

The Japan Times

Japan. Endless Discovery.

Japan Highlights

114TH YEAR NO. 40,014

ISSN 0289-1956
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Autumn 2010

Tokyo's New Landmark It's not just the sun rising in the east

Tokyo Sky Tree is one of the most attention-getting features of Tokyo, already the tallest structure in Japan, and it's not even finished. People living in the vicinity of the tower note its daily progress skyward, with much hope for it to become a huge attraction for visitors to the area.

The tower is being built near a main tourist attraction in Tokyo, the popular Asakusa district, one of the representative *shitamachi* areas – parts of mostly eastern Tokyo that retain old, nostalgic features. If you visit Asakusa, look to the east and you won't miss the tower.

Though it's still under construction, the tower can be seen from as far away as the top of Mount Fuji, according to a photo posted on a website affiliated with Tokyo Sky Tree (www.1101.com/skytree/index.html).

More to see by sea

Boats, known as water buses that traverse the Sumida River between Asakusa and Tokyo Bay are a popular attraction for visitors and a good option for enjoying views of Tokyo Sky Tree.

Boats run upriver from several places, including the Hinode Pier, Hamarikyu Gardens and Odaiba. A popular itinerary for visitors is to stroll the natural, scenic, Japanese-style Hamarikyu Gardens before taking the boat ride up the Sumida River to Asakusa. As the boat heads up the river, the tower will come into view near Eitaibashi Bridge. It will gradually grow larger as the boat draws nearer up until the Asakusa boarding station at the foot of Azumabashi Bridge, where you will see many visitors taking photos of the future symbol of Tokyo.

A recommendation if you are taking the boat from Asakusa in the late afternoon is to head for Odaiba Kaihin Koen (Odaiba Seaside Park) in Tokyo Bay, which allows great night views of Tokyo Tower and downtown Tokyo from across the water.

Various water bus transportation routes are provided by Tokyo Cruise and the Tokyo Mizube Line. For more information, call Tokyo Cruise at 0120-977-311 or visit www.suijibus.co.jp; call the Tokyo Mizube Line Office at 03-5608-8869 or visit www.tokyo-park.or.jp/english



Tokyo Sky Tree under construction as seen in September from the Kaminarimon Street near Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo
CHIHO IUCHI

What is Tokyo Sky Tree?

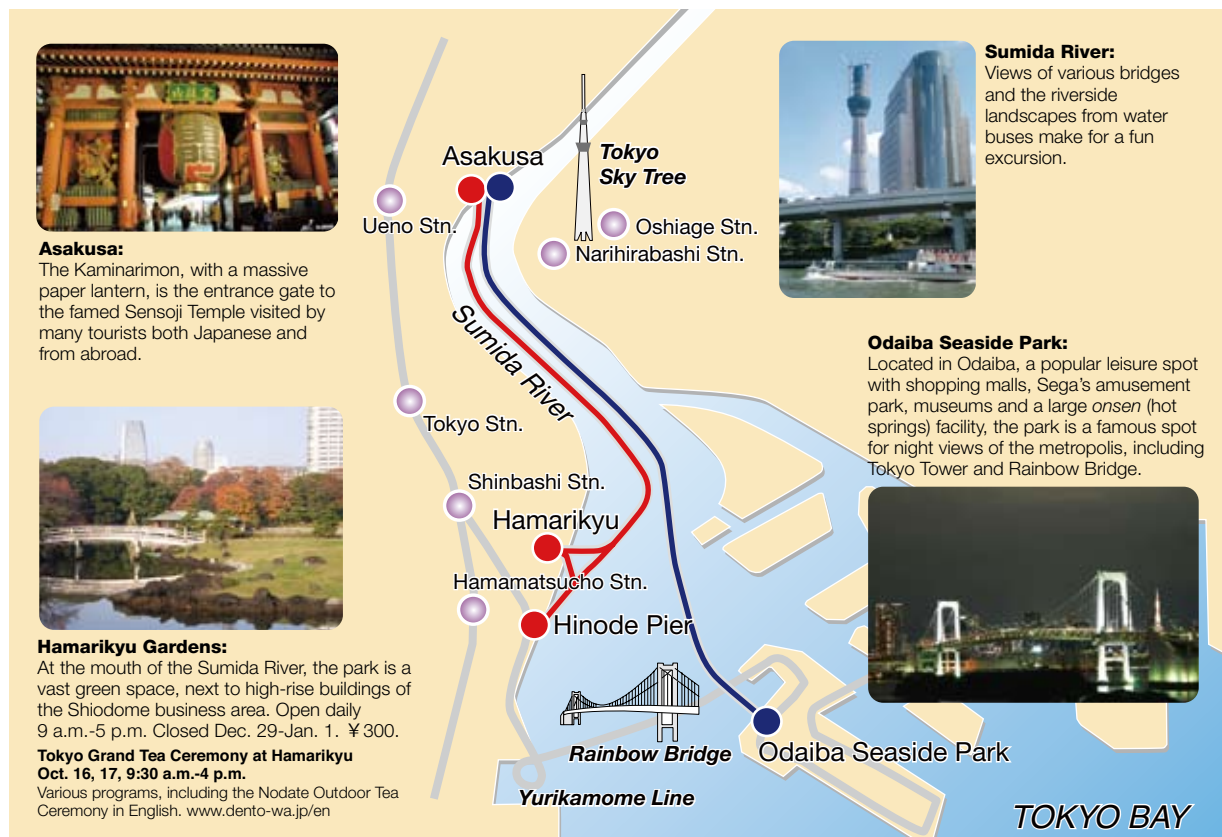
Tokyo Sky Tree is a broadcasting tower that will improve existing digital broadcasting capabilities. The tower is being built to increase signal strength by avoiding obstructions, which Tokyo Tower had faced due to the increasing number of high-rise buildings in its vicinity.

In March 2010, the Sky Tree exceeded Tokyo Tower's height of 333 meters. At the time of its completion, expected in December 2011, Sky Tree will be 634 meters tall.

Within the tower will be broadcasting facilities, two observation decks (at 350 meters and 450 meters high), shops, restaurants and cafes.

Already open is the Tokyo Sky Tree Information Plaza, located at the adjacent Narihira-bashi Station. It offers video images of what the view will look like from the completed observation decks as well as information about Sky Tree itself.

Access: Oshiage Station (Tokyo Metro Hanzomon Line or Toei Asakusa Line); Narihira-bashi Station (Tobu Isesaki Line)



TOKYO: AT A GLANCE

Local event Mikoshi Festival

Mikoshi are portable shrines that are prominent parts of traditional festivals. At the Oedo Mikoshi Matsuri, more than 2,000 people will gather to help carry 13 *mikoshi* around Kiba Park. There will also be many exhibitions and performances of traditional Japanese music and dance.



Oedo Mikoshi Matsuri in Kiba Park: Oct. 10, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; near Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo 4-6-1 Hirano, Koto-ku; 15-min. walk from Kiba Station (Tokyo Metro Tozai Line); www.mikoshimatsuri.com (Japanese only)



© MKG Hamburg

Japanese art Ukiyo-e

Ukiyo-e (Japanese genre painting) became popular during the Edo Period (1603-1867), as it portrayed ordinary people's lifestyles in low-priced, multicolored woodblock prints. The Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art, just steps away from the crowded Omotesando avenue, provides visitors with a comfortable environment to appreciate well-preserved Japanese art.

Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art: "Ukiyo-e Collection from the Museum fur Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg" Oct. 1-Nov. 28, 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. ¥1,000. Closed Mon. (open Oct. 11 and closed Oct. 12). 1-10-10 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku; 5-min. walk from JR Harajuku Station and Meiji-jingumae Station (Tokyo Metro Chiyoda, Fukutoshin lines); 03-3403-0880

Traditional drama Kabuki

Kabuki, a classical Japanese dance-drama, was established in the Edo Period (1603-1867) and became popular with ordinary people. As Kabukiza in Ginza is currently closed and being rebuilt, its performances are being staged at the Shinbashi Enbujo until 2013. The other major venue in Tokyo is the National Theater. Headsets with English commentary are available.



"Kokusenya Kassen" ("The Battles of Coxinga"): Nov. 3-26 (at noon; Nov. 9, 19, 4:30 p.m.) at the National Theater; ¥1,500-¥12,000.

Shinbashi Enbujo: 6-18-2 Ginza, Chuo-ku; 3-min. walk from Tsukiji-Shijo Station (Toei Oedo Line); 03-3541-3581

National Theater: 4-1 Hayabusacho, Chiyoda-ku; 5-min. walk from Hanzomon Station (Tokyo Metro Hanzomon Line); 03-3265-7411



Ginza Mitsukoshi
10 a.m.-8 p.m.; 4-6-16 Ginza, Chuo-ku; 1-min. walk from Ginza Station (Tokyo Metro Ginza, Hibiya, Marunouchi lines); 03-3562-1111

Shopping Ginza Mitsukoshi

Mitsukoshi, the Tokyo-based international department store chain, reopened its Ginza branch on Sept. 11. Ginza Mitsukoshi has been a landmark of the luxurious shopping district since 1930. After a grand-scale renovation, the reopened Ginza Mitsukoshi aims to attract more varied and younger customers with its own selected products. Also, the store houses the Ginza Tourist Information booth on the 2nd floor.

Souvenirs Kiddy Land

Kiddy Land, a toy store known for its huge variety of goods depicting famous characters, such as Hello Kitty and Pokémon, is a popular souvenir hunting spot. The temporary Harajuku Cat Street Branch opened in September as the flagship shop is closed for renovations.



Kiddy Land Harajuku Cat Street Branch: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. (Sat., Sun., holidays, 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m.); 6-14-2 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku; 4-min. walk from Meiji-jingumae Station (Tokyo Metro Chiyoda, Fukutoshin lines); 03-3409-3431; www.kiddyland.co.jp



Hands-on Ninja experience

Urban Ninja Tokyo, a martial arts group, provides lessons at restaurant Ninja Yashiki in the Kabukicho area of Shinjuku, all presented with English translations. The 90-minute Ninja Dojo Visit program lets you train and try special meditation, use ninja stars, practice swordsmanship and other ninja martial arts while wearing a traditional costume.

Ninja Dojo Visit at Ninja Yashiki: Mon. and Thu. 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. (1 p.m.-3 p.m. upon request); Ashibe Kaikan Building 5F, 2-36-3 Kabukicho, Shinjuku-ku; for a group of two to 15 people, ¥15,000 per person; reservations required three days in advance; 090-8055-9978 or 090-3691-8165; urban-ninja@mail.goo.ne.jp; <http://ninjawarriors.ninja-web.net>

SIGHTSEEING

What tourists want when visiting Japan and how the country can give it to them

Since the Visit Japan Campaign was launched in 2003 by the Japan Tourism Agency, the number of tourists to Japan has increased from 5.2 million (2003) to 8.3 million (2008). To explore the challenges for the tourism industry in Japan, The Japan Times recently held a round-table discussion with three experts:

- Yasuhiro Hasegawa** director of marketing and promotion department, Japan National Tourism Organization
Masashi Negishi managing director and secretary general of Japan Guide Association after 40 years of working in the travel industry; licensed guide
Atsuko Takamiya English-speaking tour guide, licensed in 2002

Japan Times (JT): What is the recent situation of the Visit Japan Campaign?

Yasuhiro Hasegawa (YH): Although tourist numbers declined significantly in 2009 due to the worldwide economic crisis and the impact of the H1N1 flu strain, the number of tourists to Japan is steadily increasing this year — 5 million at the end of July and predicted to reach more than 9 million by the end of 2010.



JT: What is the reason for the increase of inbound travel to Japan?

YH: A major factor is the increasing number of visitors from China. While 70 to 80 percent of tourists from Taiwan and Hong Kong are repeat visitors for sightseeing, 75 percent of tourists from China visited Japan for the first time.

Masashi Negishi (MN): Most Chinese tourists are members of guided tour groups. I've heard the feedback on their Japan tour, saying that they wanted to eat more Japanese foods; to do more sightseeing rather than shopping; and to meet more Japanese people.

YH: Most of the guided tour groups follow the so-called golden route, starting from Osaka, experiencing the *shinkansen* high-speed train to Kyoto, then traveling along to the Tokaido area by bus and going shopping. Their first

impression on Japan is very important, which then rapidly spreads by word of mouth, which might have an influence on potential tourists. Also, it's the key to whether they will visit Japan again. So our challenge is to let them return home with as good a memory as possible.

MN: The Japan National Tourism Organization's new catchphrase — "Japan. Endless Discovery." — demonstrates the endless attraction of Japan, aiming to secure repeat visitors.

YH: In this respect, we are stepping up our campaign abroad to show Japan's tourist attractions through local media, as well as with advertisements in public spaces. Another approach is to provide educational programs to learn more about Japan for planning and sales staff at Chinese travel agencies.

JT: What is the major tourist attraction of Japan?

YH: Japanese food. Western tourists have recently replaced historical interests with Japanese food as their first priority, while most Asian tourists go for hot springs or shopping first.

MN: Japanese food has become popular with fitness fads.

Atsuko Takamiya (AT): Of course, tourists appreciate the freshness of sushi and raw fish, but for those who request "something



From left, Masashi Negishi, Atsuko Takamiya and Yasuhiro Hasegawa discuss inbound tourism to Japan at the Japan National Tourism Organization's office in Tokyo on Sept. 14.

cooked," a recommendation is *yakisoba* (stir-fried noodles) at casual eateries. They enjoy the non-touristy atmosphere, blending in with locals.

JT: How about a favorite destination?

MN: Generally speaking, 50 percent of tourists to Japan on their first visit will go to see Mount Fuji and Hakone; 30 percent to Nikko and 10 to 15 percent to Kamakura.

JT: How do they get information?

YH: The Visit Japan Information Network consists of 300 offices nationwide, which are used mainly by tourists from the West. Information about Japan available in the Western countries is not as detailed as in Asia.

MN: And Western people tend to conduct personal travel.

AT: Today, the Internet is so convenient. Many tourists check websites. (Potential tourists') detailed knowledge about Japan elevates their desire for a more personalized trip. For example, a tourist requested to visit a Japanese capsule hotel and another wanted to view sunset from the Sunshine 60 Building in Ikebukuro. One of the major missions of a private tour guide is to fulfill such wishes. Tourists can get information, but it is difficult for them to

arrange and negotiate in Japan.

MN: It's difficult for an individual guide to respond to increasing and diversifying needs. More guides should be cultivated both in quantity and quality if Japan seriously wants to promote tourism.

JT: What do you think would be useful to further enhance tourism in Japan?

MN: I think that to provide more benefit systems such as coupons and discounts for visitors would be useful as a promotion.

YH: We arrange occasional press tours, inviting writers for local papers in Asia, which are helpful in attracting their readers to visit Japan.

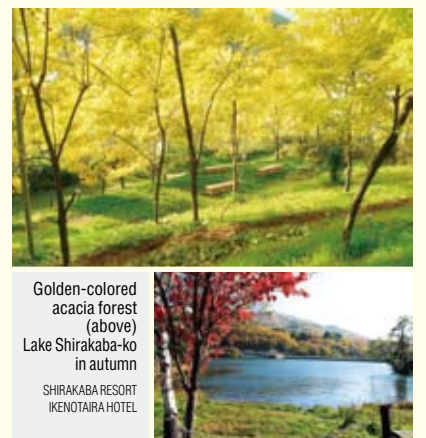
AT: I think it would be important to provide tourists with a more enjoyable stay in Japan through more information about seasonal festivals and local events. The other day, when I took five American tourists to Asakusa, we met a group of elementary school students. I talked to the children and they spent a pleasant time talking in simple English with the tourists and taking pictures together. It should be a precious memory for both the visitors from abroad and the Japanese children.

Lake Shirakaba-ko Blending man-made with nature

At the western foot of Mount Tateshina, in a quasi-national park managed by Nagano Prefecture, is Shirakaba-ko, an artificial lake 1,416 meters above sea level. Completed in 1947, the lake was enhanced in the 1950s by the addition of recreational facilities, such as a rental boat station and ice skating rink, and has developed into one of the big resorts in the prefecture today.

Easily accessible from Tokyo, the area provides visitors with family-friendly resort life all-year-round. People go there to walk, cycle and camp in the natural setting. The lake is surrounded by a forest of white birches (*shirakaba*). Hiking and skiing are also available in the nearby hills. On the eastern side of the lake is Shirakaba-ko Family Land, which has leisure facilities such as an amusement park, an indoor swimming pool, hot springs and a forest railway.

Autumn is the best season to take a walk in the woods to enjoy the fall foliage.



Golden-colored acacia forest (above) Lake Shirakaba-ko in autumn SHIRAKABA RESORT IKENOTAIRA HOTEL

Among the highlights is the golden-colored forest of some 1,300 acacia trees planted on a hill at the Ikenotaira Hotel. The hotel also offers a panoramic view of the Kurumayama Highlands from its large, outdoor hot springs.

Access: 2 hours from Shinjuku (Tokyo) to Chino Station by JR Chuo Line (limited express) and 50 min. from Chino Station to Minami-Shirakaba-ko by bus. By car, the journey takes about 3½ hours from Tokyo.



Free transportation
¥13,000~¥27,000
(per person, including tax and service charge)

Nagano Prefecture Shirakaba Resort Ikenotaira Hotel

"The Shinjuku Plan — offering direct access by bus"
 Approximately 3 hours 30 minutes from Shinjuku on the Shinshu Shirakaba Kohan-bound bus.
Duration: Oct. 1, 2010-March 31, 2011
(excludes Dec. 30, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)

Details

- Free bus ride from Shinjuku to the hotel
- Free tickets to use the indoor, warm-water pools (three free bowling tickets are offered instead between Nov. 4 and Dec. 17)
- Two meals per night (dinners are buffet-style featuring around 50 dishes from around the world, including Japanese, Western, Chinese, and other ethnic foods)
- Free access to the hotel's hot springs



Room rate (per person, including tax and service charge)	One room, two people	One room, three people	One room, four to six people
Weekdays	15,000yen	14,000yen	13,000yen
Weekends, Jan. 4, 5, 9	17,000yen	16,000yen	15,000yen
Dec. 25-28	22,000yen	20,000yen	19,000yen
Dec. 29, Jan. 3	27,000yen	25,000yen	23,000yen

It may be difficult to make arrangements when rooms are at full occupancy or when all seats on buses are full. *Children in elementary school may stay for 70% of the adult charge; toddlers from 3 years of age to pre-elementary school are 50% off; babies 2 years of age or younger who do not require bus seats are free. The outdoor baths and cave baths are mixed bathing spots, so please bring a bathing suit. Customers who do not have a bathing suit may rent one for 300 yen. *Check-in times are 2:30 p.m., and the checkout time is 10:00 a.m. We do not offer refunds in instances when the details of our offer change or due to weather. *Bus times are estimates. The weather and traffic congestion levels may delay the bus times or alter the bus route. We appreciate your understanding.

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SIGHTSEEING

Popular destinations for fall foliage and historical sites close to Tokyo

KAMAKURA was the seat of a feudal government during the Kamakura Period (1192-1333). Fortified by wooded mountains from three sides and the Sagami Bay to the south, the city boasts many historical treasures in a rustic setting. The best way to enjoy a tour of Kamakura is by exploring on your own. Among the highlights are the 13-meter-high bronze statue of the Great Buddha, the magnificent Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, the tranquil and dignified Zen Buddhist temples, such as Engakuji Temple and Kenchoji Temple, and the picturesque Enoshima Island off the coast. There are also many restaurants and souvenir shops.

★ Best time for fall foliage is from late Nov. to early Dec.



Access: 1 hour by JR Yokosuka Line from Tokyo (¥890) or 1 hour by JR Shonan-Shinjuku Line from Shinjuku (¥890)



The Great Buddha at Kotoku-in Temple (above) Hasedera Temple in autumn (illuminated Nov. 20-Dec. 5 from sunset to 7 p.m.)
KAMAKURA CITY TOURIST ASSOCIATION

Kamakura Enoshima Free Kippu is a round-trip ticket from any station on the JR Yamanote Line in Tokyo with unlimited rides on the JR and Enoden lines and the Shonan Monorail in the Kamakura and Enoshima area.

Enoshima Kamakura Free Pass is a round-trip ticket from any station on the Odakyu Line to Fujisawa, with unlimited rides on the Enoden and Odakyu lines in the Kamakura and Enoshima area.

Seasonal events:

Kamakura Takigi Noh (open-air torchlight noh performance) Oct. 8-9 (5 p.m.-8 p.m.) at Kamakuragu Shrine. Tickets cost ¥6,000 (reservations required). Call 0467-23-3050.

Juya Hoyo (10-night memorial service) Oct. 12-15 at Komyoji Temple. An annual celebration, consisting of three days and three nights of uninterrupted sutra chanting.

Shichi-Go-San Nov. 15 at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, Kamakuragu and other shrines. A traditional Japanese rite of passage and festival for girls at the age of 3 and 7 and for boys at age 5.

HAKONE is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan due to its historical significance and natural landscapes, and because it is the closest *onsen* (hot springs) resort area to Tokyo. During the Edo Period (1603-1867), Hakone was a very important checkpoint along the Tokaido route that connected Edo (present-day Tokyo) and Kyoto.

Among the sightseeing highlights is riding the Hakone Ropeway, which allows visitors to take in the spectacular scenery of the crystal-clear waters of Lake Ashinoko, the rising volcanic fumes of Owakudani and the grandeur of Mount Fuji. Another recommendation is Sengokuhara Plains, which is covered with golden-colored Japanese pampas in October. For art lovers, Hakone is home to various museums, such as the Hakone Open-Air Museum, the Pola Museum of Art and the Venetian Glass Museum.

★ Best time for fall foliage is early Nov. to early Dec.



The Hakone Ropeway over Owakudani in autumn with Mount Fuji (above)
HAKONE ROPEWAY
Sengokuhara Plains covered with Japanese pampas
HAKONE TOWN TOURIST ASSOCIATION

Seasonal event:

Hakone Daimyo Gyoretsu (Feudal Lord's Procession) Nov. 3 at Yumoto Onsen. A procession of around 170 people dressed up as samurai warriors and princesses parade over a distance of 6 km in the hot springs town. The suite of retainers, armed with a spear, bow and arrow, or gun, march on as they carry their lord in the palanquin while those leading the procession chant words meaning, "Down! Down! The Lord comes!"

Access:

85-min. by Odakyu Limited Express Romance Car from Shinjuku to Hakone-Yumoto (¥2,020; seat reservation required), or 90-min. by Odakyu Express from Shinjuku to Odawara and then 15-min. by Hakone Tozan Railway to Hakone-Yumoto (total ¥1,150)

Hakone Free Pass is a special ticket that covers travel to and from Hakone, plus unlimited use of transportation facilities within Hakone. For more information, see www.odakyu.jp/english

NIKKO in Tochigi Prefecture has been a popular pilgrimage spot since Toshogu Shrine was built in 1617, dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Toshogu is one of the most lavishly decorated shrines in Japan and, together with Futarasan Shrine and Rinnoji Temple, composes the Shrines and Temples in Nikko, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Its scenic natural setting, with mountains, lakes, hot springs and waterfalls, is famous for the beautifully colored autumn leaves. Among the highlights are the 97-meter-high Kegon-no-Taki waterfall and Lake Chuzenji at the foot of Mount Nantai.

★ Best time for autumn leaves is from mid-Oct. to early Nov.

Seasonal events:

Shuki Taisai (Grand Autumn Festival) Oct. 16-17 at Nikko Toshogu Shrine. The main attraction is a grand procession on Oct. 17, consisting of one *mikoshi* (a portable shrine) and a train of about 1,000 men dressed in samurai costumes (known as Hyakumono-Zoroe Sennin Gyoretsu). Also, on Oct. 16, there is the performance of *yabusame*, a contest combining equestrian skills and *kyudo* (Japanese-style archery).

Access: 110-min. by Tobu Railways Limited Express Kegan or Kinu from Asakusa to Tobu-Nikko (¥2,620; reservations required), or 150-min. by Tobu Railways from Asakusa to Tobu-Nikko (¥1,150), or 50-min. by JR Shinkansen Express Yamabiko from Tokyo to Utsunomiya (reserved seats ¥4,800; unreserved ¥4,290) and then 40-50 min. by JR local trains from Utsunomiya to Nikko (¥740)

The World Heritage Pass is a round-trip ticket between Asakusa and Nikko by Tobu Railways with unlimited rides on Tobu trains and buses within the designated area.



Rinnoji Temple in autumn (above) NIKKO TOURIST ASSOCIATION
Kegon-no-Taki waterfall JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION



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Japanese culture experience tours

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No.1 Tokyo Morning Tour

Enjoy a vivid atmosphere in the hustle and bustle of the fish market and a divine atmosphere of esoteric ritual service!

Tour
Tuesday, October 19, 2010

Meeting Time & Place
9:00 a.m. Tsukijishijo Station → Visit to the fish market (no tuna auction) → Monzen-nakacho Station → Fukagawa Fudo Temple → Tomioka Hachiman 12:30 p.m. Tour disbands.

No.2 Tokyo Morning Tour

Discover something new in two popular spots in Tokyo!

Tour
Thursday, November 11, 2010

Meeting Time & Place
9:00 a.m. Otemon of Imperial Palace → San-no-maru Shozou Kan (Museum) → Higashi Gyoen (East Garden) → Yasukuni Shrine 1:00 p.m. Tour disbands.

Details of free guided tours

- Maximum number of participants: 25
- Eligibility Requirements: Japan Times subscribers
Max 3 people per application.
Under 15 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.
- Tour Fee: Free except for transportation fees and entrance fees.
- Selection Method: Lottery
Those not selected are entered into a second lottery in which 10 people will win a Hato Bus Tour (Cityrama Tokyo Morning).
- Deadline: Tour No. 1: October 12, 2010
Tour No. 2: November 4, 2010
- Meeting Place: Tour starting place.
- Application Method: The Japan Time Online
<https://form.japantimes.co.jp/special-issue/>
- Inquiries: <https://form.japantimes.co.jp/special-issue/inquiries.html>

Hello, everyone. I am quite interested in the history and culture of Japan. I passed the certification exams on history and culture of the following old cities:
1. Edo (present Tokyo) 2. Kamakura (capital city about 800 years ago) 3. Nara (the oldest capital city, about 1,300 years ago; placed on World Cultural Heritage list) 4. Kanazawa (the city of the Maeda clan, the biggest local lord during the Edo period) 5. Nikko (famous for its gorgeous shrines and temples; placed on World Cultural Heritage list).

One of the most popular tours of mine is a One-Day Walking Tour in Tokyo and vicinity with only your friends and families (only one group). Friends who are guides are also available for this tour.
Please contact **Susumu Yoshida** yoshi-su@ops.dti.ne.jp

I have been a housewife most of my life, however, I think one of my essences as a guide was fostered during so-called "Yomeiri Shugyo" (valuable training for finding a good husband): To master tea ceremony, flower arrangement, sewing kimono and Western clothes; cooking; how to clean rooms; calligraphy; playing Japanese musical instruments and so on. I am also sure that my long-term volunteer activities gave me enough historical and cultural knowledge for my own country. "Seeing is believing" is my favorite saying, so I do hope every visitor has a good time in Japan. My walking tour "Ukiyo-e Museum and Shinto Shrine" is on the JGA Walking Tour site.
Please contact **Tomie Shibata** y.shibata@sweet.ocn.ne.jp

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GUIDE: **JGA Japan Guide Association**
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Japan. Endless Discovery. **JGA**

FOOD

Top 10 eats and drinks

Japan offers visitors a variety of culinary offerings

In line with such a trend, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been vigorously promoting Japanese food. The MAFF has selected the following "10 Great Tastes of Japan" that convey the rich variety of Japanese cuisine and will enhance your understanding and appreciation of what is available in Japan. Please try some of these dishes during your stay in Japan.

According to a 2009 Japan National Tourism Organization survey, Japanese cuisine came out on top as the thing visitors hoped to enjoy, ahead of other attractions, such as shopping (tops in 2008), hot springs and natural scenery.

Japanese cuisine has been steadily gaining attention overseas for a variety of reasons, including the taste, presentation and reputation for being healthy and safe.

■ Sushi/sashimi

Sushi is usually raw fish but sometimes eggs and vegetables are used and served on bite-size vinegar-seasoned rice shaped by the hands of a sushi chef. Sashimi is thinly sliced raw fish eaten mainly with soy sauce and wasabi.

Sushi is the most famous and popular Japanese food overseas. Sushi restaurants are now seen all over the world.

People usually visit sushi restaurants with counter seating only on special occasions. Meanwhile, the conveyor belt style of eatery serves sushi at reasonable prices in a casual setting. You can buy sushi or sashimi for takeout at supermarkets, too.



Sashimi

■ Tempura

Tempura — seafood and seasonal vegetables coated in a light egg batter and deep-fried in vegetable oil — is usually served with a dipping sauce with grated daikon, but sometimes just with salt.

The style of cooking is said to be originally brought to Japan by the Portuguese.

Special tempura restaurants may be expensive, but you can find it on the menu at most *izakaya* (Japanese-style pubs). *Tendon*, a bowl of fresh tempura over rice, is a popular, quick meal.



Tempura

■ Noodles

Among the wide variety of Japanese noodles, *soba*, made from buckwheat flour, and *udon*, thicker and made from wheat flour, are popular.

When served hot, *soba* and *udon* are served in a bowl with a broth and garnish. A variety of toppings are usually available, such as tempura, eggs, *wakame* seaweed, *tororo-imo* yam.

Soba and *udon* can also be served cold on a bamboo sieve and dipped in a cold broth, with spices added as you please, such as wasabi, ginger and chili peppers.

Relatively speaking, *soba* is popular in Eastern Japan and *udon* is a favorite of Western Japan.

However, across the nation, the favorite noodle is ramen.

With its origins in Chinese cuisine, ramen is not traditionally considered a Japanese dish, but it has developed into a specialty unique to Japan.

There are many variations in the soup base: soy sauce, miso, salt, pork stock, etc. The most popular shops often have long lines of customers. Ramen is mostly served hot, but recently, a variety known as *tsuke-men* has become popular in Tokyo. The dish consists of cold ramen dipped in a hot, rich soup.



Soba



Udon



Ramen

■ Sukiyaki/shabu-shabu/teppanyaki

Sukiyaki is thinly sliced beef and other ingredients that are cooked stir-fry style in a flavorful, thick sauce.

Shabu-shabu is thin slices of meat that are swished around in a boiling broth and then immediately dipped in a sauce.

Sukiyaki and *shabu-shabu* are two types of *nabe* pot dishes. Using many vegetables and tofu, *nabe* cooking is considered healthy, being nutritionally well balanced and low in calories.

Teppanyaki is meat, seafood and vegetables cooked on an iron hot plate that usually runs the length of a counter. With minimum seasoning, *teppanyaki* allows the enjoyment of original flavors.



Shabu-shabu

■ Shojin-ryori/tofu

Shojin-ryori is a form of vegetarian cuisine that originated as a Buddhist meal. *Shojin-ryori* does not use animal products. The featured ingredients are vegetables, such as beans and potatoes.

In order to supplement protein content, tofu is an essential ingredients. Specialty restaurants focusing on using tofu in every course are also available.



Tofu

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Japanese Sake

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梵·钱 Born-GOLD
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梵·日本·的·真 Born-Mikoto
梵·寒·梅 Born-Kanbachi
梵·梦·是·应·验·的·梦 Born-Yume vs. Masayama
梵·超·吟 Born-Chigin
梵·冰·山 Born-Hyozan
梵·极·纯·造·大·吟·醸 Born-Gokuhito
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这个就是被称为「完美双钻石」，在富士山所出现的珍贵景象。此景象会为大家带来好运。
This is a rare image of Mt. Fuji called Perfect Double Diamond Fuji and it is believed to bring good luck.

Sake shows stronger presence internationally at IWC 2010

The International Wine Challenge, held annually in London, is the world's largest wine competition, and one of the most prestigious, with more than 10,000 wines assessed by more than 300 experts. Reflecting the growing attention to Japanese sake in the international scene, the IWC established the sake section in 2007. This year, there were 405 sake entries, making IWC 2010 the world's largest competition for sake.

In September, the IWC 2010 unveiled this year's champion wines. In the Japanese sake section, champion sakes were selected from each of five sake categories.

The following are the champions this year in the sake section:

- Junmai – Born: Ginsen 2008, by Katoukichibee Shouten
- Junmai/Ginjo/Daiginjo – Nechi 2008, by General Partnership Watanabe Sake Brewing Store



Atsuhide Kato, 11th president of Katoukichibee Shouten, is jubilant after receiving the top award in the junmai sake category for the company's Born: Ginsen 2008 at the International Wine Challenge 2010 in London on Sept. 7.

- Honjozo – Honshu-ichi Muroka Honjozo, by Umeda-Shuzoujyou & Co.
- Gingo/Daiginjo – Sawahime Daiginjo 2009, by Inoue Seikichi Co.
- Koshu – Hanahato Kijoshu Aged For 8 Years 2001, by Enoki Shuzo Co.

*Highlights of the IWC 2010 award ceremony can be seen on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/winechallenge

Daishichi
SAKE IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

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DAISHICHI SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.

Daishichi makes rich, mellow sakes whose outstanding reputation comes from an insistence on a strictly orthodox brewing tradition: the *kimoto* method. All Daishichi products are superb examples of *kimoto* sake.

<http://english.daishichi.com>

FOOD

Rice

Japan's staple rice variety is characterized by its round, short shape and plump, moist texture with a sweet taste when cooked. Flavored rice, or *takikomi gohan*, cooked variously with stock, vegetables, seafood or meat, is a seasonal treat. For example, chestnuts, ginkgo nuts or *matsutake* mushrooms can be steamed with rice in autumn. *Onigiri* are balled up portions of rice filled with various items. It is a portable and easy-to-eat meal, often made for lunch at the office or for picnics and outdoor activities. They can be found at most convenience stores.



Rice

Miso soup

Miso soup consists of *dashi* soup stock, which can be made from dried bonito flakes, seaweed, kelp, or *niboshi*, a type of small dried fish, with miso. Different regions use different kinds of miso, making for a wide variety of flavors. Together with rice, miso soup will commonly accompany a Japanese set meal or in a course. The well-known marriage proposal "Would you make miso soup for me every morning?" shows how essential it is to daily Japanese life.



Miso soup

Fruits

A variety of fruits are cultivated and enjoyed in Japan. They are highly valued outside Japan, especially in Asia. The high-quality produce are renowned for their sweetness, texture and appearance. People enjoy fruit picking in summer and autumn at groves and farms that often offer all-you-can-eat deals from around ¥1,000. Near Tokyo, Yamanashi Prefecture is famous for fruit production. Fruits in season in autumn include persimmons, pears and apples.



Fruits

Green tea/Japanese sweets

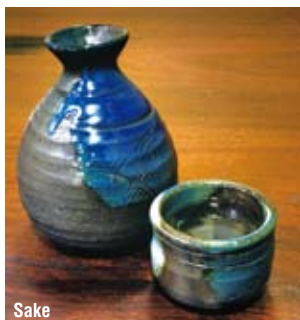
Green tea usually refers to *sencha*, a loose tea made by steaming, rolling and drying tea leaves. *Sencha* is an everyday drink and most beverage makers sell bottled green tea that, unlike usual bottled tea sold in Asia, does not contain sugar. Meanwhile, *matcha* is a powdered tea brewed in hot water and is usually enjoyed at tea ceremonies. Along with the Japanese food boom, green tea is gaining attention around the world for its health benefits. It is said to regulate blood cholesterol and prevent hypertension. Traditionally, green tea is taken with Japanese sweets, or *wagashi*. Most traditional *wagashi* are made from non-animal products, apart from eggs, such as beans and rice flour.



Sencha

Sake/shochu

Sake, with more than 2,000 years of history, is a unique Japanese alcoholic beverage, brewed primarily from rice. From Hokkaido to Okinawa, there are thousands of sake brewers. Sophisticated techniques are required to make sake and the quality of the rice and the water is important. The Nada area of Hyogo Prefecture, which has some of the hardest water in Japan, is known as a quality sake-producing area, as is Niigata Prefecture, which is known for its high-quality rice. When the polishing rate of the rice is high, the sake is called *ginjo* or *daiginjo*, considered premium sakes. When brewing alcohol is not added during the sake-making process, it is called *junmai*, meaning "purely rice." *Shochu* is a type of liquor made from a variety of ingredients, such as rice, barley, sweet potatoes or buckwheat. Most people drink *shochu* on the rocks with hot or cold water.

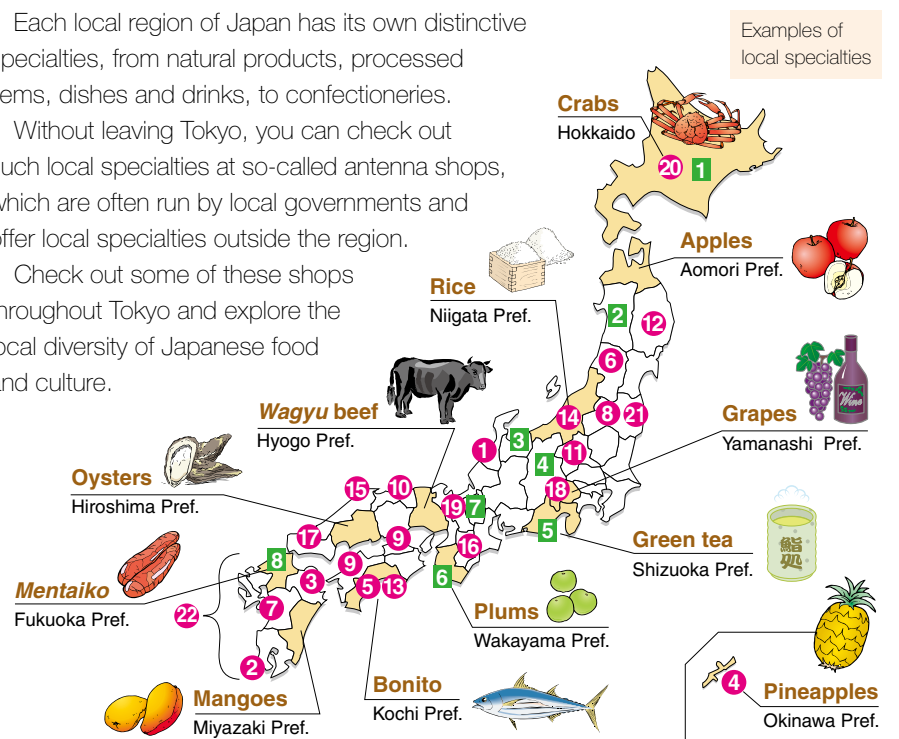


Sake

*Visit www.maff.go.jp/e/ if you would like to know more. The MAFF provides a range of information in English about Japanese cuisine, from ingredients and recipes to history and cultural background.

Take a culinary journey across Japan without leaving Tokyo

Each local region of Japan has its own distinctive specialties, from natural products, processed items, dishes and drinks, to confectioneries. Without leaving Tokyo, you can check out such local specialties at so-called antenna shops, which are often run by local governments and offer local specialties outside the region. Check out some of these shops throughout Tokyo and explore the local diversity of Japanese food and culture.



Examples of local specialties

Among some 50 antenna shops in Tokyo, many are concentrated in the Ginza and Yurakucho area. Moreover, at Ginza Meza Marche, a 14-story building that opened earlier this year, you can take a look at local products from all 47 prefectures. The store also has cafes and restaurants that offer items made from ingredients gathered from all over Japan. The region numbers in the map above correspond to the shops below.



Urakasumi Zen (Junmai Ginjo)

Urakasumi Zen is a flagship product of Urakasumi brand. It has an elegant fragrance, which is the result of the great care we take in the sake-making process. Because of its well-balanced flavor and smooth taste, Urakasumi Zen goes well with a wide range of dishes, especially seafood.

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 URL: <http://www.urakasumi.com/>



Urakasumi Sake Gallery

The Urakasumi Sake Gallery, in addition to the products of our company, sells sake cups and decanters made by a young artist who resides in Miyagi Prefecture. Customers who purchase Urakasumi's original refined sake glass will receive a free bottle of our Kiki sake.
Open: 10 a.m. ~ 5 p.m.
Closed: Sundays, year-end and New Year's holidays

SHOPPING

Depachika

Head underground for a food paradise

Visiting *depachika* (*depa*, short for department store, and *chika*, basement), feels like entering a food theme park, an exciting place to experience and understand Japan's food culture.

Located with convenient access from stations and underground arcades, *depachika* attract lots of Japanese people shopping for prepared foods and sweets to eat at home or to bring as a gift to someone's house.

Here you can find *sozai* (prepared food), *bento* (boxed food), sushi, *onigiri* (rice balls), *yakitori* (grilled skewered chicken pieces), tempura, packaged goods, baked goods, pastries, chocolates, *wagashi* (Japanese sweets), wine and sake, along with fresh produce and meat.

Prestigious Japanese *shinise* (long-established shops and restaurants) or top gourmet brands from around the world have their products beautifully displayed; some even have cooking demonstrations. Looking around at this enormous variety and tasting some samples is always fun.



Confectionery floor of Daimaru Tokyo (top); at Isetan in Shinjuku, Kitchen Stage (left) and premium gift melons

This is also where you can find the extremely expensive premium melon or *wagyu* beef packaged in wooden gift boxes. In the evening, the *depachika*'s lively, exciting atmosphere reaches its peak, when delis discount prepared food before the department store closes and shoppers stop by after work to purchase something for dinner.

At Tokyo Station Located just outside Tokyo Station, Daimaru Tokyo's confectionery floor (1F) attracts many tourists and businesspeople traveling from the station looking for packaged souvenirs. Some shops are so popular that customers get in long lines to purchase their favorite sweets or "only at Daimaru Tokyo" flavors. In the basement food floor, you'll see people with travel bags looking for prepared foods and *bento* (boxed food) to eat on their train ride. If you are traveling from Tokyo Station, this would be a nice place to pick up something tasty to accompany your trip.

Daimaru Tokyo department store: in Grand Tokyo North Tower, Yaesu Exit of the station; food floors open daily except for Jan. 1, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. (Sat., Sun., holidays, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.); 03-3212-8011

At Shinjuku Station Isetan's food floor (B1F) is quite large. With the stylish design and spacious aisles, unlike old-fashioned *depachika* image, it may make you feel like you are shopping for a fashion item. You will find top brands and premium hotel brands, a superb selection of wine and sake, and decorated pastries displayed like jewelry. At Food Collection corner, selected shops from all over Japan set up their limited-time stalls on a weekly basis. Kitchen Stage invites famous restaurants' chefs to cook and serve popular dishes. Café & Sucre is a gallery of sweets, some of which can only be found at Isetan.

Isetan department store: direct access from the Tokyo Metro promenade; open daily, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; 03-3352-1111

At Shibuya Station Tokyu Toyoko is the first department store that came up with the idea of gathering highly reputed shops in one marketplace, which is common at *depachika* now. Established under the concept in 1951, the department store's Noren-gai (1F) runs to Shibuya Station, offering boxed gifts of Japanese sweets, Western sweets and prepared foods from famous shops. Foodshow (B1F) sells pastries, wine, fresh produce, meat, fish, deli goods or baked goods. The Dashi Chazuke En shop may be interesting for those who want to try a typical, simple and quick meal that many Japanese eat at home. The eat-in shop specializes in *ochazuke*, a dish with *dashi* broth poured over rice with beef or fish.

Tokyu Toyoko department store: direct access from various lines in the station; open daily, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; 03-3477-3111

Togoshi Ginza Togoshi Ginza Shotengai is the longest shopping street in Tokyo, with over 400 shops and restaurants alongside a 1.6-km street. The street is always filled with a lively atmosphere, attracting over 10,000 people on a typical weekday shopping for daily goods. If you get a bit hungry taking a stroll down this long street, stop by Torian for some Japanese-style *karaage* (fried chicken) or a meat shop for *korokke* (Japanese version of the croquette). There is also Togoshi Ginza Onsen, a natural black water hot spring. Located nearby is Togoshi Koen Park, which was originally a second residence of feudal lords.

Togoshi Station (Toei Asakusa Line)/Togoshi Ginza Station (Tokyu Ikegami Line)

Sugamo Jizo Dori Known as the "Harajuku for grandmothers," Jizo Dori Shotengai attracts many elderly people. Many visit to worship the Togenuki Jizo and the Arai Kannon at Koganji Temple located on this street, a place purported to heal illnesses. Jizo Dori has many shops that sell *wagashi* (Japanese sweets), a favorite of older generations. A popular souvenir here is the *shio daifuku* (rice cake filled with salt-seasoned beans), not as sweet as a typical *daifuku*. Another well-known item in Jizo Dori that is quite eye-catching is the red panty. Bright red panties are believed to generate one's natural healing ability and help to warm a person's body. Now, there seems to be an expansion of the clothing line, so you will find not only red panties, but all kinds of red items: underwear, socks, towels and more for both men and women.

Sugamo Station (Toei Mita Line, JR Yamanote Line)

Azabu Juban Dating back to the Edo Period, Azabu Juban Shotengai is home to several *shinise* (long-established shops) that are still in business. Today, Azabu Juban's atmosphere is a mixture of old Japanese and stylish modern Western shops, restaurants and cafes. Established in 1865, Mamegen sells various kinds of flavored bean snacks packed in nice gift sizes. Try some of the popular *shio okaki* (salted rice crackers) freshly made inside the store. Another famous *shinise* is Naniwaya, a store in business since 1909, that serves *taiyaki* (literally, baked sea bream), which is a sweet bean-filled pancake shaped like a fish that is a casual snack enjoyed by many Japanese.

Azabu Juban Station (Tokyo Metro Nanboku Line, Toei Oedo Line)

Shop like the locals do at ...

Shotengai

If you want to experience nostalgic Japan with some local flair and see what and where normal Japanese people shop daily, *shotengai* (local shopping streets) are the place to go.

Though *shotengai* in some areas have recently been taken over by larger supermarkets for their one-stop shopping convenience and longer business hours, these streets are where Japanese people used to shop for their daily food and goods. Usually located near a train station, *shotengai* are composed of small specialty shops lining a main street.

Such shops are usually a vegetable vendor's, a butcher's, a fishmonger's, a tofu shop, a bakery, a liquor store, a *yakitori* (grilled skewered chicken pieces) shop, an *oden* (processed fish cakes in flavored broth) maker, *wagashi* (Japanese sweets) store, to dry cleaners and drug stores. Most are mom-and-pop stores, catering to the needs of local residents.



Togoshi Ginza Shotengai (top); Sugamo Jizo Dori Shotengai (right) and Arai Kannon at Koganji Temple MIHO ISHIHARA

Some *shotengai* are for pedestrians only, making shopping easier for the elderly and parents with children. Typically, items are more reasonably priced than at supermarkets, so some *shotengai* attract people from far away.

Perhaps English may not be spoken much, however, all prices are displayed, so getting what you want should not be a problem.

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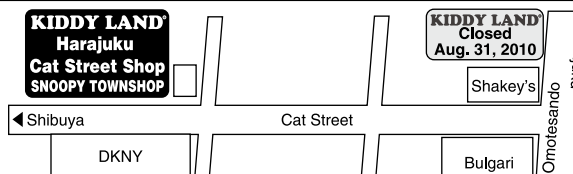
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- 4-min. walk from Meiji-Jingumae Exit 7 on the Fukutoshin Line