



- About Me
- Chicago
- Japan
- Taiwan
- Stuff I Like

□□ Japan

Japan tips from various travels there

- Been a minute since this has been updated, but it's mostly all still true!
- Need to update from August 2023 trip that included stops in Naoshima & Sapporo
 - Still need to update based on this, but ask me about Tokyo Disney

TOKYO:

Subway:

Take the subway as much as possible. It's awesome. To do it, buy a Suica card. Should've given you mine cuz it costs like \$5 to get it, but it's awesome because many of the vending machines & 7-11s take this card as well. This has now been unified with the Pasmo card, which is pink. Easy to reload and you will not need to do math. Otherwise you get charged a different price depending on starting & ending stop. These days, just use it on your iPhone by adding it via your wallet and using ApplePay or credit card.

JR Pass, Trains, & the Subway:

JR Pass is awesome, but also get a Suica/Pasmo in case. JR Pass for sure if you're traveling out of Tokyo and using a few bullet trains. Super easy to get on the Shinkansen even though you don't get the fastest one (Nozomi) w the JR Pass. The JR Pass will ALSO work for the subway at any station (entering or exiting) as long as a JR Train stops there. Google maps is pretty good at showing which trains are JR. The only downside is that w/JR, you have to walk through the manual office and flash the pass, but, totally easy to do and overall worth it if you're taking subways around Tokyo and nearby areas. Price has recently risen, so might not be a deal unless you're there for awhile and ride the train more than a few times and have flexible schedule.

Taxis:

They open & close the door automatically. I think red is available and green is taken. Opposite of what you think! heh. Not cheap, but we used it when weather was bad or were in a rush.

Tabelog:

Best restaurant rating guide. Kinda like yelp, but more trustworthy. Best way to find a restaurant on here is to google the name + Tabelog. Ratings are on 5 stars, but basically:

- > 3 is good
- > 3.5 is fantastic
- > 4.0 might be one of the best restaurants you will eat at anywhere.
- For example, Jiro is a 4.5. Japanese folks don't give out 5 stars.

TableAll:

Lots of super high end japanese restaurants only take reservations in japanese or often don't allow 'newcomers' to book on their own. TableAll is the Tock of Japan. If you really want a pricey meal at a fancy spot. This is one of the worst easiest ways to do it. I will say though, that it's expensive. There's so much amazing food everywhere in Japan that you do not need to do this. But, if you want a super top end experience w/no hassle... this will be awesome.

Wifi Hotspot:

There are lots of options, but I use this site call [GlobalAdvancedCommunications](#) to pre-purchase my hotspot. They mail it to the Post office at the airport and then you just pick it up like you're picking up a package w/your passport. Comes w/an envelope that you just drop in the mailbox on your way out. Easy. You can also go the route of NTT Docomo or others in the terminal area if you're lazy. These days tho... w international plans, maybe you don't need it. Might be more cost effective if you're in the country for awhile but not sure if I'd do it now in 2022. Now in 2023, I'm lazy and just used my ATT international data plan for \$10/day, capped at \$100/month. Many people have been using esim, but I'm not sure on speeds or

Furthermore many people have been using coins, but I'm not sure on speed or overall cost. Probably more worthwhile if there for longer than 1 week.

Sushi:

Midori Sushi: The sushi in train station/mall that was really good. Can still end up w a bit of a line but they do a good job of queuing.

http://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g1066456-d1678469-Reviews-Umegaoka_Sushi_No_Midori_Sohonten_Shibuya-Shibuya_Tokyo_Tokyo_Prefecture_Kanto.html

Genki Sushi: sushi you order on an iPad and it comes to you via this little skateboard/tray. Good but not best sushi. Awesomely fun experience.

<https://instagram.com/p/3T98HWMWzd/>

Nemuro Hanamaru: Best conveyor belt sushi. There are a couple of them near each other. We went to the one right next to Tokyo Station and the other is in Ginza nearby. Pretty easy system for ordering/taking things... plates are color coded for cost and have lots of English for visitors. The sushi we ate at a bunch of here is called Engawa (Fluke Fin)... not all places have it and it's delicious.

Tsukiji Market: Wander where you think you shouldn't be. Only until then will you actually have found the innards of the fishmarket. Go here ASAP when you arrive. Use your jetlag to your advantage. Lines queue up. As far as best places to eat, there are a couple of most famous restaurants. Sushi Dai and

Daiwa Sushi. Many people say Sushi Dai is a bit better, but Daiwa Sushi, next door to it is also amazing. The biggest difference is that Daiwa actually owns 2 restaurants so their throughput is 2x faster. Regardless of the time you arrive, there'll be a line. Full line is about 45 min for 2 people, 60 min for 3 people. Getting access to the wholesale part of the market is now not available until 10a. We got there around 7:30/8am, got in line, waited, ate in about 25 min, then wandered for a little bit before the wholesale opened up. Timing worked out well. Also, check the calendar to make sure that the market is actually open when you want to visit.

- *January 2017 Update:* Ate at Daiwa Sushi. Continued to be stellar. Line was really long... but only took about 45 min for us to get in (group of 6, but split up into 2 groups of 3). Worth doing if you love sushi. Discovered that the interior of the fishmarket is now not really open for tourists until 10am. So, if you go eat there, plan for some walking around and then go into the market. Only saw one tuna being cut since you can't walk in until later now. Don't miss the vegetables area too that's off to the side.

- *March 2018 Update:* Went again but didn't eat at Daiwa. Instead, ate some uni at one of the stalls. This time there was even less going on at the fishmarket when we went in at 10am. I'd still say that walking around Tsukiji is a great experience. But, it's not the same as it used to be because most of the action in the market has been completed.

- *August 2023 update:* Now a part of Toyosu Market. Can still eat here even though you can't really tour much of Toyosu Market. Amazing omakase + sake for 2 people cost us \$120 ☐

Izakaya:

Narukiyo: one of the best meals we had while in Tokyo on our first trip. It's a tiny little izakaya that locals know as awesome. Maybe had the best beef I've ever eaten here. After eating here, decided I didn't need to go find Kobe Beef.

<https://instagram.com/p/3uhAEusW-X/>

Ramen (sorta in order of what we liked best):

Kagari Ramen: in Ginza, a super nice neighborhood. Tori Paitan ramen... from the [lucky peach list](#). It's awesome. The restaurant is also tiny. 8 seats total. If you're all up for it, it's worth it. Also, be sure to get the fresh seasonal veggie upgrade.

- *March 2018 Update:* Kagari original location has closed. New location is a little bigger (8 seats) and is down the train station steps near where Google Maps has it placed in Ginza. Just around the corner when you go downstairs. Still one of the best ramens.

- Has closed and moved again. Still exists but I'm not sure where. Probably still in

Ginza.

Fuunji: Shinjuku. On the lucky peach list. Tsukemen. Underground, but look for the line that queues across the street.

- *March 2018 Update*: Went here again. Secret is definitely out. Line was much longer than before, but we were able to get in well before closing. Took about 30-40 min even though the line stretched across the street and around a corner. Still fantastic and the best tsukemen we had. Easy to use vending machine.

Saikoro: Off of Nakano Train stop on Chuo line. If you go to Nakano Broadway for Otaku stuff, eat here. On lucky peach list.

- *March 2018 Update*: This is still one of the best broths we ate. No other drinks than beer. Vending machine all in Japanese, but have an English translation sheet you can ask for. Still one of our favorites and will always stop here if we go to Nakano.

- CLOSED Now ☐

Rokurinsha: Tokyo Station: There's a Ramen Row area in the train station. Find the longest line there and you've found this. Awesome Tsukemen. Not on luckypeach list, but great. Also pretty efficient. Especially if you find yourself at Tokyo Station.

Tomita: If you're into ramen. Worth the visit.

Others: there are so many others that are great

Washu:

Yakitori:

Toritake - close to Shibuya station and is terrific. Large enough total space for a group and amazing yakitori. 3.58 on Tabelog.

Pizza:

Seirinkan - best Neapolitan I've ever had. Their marg > marinara but both are great and the only ones on the menu. Just sayin if you can only order one. We are here twice on same trip it was so good.

Steak:

Shima Steak

Coffee:

Onibus

About Life

4/4 Seasons

Omoteshando Coffee

Akihabara:

Mandarake: bookstore, anime, lotsa classic toys

Sega Arcades - there are a few of them here. Walk into them all and check out the amazing games.

Maid cafe: we went to Maidreamin. Was brilliant! One of us bought the "set" which let us take a picture w/the maids. Otherwise, no pics allowed. But, you don't all need to buy the "set".

Consignment shops: Also, if you like toys, keep an eye open for the consignment shops. Here, people who have lots of toys/figures, all rent out these acrylic lock boxes to display their toys that they're selling. Sometimes cheaper to buy here than from one of the main stores.

Nakano Broadway + Ramen:

Like Akihabara but smaller and mostly one large building. Also a bit more local in flavor. Wander the whole building. Lotsa vintage toys here. We also found on the top (4th?) floor an amazing little shop that has Animation Cels. There's a large fancy store nearby, but the smaller one lets you flip through them all in books or like records. Some are as cheap as \$3.

If you go here, one of the ramens from the lucky peach article is nearby. Ramen Saikoro. Was one of the best ramens we had while in Tokyo. Chicken, Pork, & Smoked Mackerel in the broth.

Kappabashi & Asakusa

Do the restaurant supply area & Asakusa together. All your fake food needs are here.

One of the secrets to the area is that there's a Cultural Center nearby that it's free to go to the top floor (7th floor?). There you'll find a nice rooftop deck that lets you overlook that area of Tokyo: http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g1066461-d1943496-Reviews-Asakusa_Culture_Tourist_Information_Center-Taito_Tokyo_Tokyo_Prefecture_Kanto.html

Shopping Areas / Stores:

Harajuku: Japan street style. Kawaii. Edgy. Crazy boutiques

Shibuya: Hip and trendy, lots of random stuff. Also Loft, Muji, & Tokyu Hands.

Omotesando: High end and next to Harajuku.

Ginza: Super high end.

ShimaKita: The "Logan Square of Tokyo" - hipsters, vintage, popular

Kiddie Land (amazing toy store in Omotesando)

Muji & Loft - there's one in Shibuya that has both

Tokyu Hands - great store that has everything

Other Amazing Stuff in/near Tokyo:

Gotoku-ji: Maneki Neko (Lucky Cat) Shrine that's close to ShimaKita

Wagashi (Japanese Sweets)

Cherry Blossom Season

Hanami

Cat Cafe

Visit a 7-11, Lawson, & Natural Lawson: The food there is amazing and they also have a great citrus alcohol drink called Chu-Hi. Fried chicken & egg salad sandwiches at Lawson is amazing. Also a great place to find some basic cheap Japanese whisky. Sometimes will find Akashi there.

Robot Restaurant: Was amazing. Mind blowing. Save your stomachs though and do food elsewhere. Buy drink tickets for some chew hi and you'll be all good. A lil risqué but amazing.

Ghibli Museum: Hard to buy tickets for because they open them only a month in advance and they sell out. That said, you can buy them via govoyagin for a premium. Amazing stuff here especially if you're a Miyazaki fan.

Kawaii Monster Cafe Harajuku: We didn't go here, but everything about it seems. A.MAZING.

Life-Sized Gundam in Odaiba: It's outside a mall in Odaiba. We did this and then took the nearby ferry up to Asakusa & Kappabashi.

- *March 2018 Update*: The Gundam has been updated and now 'transforms'. There are showtimes during the day every couple of hours, but it lasts for about 1-2 minutes. It's cool, but apparently the evening shows w/lights are better because there are a few phases. If your timing lets you be there for the transformation, watch it, but probably not worth scheduling your day around it.

Cup Noodles Museum: Yokohama. You get to design & pick ingredients for your own CupONoodles.

AnimeJapan 2018:

Cherry Blossom Season

KYOTO:

Def do the Shrines & Temples in Kyoto. It's rainy season right now, but don't let that stop you from going to these temples. They're kinda amazing in their own way when it's raining. Plus, there'll be way less people. The ones we did were:

Tenryu-ji - awesome zen garden & Arashiyama Bamboo forest nearby. Pics make the forest look massive. It's nice but only takes a few min to walk through.

Kinkaku-jin - gold leaf temple

Fushimi Inari Shrine - red gates. Lotta walking and rewarding. Beautiful and super cool... But yah. A lotta climbing

Nishiki Market: super long food market. Don't eat beforehand so you can buy and try anything that looks interesting.

Aritsugu - knife shop in Nishiki. Will engrave your name for free if you buy something.

Daimaru Dept Store - depa chika are crazy food floors in the basement. Has everything! There's a place to sit on the far end sorta outside.

Ippodo Tea - awesome tea shop. Will teach you how to properly make tea and also has super high quality tea.

Kakaido - Chazutsu: Amazing tea containers that I'm personally addicted to collecting. They're based out of Kyoto and have a showroom there. Kinda ridick to pay >\$100 for a tea container, but they're so cool.

Intl Manga Museum: Cheap and pretty cool. Check to see if there are some cosplayers in the courtyard

Yamasaki Distillery: See Osaka section

SAPPORO:

Crab Restaurant

Sapporo Fishmarket

Ramen Alley

Batting Cages

Knife Store

Shopping

KUTCHAN / NISEKO / HIRAFU:

Skiing:

Tiene

Niseko United (Hirafu & Honozunu)

Kiroro

Onsen:

Yugokurotai

Hirafu Onsen

Food:

Soba:

Rakuichi

Izakaya:

Bang Bang 2

Rin/Rai

Kutchan Izakaya

Ramen:

Niseko Ramen

Bars:

Gyu Bar (Fridge Bar)

Bar Moon

Accommodations:

Shopping:

Whiskey Hunting:

- Lucky's (Kutchan)

- Co-Op

- Nikka Yoichi Distillery is btwn Kutchan & Sapporo via train

OSAKA

- Visiting Yamasaki Distillery

- Not Updated yet from 4/18

HIROSHIMA

- Not Updated yet from 4/18

Jordan Ho © 2022-2025

[Archive](#) [RSS feed](#) [QR Code](#)

Made with [Montaigne](#) and [bigmission](#) 