

# 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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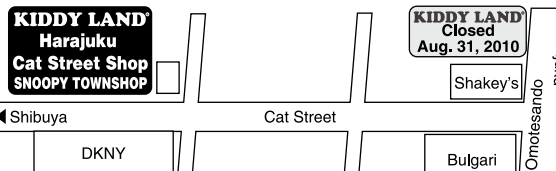


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- 3rd floor: "Lovely Characters"** (Hello Kitty, Miffy, etc.) and Snoopy Town Shop



**KIDDY LAND®**  
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Tel: 03-3409-3431  
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Sat., Sun., Holidays 10:30 a.m. ~ 9:00 p.m.  
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**Access:**

- 8-min. walk from JR Harajuku Sta. Omotesando Exit
- 4-min. walk from Meiji-Jingumae Exit 4 on the Chiyoda Line
- 4-min. walk from Meiji-Jingumae Exit 7 on the Fukutoshin Line