramble Crossing** and you'll get to the youth hub that is Center Gai. Bustling and exciting 24 hours

#### 2) Shibuya Parco

Much of this Parco department store has your standard collections of brand stores and fashion boutiques, but the bottom and sixth floors are where things get different. In the basement is the Chaos Kitchen food hall. Rather than the usual upmarket and safe selections of most department store food courts, this one is full of quirky bars and restaurants. Most unique is **Kome To Circus** (12am-10:30pm, from 5pm on Thursdays), an izakaya where you can try out insects, crocodile meat and other left-field options.



Upstairs on the sixth floor is **Cyberspace Shibuya**, where the main hitters are the **Nintendo Tokyo** store (11am-8pm) and the **Pokemon Center** (11am-9pm). Whether you're a Pikachu fanboy or can't get enough of Animal Crossing, there's a real smorgasbord of amazing character goods. Even if you're just window shopping, it's worth heading up here to soak in all the craziness!

11am-9pm • [shibuya.parco.jp](http://shibuya.parco.jp)

### 3) Miyashita Park

One of the newest developments in Shibuya. Here visitors can relax in the greenery of the rooftop garden and enjoy a bit of shopping at dozens of up-and-coming stores, as well as flagship shops for brands like Adidas.

Outside on the first floor is **Shibuya Yokocho** (24h), a line of classic Japanese street food outlets, all specializing in local food from a particular region or city in Japan. It's also a great place to try out Japanese sake and shochu (a traditional hard liquor), with English menus usually on hand.

8am-11pm • [miyashita-park.tokyo](http://miyashita-park.tokyo)

### 4) Cat Street

Generally catering to an older audience than the upcoming Takeshita Street, Cat Street is a hipster's paradise. Here you'll find plenty of edgy and up-and-coming boutiques, vintage clothes stores and the odd street art to admire along the way. It's a much more interesting way to journey from Shibuya to Harajuku.

### 5) Omotesando Hills

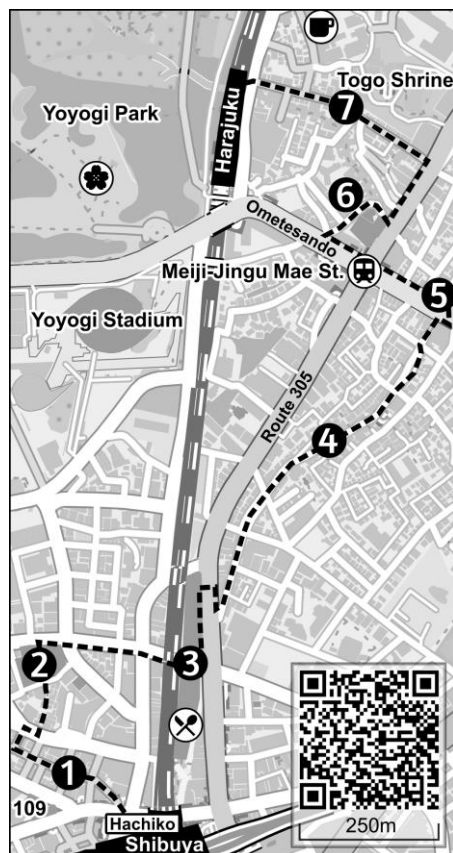
A super posh shopping complex designed by the renowned Tadao Ando. Inside you'll come across famous overseas labels as well as stores from local designers like Yohji Yamamoto and Jun Hashimoto. To be honest, as there aren't many around, it's also a perfect toilet stop on this walk!

11am-11pm (some shops may close earlier) • [omotesandohills.com](http://omotesandohills.com)

### 6) Ota Memorial Museum of Art

Pop in here if you need a little respite from all the activity outdoors. This museum is dedicated to the Japanese art of ukiyo-e, a

kind of Japanese woodblock print. Most famous is the Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji, an often reproduced print of huge waves with Mount Fuji in the background. This piece has itself been on display here in the ever-changing exhibitions. Check [ukiyo-e-ota-muse.jp](http://ukiyo-e-ota-muse.jp) for what's on when you are in town. Exhibits 800-1200 yen • 10:30am-5:30pm • Closed on Mondays (except national holidays) • [ukiyo-e-ota-muse.jp/eng](http://ukiyo-e-ota-muse.jp/eng)



### 7) Takeshita Street

Harajuku's busiest fashion street, this is the place to experience kawaii (cute) on hyperdrive! There's a seemingly countless assortment of bright and colorful shops to venture into.

There are a few highlights to look out for. First on your path will be **SoLaDo** (10:30am-8:30pm), a hotspot for kawaii souvenirs from the likes of PINK-latte and Line Friends. There's also **Sweets Paradise** (11am-9pm,

2000-3000 yen), which offers all-you-can-eat candy and dessert extravaganzas.

Further on up, **Strawberry Fetish** (9am-8pm, around 700 yen, [strawberryfetish.com](http://strawberryfetish.com)) is all the rage with its sweet strawberry sticks, but a visit to Takeshita Street is incomplete without checking out **Harajuku Alta** (10:30am-8pm). Since launching in 2015 this mall has become a new icon of Harajuku, packed with any kind of item related to Harajuku's pop culture. It's all very cute, and quite often cheap!

#### Recommended cafe

Would you like to get your coffee served through a hole in the wall by a furry bear? Anakuma is a kawaii coffee shop and yet

another unusual addition to Harajuku. To order at this 'unmanned' joint, use the tablet and one of the seven bears that lives behind the wall will soon be ready with your coffee!  
*Drinks 1200-1500 yen • 11am-7pm • [anakuma.jp](http://anakuma.jp)*

#### Recommended meal spot

At Eggslut, the humble egg is taken to new levels. Served in brioche buns, their egg burgers ooze with the creamy scrambled egg and cheese. The Japan-only limited edition specials are pretty inventive too, such as putting a whole eel into a sandwich.  
*From 850 yen • 11am-9pm • [flavorworks.co.jp/eggslut](http://flavorworks.co.jp/eggslut)*

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### 3. Not just Senso-ji – Asakusa

DISTANCE: 3.5 KM | BEST ON FOOT



*Senso-ji*

You've all heard about Asakusa, the most popular, and the busiest tourist destination in Tokyo. Millions visit Senso-ji temple and shop up Nakamise-dori every year, but there is so much more to see if you venture out a bit....

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#### Starting and ending points

Head out from the Tokyo Metro section of Asakusa Station (Exit 3). You could either finish at Tsukuba Express Line's Asakusa Station, which goes to Akihabara, or continue

back down Kaminarimon-dori back to the Tokyo Metro Asakusa Station.

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## Places of interest

### 1) Nakamise-dori Street

Let's tick off the main tourist spots before we start our real adventure (try to start early if you can, to avoid the tour groups). Beginning at **Kaminarimon Gate**, this lively shopping street has a nice mix of souvenir shops, food stalls and craft shops. Keep an eye on your wallet though, as prices will generally be better once you head out of this touristy street.

### 2) Senso-ji ㊦

The legend goes that two fishermen caught a golden statue in Sumida River. Even though they tried to return it to the river again and again, they kept on catching it instead. Once it was recognized as Kannon, a Buddhist deity, though, it was enshrined at this site.

This all happened in 628 AD, making Senso-ji the oldest temple in Tokyo. Even with the usual crowds and noise, the sheer size of everything is simply awe-inspiring. Inside there is a five-story pagoda, trails of incense and several temple halls to explore.

*Free • 24h • [senso-ji.jp/english](http://senso-ji.jp/english)*

### 3) Benten-do

A mainly unknown shrine to the east of Senso-ji. Inside, **The Bell of Time** is a cast-bronze bell that was used as an hour bell by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1692. These days, it gets hit at 6am, if you are able to get up early enough. Note that the actual shrine grounds are often closed, so check at your hotel or an information center beforehand.

*Free • 11am-7pm*

### 4) Denboin-dori Street

Shops and signs reminiscent of old Tokyo, with some almost looking like shacks. As you start to walk down here and into the other streets west of Nakamise-dori, things get more down to earth. The shops will cater more to locals, with a splattering of places to pick up things like a traditional fan or yukata.

### 5) Hoppy Street

Asakusa's most famous spot for drinking and eating out. It's mostly old fashioned izakayas and outdoor bars here, and while it gets crowded, the atmosphere is amazing.

Most of the restaurants here serve nikomi. An inexpensive stew made with beef tendons and mixed vegetables, each spot will have its own twist on it. Comfy favorites like yakitori and sashimi are readily available, so it's best to stroll down and head into whatever takes your fancy.

### 6) Asakusa Hanayashiki

Forget Disneyland, this is the real deal! Hanayashiki opened way back in 1853. It offers a truly old school, nostalgic experience. No big fancy VR/3D roller coasters here, but classics like a merry-go-round, swan rides and haunted houses. Oh, and a panda car too. *Access 1000 yen (rides from 100 yen), all access pass 2800 yen • 10am-6pm • [hanayashiki.net/english](http://hanayashiki.net/english)*

### 7) Edo Taito Traditional Crafts Center

Excellent collection of traditional Japanese handicrafts. On weekends, the city's select artisans visit and give demonstrations of how the handicrafts are made, as well as organize hands-on experiences for visitors.

*Free • 10am-6pm*

### 8) Kappabashi Dougu Street

Ever seen plastic food models outside a Japanese restaurant, and want some of your own? Or want to check out the kind of kit that Japanese chefs use? Kappabashi is the place to come. It's lined with all sorts of shops dedicated to wooing enthusiasts and professionals, with shops selling knives, kitchenware, shop signs and lots more.

### 9) Drum Museum

Taiko drums have been making a name for themselves across the world, and this is the premier spot to see and learn about them. Opened by Miyamoto-Unosuke, a company that has been building Taiko since 1861, it has a collection of around 800 drums. Visitors can also have a play if they like.

500 yen • 10am-5pm • Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays (except national holidays) • [miyamoto-unosuke.co.jp/taikokan/](http://miyamoto-unosuke.co.jp/taikokan/)

#### Recommended cafe

Try fruit sandwiches at Sukemasa Coffee, as well as a brew using beans brought over from Kanagawa. There are some cool extra touches, like the macchiato served in a Japanese sake cup, and the latte served in a delicate porcelain cup.

Snacks and drinks from 500 yen • 11am-6pm • Closed on Tuesdays • [sukemasa.tokyo](http://sukemasa.tokyo)

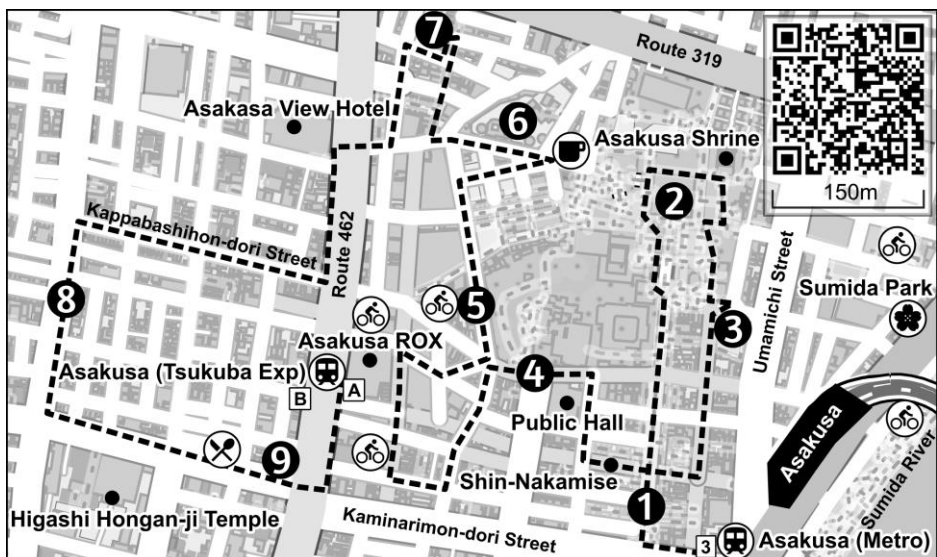
#### Recommended meal spot

Finish your walk with an okonomiyaki (Japanese pancake) and other tasty grilled plates at Sometaro. Cooking instructions and English-speaking staff available.

From 900 yen • 12am-8:15pm • Closed on Tuesday



Hoppy Street



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## 13. Checking out Tokyo's cool canals – Shinagawa

DISTANCE: 3 KM | EASIEST ON FOOT



*Chilling out along the canals*

Shinagawa is one of Tokyo's main transportation hubs, being on the Shinkansen network and soon to be the Tokyo terminus of the maglev train to Kansai. Venturing a little south to Kita-Shinagawa is a classic Tokyo walk, with a mix of traditional shopping on the west side, and a modern, hip area around the canal on the east side.

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### Starting and ending points

The route begins at Kita-Shinagawa Station, one stop from Shinagawa on the Keikyu Line. Take a left from the exit, and head over the tracks to start your adventures. You'll end up back at Shinagawa, which is conveniently located on the JR Yamanote Line.

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### Places of interest

#### 1) Kita-Shinagawa Shopping Street

Previously a port station in the Edo era. There are still plenty of wooden-built stores that look like they are from that period, but the real charm of this place is the local life. It's a quiet shopping street, mostly devoid of

chains, where everyday people go about their business. The mom-and-pop greengrocers, butchers and toy shops, plus some no-fuss Japanese restaurants, provide a nice glimpse into everyday Tokyo life. Head into the TOIYABA Tourist Information Center to find out more about the area.

#### 2) Kitashinagawa Spa Tenjinyu

A modern sento (public baths) that feels more upmarket than most, Tenjinyu is known for its black amber colored water. This color comes from all the fallen plants that permeated the groundwater millions of years ago in the area, meaning it is silky smooth and rich in minerals.

Tenjinyu caters well to foreign tourists that don't know all the rules and etiquette, with clear English explanations and signage. The almost pitch black water also helps if you are a little shy!

*500 yen • 3pm-11pm • [tenjinyu.com/en.html](http://tenjinyu.com/en.html)*

#### 3) Tennozu Isle

This artificial island has transformed many of its once presumably dank industrial warehouses into a hip canal-side

neighborhood. It's the perfect spot for a summer stroll, with plenty of spots to sit down at and chill. Below are some highlights.

#### 4) WHAT Museum

A warehouse museum that focuses on making private collections available to the public, as well as showing off up-and-coming artists. Alongside the exhibits the collectors and artists have shared their thoughts on the works they own or created, offering a deeper insight into the art and sculptures.

*1200 yen • 11am-7pm • Closed on Mondays (except national holidays) • [what.warehouseofart.org/en](http://what.warehouseofart.org/en)*

#### 5) Pigment

Designed by world-renowned artist Kengo Kuma, this unique store specializes in rare painting utensils, and has a bewildering display of art materials and paints. The building has a dynamic, modern bamboo themed interior, with a display of more than 4,500 colors, interesting workshops and lots of cutting-edge technologies to check out.

*11am-7pm • Closed on Mondays (except national holidays) • [pigment.tokyo/en](http://pigment.tokyo/en)*

#### 6) Bond Street

Unfortunately not related to 007, here Bond refers to how the area used to hold imported goods that were inspected for tax duties. Nowadays the street is lined with vibrant murals and graffiti spanning multi-story buildings, something that is certainly an unexpected sight in Tokyo.

#### 7) Canon Gallery S

Camera manufacturer Canon has a small showroom and gallery on the west side of **Shinagawa Intercity**, which is worth a visit if you have the time. As well as exhibiting thousands of works by famous Japanese photographers, the site also has a display of Canon's latest cameras, lenses and other technologies.

*Free • 10am-5:30pm • Closed on Sundays*

#### 8) atré Shinagawa

A small shopping mall located on the east side of Shinagawa Station. First to try is Dean &

Deluca, which has a huge range of bakery items on the second floor. Up on the third floor there are a bunch of premium brands, such as the Isetan Queen supermarket and food court with Miyazaki style chicken. There are also a bunch of window shopping and Japanese snacking opportunities inside the JR ticket gates too.

*7am-11pm • [atre.co.jp/shinagawa](http://atre.co.jp/shinagawa)*

#### Recommended cafe

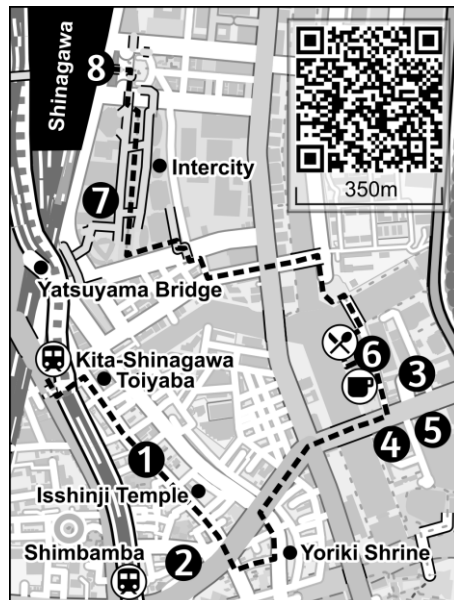
WHAT Cafe has got to be the most spacious cafe in Tokyo. Surrounded by the gallery's art, visitors can grab a barista-made coffee, craft beer, or alternatively a light meal.

*Drinks 450-800 yen • 11am-6pm • [cafe.warehouseofart.org](http://cafe.warehouseofart.org)*

#### Recommended meal spot

T.Y. Harbor is an American restaurant offering a decent selection of craft beers and a modern cuisine. The meals are prepared by an American chef, and include classics like sub sandwiches, burgers and grilled steaks. Perfect if you need a fix of western food.

*Meals 1000-2000 yen at lunch, 1000-4000 yen at dinner • 11:30am-11pm • [tysons.jp/tyharbor/en](http://tysons.jp/tyharbor/en)*



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## 28. Cycling the Tamagawa River – Kawasaki to Haijima

DISTANCE: 45 KM | BEST THURSDAY OR FRIDAY



The quintessential classic cycling ride in Tokyo. With a mostly flat route along dedicated paths, as well as multiple available start and finish points, it's perfect for any kind of cyclist. Along the way there are various 'power spots', from shrines to Japanese gardens, and even abandoned castle grounds.

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### Starting and ending points

From Shibuya take the Tokyu Toyoko Line to Shin-Maruko, about 18 minutes away, to begin. The route ends near Haijima Station, on the west side of Tokyo.

Where you start and end is completely customizable though. Train lines run along much of the river, with dozens of stations to pick up or drop off your rental bicycles. For example, you could finish at the Hugsy Doughnuts mentioned below and catch a train from the nearby Seiseki-Sakuragoaka Station.



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### Places of interest

#### 1) Tamagawa Sengen Shrine ㊦

Originally built approximately 800 years ago, this hilltop shrine offers wonderful views over Tamagawa River, as well as the railway bridge crossing it.

The local legend goes that during the early years of the Kamakura period (1192-1333), a warrior named Yoritomo went to battle in the Ikebukuro area. His wife, concerned about his life, went looking for him, but after injuring her foot she had to abandon her journey and seek help close to the river. After treatment, she was able to climb this hill to pray for her husband.

The wife eventually built a statue at the shrine called **Seikanzenon Bodhisattva**. The grounds also contain the copper statue of **Daibosatsu Bodhisattva**, which was excavated from the 5<sup>th</sup> station of Mount Fuji in 1652. Missing a leg at the time, it was brought to the shrine for repair and was enshrined here.

*Free • 24h • [sengenjinja.info/english](http://sengenjinja.info/english)*

#### 2) Tamagawadai Park

Get off your bike and take a quick stroll at this beautiful public park, selected as one of the

‘Eight Great Views of Tamagawa’. As you explore the many winding paths, you’ll see gardens for aquatic plants, wildflowers and hydrangeas, plus ancient burial grounds dating back to the 4th century.

*Free • 9:30am-5pm*

### 3) Zen-yoji Temple 禅

I had never seen a temple like this! Zen-yoji is a Buddhist temple littered with overwhelmingly big statues and stone artwork depicting everything from frogs to Hindu Ganesha. The artifacts come from across India and Asia, really setting this temple apart from others in the capital.

*Free • 24h*

### 4) Futako-Tamagawa Park

Just outside the HQ of mega conglomerate Rakuten is this idyllic park. A sweet spot for a coffee break with its cafe, occasional food trucks and picturesque views over Tokyo. There’s also **Kishin-en**, a compact Japanese garden featuring a 100-year old teahouse.

*Free • 24h (Kishi-en 9am-5pm)*

### 5) Fuchu City Local History Museum

Outdoor museum with old townhouses, farmhouses, a town hall and an elementary school building. These are filled with artifacts from the Meiji and Taisho eras, plus there is an exhibit about the history of the city and another about life in a wartime school.

*9am-5pm • Closed on Mondays (except national holidays) • fuchu-cpf.or.jp/museum*

### 6) Takiyama Castle Ruins

Listed as one of Japan’s top 100 castles, this 16th century site is completely unknown to most Tokyoites. While all that remains from the old era today are the remnants of moats and earthworks, there is an informative AR experience that visualizes what the castle would have looked like 500 years ago.

*Free • 24h*

### 7) Ishikawa Sake Brewery

Japanese sake brewery that started way back in 1863, and still uses the old Kura storehouses. It also started to brew beer for a short period in the 1880s, and revived this production with its Tama no Megumi brand in

1998. This beer, as well as sake, can be purchased in the onsite store to take home. There’s also a sake museum.

Note that Ishikawa is one of the few to hold English-language tours in Tokyo. The guide will explain the sake making process, take you around the historic grounds and explain a bit about the giant bronze cauldron that was used to boil water for beer production.

Book your tour beforehand at [tamajiman.co.jp](http://tamajiman.co.jp). If you arrive too late for a tour, or tours are not available, it’s also perfectly possible to explore much of the grounds on your own.

*10am-6pm • Closed on Tuesdays*

### 8) Akishima Onsen Yuranosato

Modern hot spring, with a classy yet understated feel, that comes with multiple indoor and outdoor baths. The ‘one man’ baths are particularly relaxing. Afterwards the onsite restaurant offers classic Japanese sets like ramen and soba.

*850-950 yen • 9am-1am • yurakirari.com*

### Recommended cafes

There are a few spots along the way if you need a power boost. Daikokudo, near the beginning, is famous for its fish-shaped ayu sweets filled with red bean paste (11am-5:30pm, closed Tuesdays). At about the halfway mark Hugsy Doughnuts is an adorable neighborhood favorite (11am-6pm, Friday to Sunday), while Cafe Hikobae offers some top-rated riverside coffees (11:30am-5pm, closed Mondays and Fridays).

### Recommended meal spot

Fussa No Birugoya, at the Ishikawa Sake Brewery, is an Italian restaurant offering local beer and sake, accompanied by handmade pizzas and pasta. If this seems too pricey you could indulge in some cheap conveyor-belt sushi instead. Sushiro is just around the corner (11am-11pm).

*Meals from 1300 yen • 11:30am-9:30pm*

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### Combine with...

This route finishes at Hajijima, where the America Town walk begins (p70).



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## 36. Hiking the mysterious Takinoo Path – Nikko

DISTANCE: 5 KM | CASUAL HIKING EXPERIENCE



*Kaizan-do and Kannon-do*

Nikko, one of the most popular weekend trips from Tokyo, is home to a smorgasbord of World Heritage shrines and temples. Starting at the famous red Shinkyo Bridge, Nikko's Takinoo Path takes walkers up and around famous tourist sites like Toshogu Shrine and Futarasan Temple. Rather than just heading straight into these busy tourist spots though, the route goes into a pristine forest course that takes you to off-the-beaten-track shrines and temples. Many of these are also World Heritage sites, but as they require a bit of a hike they unfortunately get missed by most day-trippers from Tokyo.

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### Starting and ending points

First you'll need to get to Tobu-Nikko Station from Asakusa in Tokyo. It takes about two hours, and it's recommended to get a Tobu Nikko pass, which includes a return on the trains plus unlimited use of the buses. Purchase at [tobu.co.jp](http://tobu.co.jp). If you have a Japan Rail Pass, head to Utsunomiya on the Shinkansen and transfer for a train to Nikko. Once in Nikko, take a local bus to the Shinkyo bus stop.

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### Places of interest

#### 1) Shinkyo Bridge

One of Nikko's many iconic sites that must be featured on countless postcards. It's actually ranked as one of the three most beautiful in Japan.

Legend has it that a priest named Shodo Shonin was trying to cross the river, and was aided by a gigantic god who created a rainbow-colored bridge. Shonin went on to found many of the local shrines and temples in Nikko, and as the Takinoo Path traces a route he often used, you'll see his name mentioned frequently in the historical information signs featured at most sites. Note that you don't have to cross Shinkyo Bridge. *500 yen (to cross bridge) • 8:30am-4pm*

#### 2) Hongu Shrine ㊦

Our first World Heritage spot. One of the oldest structures in Nikko, Hongu is considered the birthplace of what eventually became Futarasan, a more famous shrine you'll encounter later. Visitors will also come across a three-storied pagoda and a simple Shinto hall enshrining the Goddess of Mercy. *Free • 24h*

### 3) Kannon-do (San-no-Miya)

A little further up we reach Kaizan-do and Kannon-do to its side. It may seem a bit weird to see a Shinto gate in front of a Buddhist temple, but this was built in a time when the practices and religions were often combined.

Venturing around the back you'll see six stone figures, which are Buddhist guardian deities. Other features include the Ying and Yang rocks, with a narrow rock representing the man, and the shorter, wider one representing a woman. Japanese people come here to pray for a safe childbirth.

*Free • 24h*

### 4) Kitano Shrine

It's mainly moss-lined stone paths from here, past old cedar trees, without a vending machine in sight. There are loads of random little shrines, halls and stone figures along the way. Kitano Shrine houses a scholar from the Heian period, as the God of Study.

A little further up you'll pass the Dai-Shoben Kinzei monument. It used to be a notice telling past visitors not to relieve themselves around here, as it's a holy place!

*Free • 24h*

### 5) Takinoo Shrine ㊦

The halfway point of the hike, Takinoo Shrine is a World Heritage site, just like the more famous shrines and temples in Nikko, so you'll probably be amazed as to why there are so few people here. There are many things dotted around, such as sacred rock that answers prayers for safe births, waters that were said to produce some of the most delicious sake, and a luck testing gate too. If you manage to throw a stone through the gap at the top of this torii gate you get good luck, so give it a try if you can.

*Free • 24h*

### 6) Futarasan Shrine ㊦

The first of the Nikko biggies. Futarasan is dedicated to the deity of Mount Futarasan, a nearby mountain that has long been a place of worship for locals. Inside this World

Heritage site are sweeping 'irimoya' Chinese roofs, lush gardens and two samurai swords that became official National Treasures.

*300 yen • 8am-5pm*

### 7) Toshogu Shrine ㊦

This one enshrines Tokugawa Ieyasu, Japan's most famous samurai. Toshogu takes things up a notch with a magnificent five-story pagoda and Yomeimon Gate, covered in more than 500 intricate carvings of elders and mythical beasts. Be sure to check out the vibrant wood carvings, such as the 'sleeping cats', an elephant said to have been made by an artist who had never seen one, and of course the world-famous 'three wise monkeys'.

*1300 yen • 8am-5pm • [toshogu.or.jp/english](http://toshogu.or.jp/english)*

### 8) Rinnoji Temple ㊦

Nikko's most important Buddhist temple is also full to the brim with elaborate carvings and more colorful structures than you would find at standard Japanese temples. Inside, Sanbutsudo Hall contains gold statues several meters high, and there is also a treasure hall housing more statues of Buddha.

*400-900 yen • 8am-4pm • [rinnoji.or.jp/en](http://rinnoji.or.jp/en)*

#### Recommended cafe

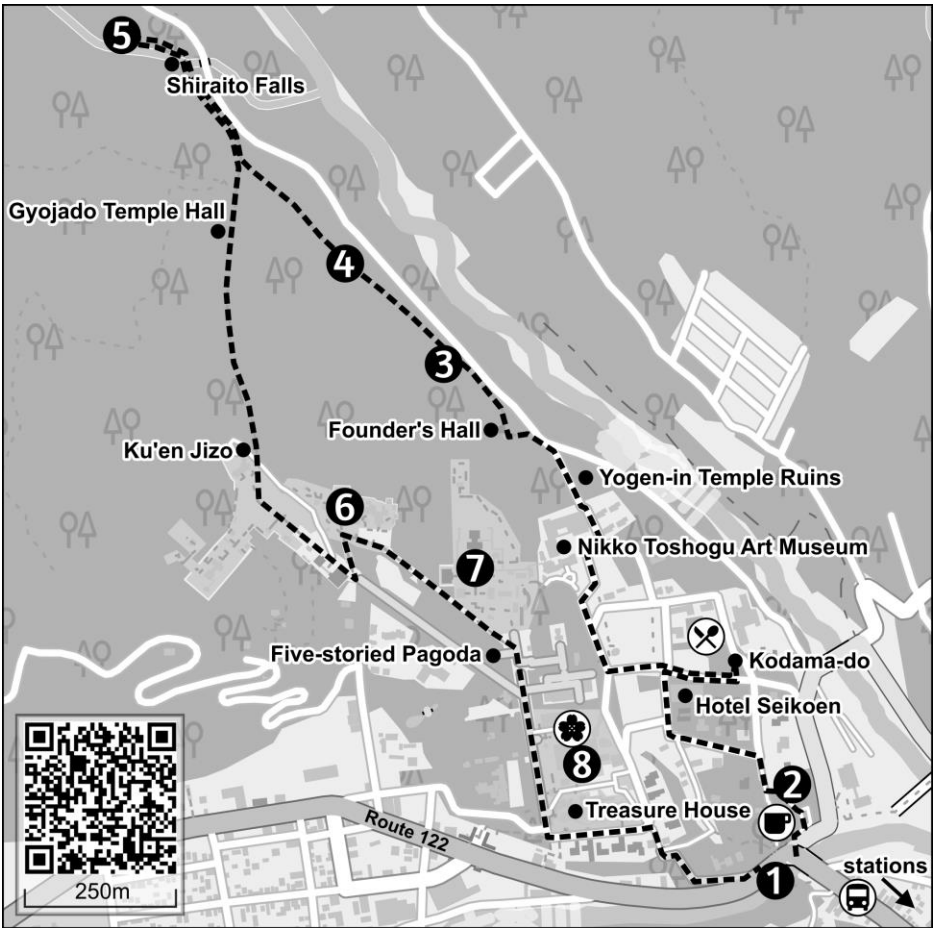
Hongu Cafe is a cozy lodge under the towering trees of Hongu Shrine. The menu focuses on sweets using traditional Japanese ingredients like matcha and azuki beans.

*Drinks from 500 yen, Japanese sweets from 550 yen • 10am-5pm • Closed on Thursdays • [hongucafe.shopinfo.jp](http://hongucafe.shopinfo.jp)*

#### Recommended meal spot

Dine like a Meiji era aristocrat at Meiji No Yakata. Originally constructed as a Western style cottage for an American merchant, the building now houses this lovely restaurant, offering Western dishes that have been altered for Japanese tastes.

*Meals usually 1800-3000 yen • 11am-7:30pm • [meiji-yakata.com/en](http://meiji-yakata.com/en)*



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