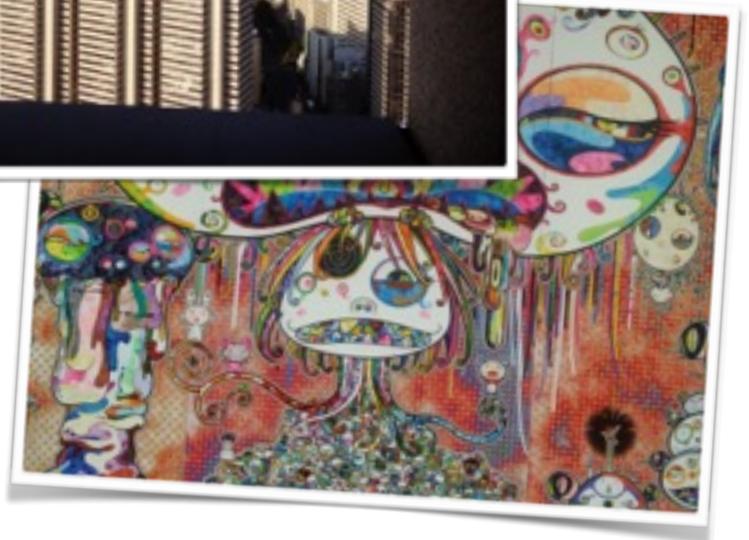
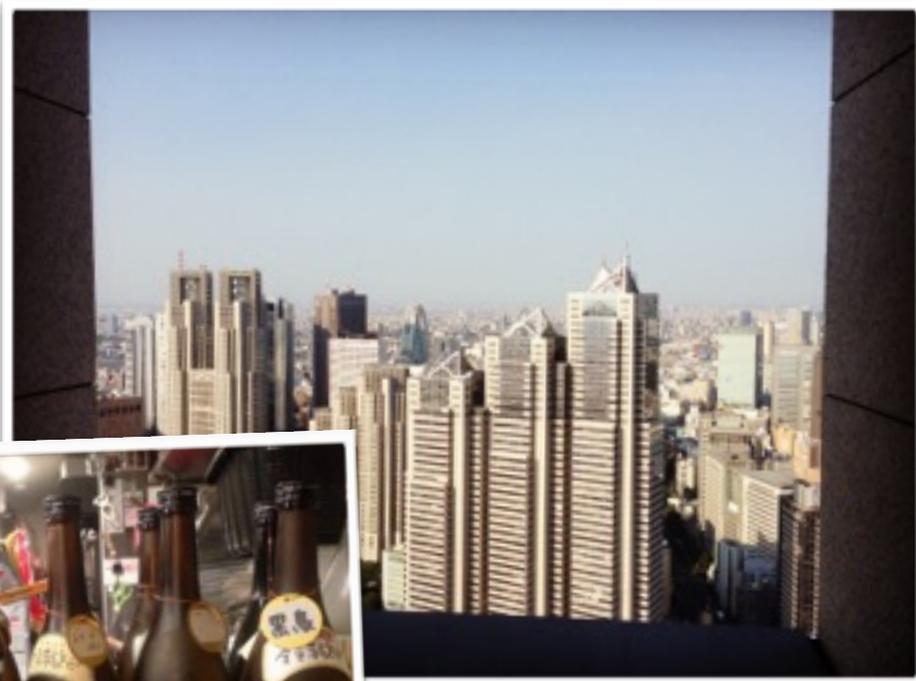


# Rosie's really good (and really selective) guide to Tokyo

\*Disclaimer: I live in Nakano (west Tokyo), am a loyalist to my neighbourhood (because it is the best), and dislike going to the east side because it is \*boring\*



# Stuff all tourists do, and some things they don't...

## Traditional Shrine-y Stuff:

Meiji-Jingu Shrine, Harajuku - that one that everyone goes to, but it has the giant wall of sake barrels and is great for a relaxing walk after dealing with the insanity of Takeshita-dori in Harajuku.

Sensoji-Temple & Shrine, Asakusa - that one with the giant lantern that you see a million pictures of, despite it being cliché, if you haven't been it is worth a visit. Asakusa is a traditional area and if you walk towards the Sumida river after you'll see the beer shaped Asahi building and the golden poo.

Hanazonoinari Shrine, Ueno - this shrine has all those lined up red torii gates plus it's near Ueno park which is great to walk around and near to a popular traditional shopping street (Ameya-Yokochō).

Yasukuni Shrine, Kudankita - the super controversial shrine housing all the war criminals. This shrine looks different to the others in that it's all made of metal, and it is a super weird juxtaposition watching all the happy school kids pass through on their way home. It's near the Emperor's palace (kind of) so if you go there you might want to check it out as well.

Extras: Go to an onsen (if you don't have any big tattoos)! There are heaps around but Japanese public baths are pretty cool and pretty famous. There is a really good one in Chofu: <http://www.yumorinosato.com/contents/fee/> (It's about Y1200 for "all you can bathe").

## Super Nerdy Stuff:

Akihabara (generally) - Taito Game Station (go inside, check out all the floors, destroy people at arcade games), hit up Gundam cafe for a cute coffee, check out a million electronics and used games (old consoles are super cheap!), make sure you pick up the weirdest gachapon you can find.

Joypolis - is an indoor theme park in Odaiba (a man made island which also houses the giant Gundam - a new 'unicorn' one in fact, and the 'real' statue of liberty) including an indoor roller coaster, initial d driving simulators with the real car chassis', and a team playing snowboarding ride: <http://tokyo-joypolis.com/language/english/>.

Nakano Broadway - Nakano Broadway was made in the 80s and has never been updated and includes (if you go through Sunshine Plaza to the building at the back) 4 levels worth of anime, manga, video game etc memorabilia. In the basement it also includes a shop where you can buy a 8 layered, 8 flavoured ice cream for around Y500 (you can see a nice man order it then look terrified here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0XAMpA1h-k>).

## Other Stuff:

Try and check out a baseball game - there's a lot of singing and synchronised moves by the audience, beer girls with giant flowers, as well as each team having its own brass band, flag bearers, and amusing mascots.

Check out Tokyo Cheapo for when and where the summer festivals are, matsuri are the most fun and make sure to try all the festival foods! <https://tokyocheapo.com/>

## General Locations You Will Want To Check Out:

Asakusa - Where all the traditional stuff is - shrines, temples, markets, rickshaws etc.

Shimokitazawa - A hub of second hand clothing and record stores, cool cafes, and good izakaya. It's where the youth hang out in Tokyo so head down there on an evening to check out the street fashion, browse the shops, and grab a good dinner. If you need a good (Australian standard) coffee as well (or want to try a matcha lamington), head over to Frankie:

<http://www.frankie.jp/>

Shinjuku - Home to the busiest station in the world, try not to get lost in Shinjuku (and it's neighbouring red light district Kabukicho). Make sure you check out the giant Godzilla on the Gracery hotel, and find Village Vanguard in Lumine Est (there is also one in Shimokitazawa if you want more of a selection).

Shibuya - Where that crossing is (from Tokyo drift - please don't stand in the middle and take a photo, it is obnoxious and gets in the way of everyone, it's better to take a photo through a window inside because it gives you a better view). Filled with a million shops (and the smell of urine), Shibuya is another shopping hub. Make sure to check out the Mega-Donki as well as a million back streets. You can easily walk to Harajuku from here if you want to hit it all up in one day.

Ikebukuro - Ikebukuro is another big hub and it's where Sunshine City (and thus the Pokemon Center) is. Like Shibuya and Shinjuku it's made up of a million giant buildings filled with shops (and shoppers).

Harajuku/Omotesando - Obviously you want to go down that insane shopping street where you can't move, Takeshita dori (and yes, the joke has been made before by many but it's pronounced tak-eh-shee-ta). There are a bunch of winding roads in the back streets and the main road leads down into the more expensive area of Omotesando. I would recommend going here on a Sunday, that way you can see the twist dancers with their quiffs in the nearby Yoyogi park.

## Stuff That Is A Waste Of Time (and I advise against doing it):

Robot Restaurant - It looks good on camera but is ultimately a big waste of money, the ticket is expensive, the show is short, you have to buy food separately, and it's becoming very dated.

Ginza - Ginza is the most expensive, soulless, boring place in the universe.

Roppongi - Roppongi is where foreigners go to catch STDs and lie in their own vomit in the street. It is a foul place and should especially be avoided at night.

Golden Gai - Golden Gai is overrated, they charge you through the nose and really you get the same and a more authentic experience in the tiny bars in Nishi-Ogikubo (the owners there are far more friendly as well).

# Things to eat and drink

(with a vegetarian bias, kind of)

How to ask for an English menu: Eh-go men-yū wa arimasu ka?

Specific places for specific things:

Monster Cafe, Harajuku: amazing theme, cute multicoloured food, very very japanese (hot tip - go around lunch time and they usually put a show on):

<http://kawaiimonster.jp/>

Alcatraz ER, Shibuya or The Lock Up, Shibuya: both these places are super odd and include strange free shows with your themed drinks and food. Alcatraz ER is more 'anatomically' themed, while The Lock Up is supposed to resemble a prison:

<http://alcatraz-er.net/>

<http://www.lock-up.jp/>

Namja Town, Sunshine City, Ikebukuro: on your way to see the giant pokemon centre (or pretend to be a super sayan at J-world), stop by Namja town (just buy entry not for rides) and try out their disgusting and amazing selection of ice creams. Options include (but are not limited to): beef tongue, shark fin, eggplant, cheese, indian curry (actually very good), charcoal etc.

Kin-no-Kura, Everywhere: Engage in some wild nomi-hodai (all you can drink) by looking up your nearest kin-no-kura, walking in and asking for 2 hours (ni jikan) which is usually between ¥1500-2000 per head. They will ask you if you want it with beer (costs a bit extra) and tell you that you need to order 2 foods each, which will be tacked on the the price. Then sit down, grab the ipad and begin your adventure. You're only allowed one drink in front of you at a time, so make sure to order another before you finish so you NEVER run out.

Piss Alley, Shinjuku: Squeeze down tiny piss alley to eat sticks (outlined below) with a bunch of businessmen. See them cooked in front of you! Feel very Japanese. Plus when you're tired it's right next to the train station (PSA: Don't actually piss in the street).

Areas with good Izakaya (Japanese pub): Koenji, Nishi-ogikubo, Nakano, Shimokitazawa

Items you should try (and where to try them):

Ramen (duh) - and can be found everywhere.

Yaki-tori etc. (also known as 'sticks') - also found everywhere, identify them using this kanji:  
串

Dango (Asakusa) - dango are those pink, white, and green mochi on a stick. You can find good ones wandering around Asakusa, so make sure to check them out. Mochi also is pretty good, it looks like a ball of playdough but is v tasty (and made of rice, not playdough).

Kare age (Shimokitazawa/Nishi-Ogikubo) - there are many fried chicken restaurants here, many apparently good, unfortunately I can't tell you any more than that.

Shabu-shabu - traditional meat dish with thinly sliced beef in a soup. People seem to rave about this and always mention Asakusa Imahan (which seems to have an English menu).

Onigiri - it is time to hit up the combini! Choose your onigiri! Open from the middle then take out the plastic on the sides! Scream in delight! These are Japan's greatest gift.

One million strange lollies - you will see these in combini and everywhere else. Eat them all. They are delicious and sometimes contain added vitamins as well as collagen for skin and hair. A delight!

Tonics - you will also find these in combini, choose wisely as sometimes they contain exciting things. Like placenta. The one with ginger on it is said to be good for hangovers though (it's a gold bottle, and you'll see many young people drinking it before hitting up the strong zeros - try these too, they're deadly and you can drink them literally anywhere).

## Final Tips!

Buy a Suica (train card) at the airport if you're not doing a JR pass (and even with that you have to buy tickets if you want to use any metro lines, so beware). Pick up an English language train guide at the airport too, you may have Google maps, but trust me, you'll need it eventually. It gets confusing.

Don't be intimidated by anything - Japanese people are (mostly) friendly and really interested in what you're about (especially a lot of the older men/oji-san), so get amongst it, have a few drinks with them, and yell kampaï loudly. If somewhere looks intriguing, go in! You can always play the gaijin card and say you didn't understand if you're not meant to be in there.

Don't run across the road. Ariel did this and got hit by a taxi. It cost him one night in hospital and \$900. Ambulances are free however, so if you do need one, call one. But seriously, wait for the lights no matter how clear it looks.