

# 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 'Uptown': 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 *jiriksha* (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 Iidabashi, west exit or Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō, Toei Ōedo lines to Iidabashi, 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-itohōme, 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 Iidabashi, west exit or Namboku, Tōzai, Yūrakuchō, Toei Ōedo lines to Iidabashi, 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.