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SHOWCASE IWATE'S
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EXPLORE WITH US

YANAKA

GINZA



Tsutanuma Pond, popular fall spot near Misawa AB, restricting entry again

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPE JAPAN

Every autumn in Aomori Prefecture, crowds take to the parks, forested mountains and tree-lined streets to enjoy the stunning foliage. One very popular spot is Tsutanuma Pond in Towada City and this year city officials are again putting measures in place to ensure protection for the natural environment and safety of the public.

The stunning site known for its gorgeous foliage and crystal clear waters is about an hour away from Misawa Air Base. So popular, in fact, that starting in 2020



Photos courtesy of Amazing Aomori

officials have put in measure to deal with issues including traffic congestion, illegal parking and damage to the local nature due to overcrowding. This year, fall-season entry to the pond on the southern foot of Mount Hakkoda is limited and requires advanced reservations.

So, when visiting the pond looking for the breath-taking autumn view this fall, keep the following points in mind.

The beautiful fall foliage season doesn't last long, so make plans now to enjoy one of Aomori's most

memorable autumn landscapes with a little more planning before it's too late.

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Things to know

Early morning visitors (5 – 7:30 a.m.)

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Daytime visitors (7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.)

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*The area opens from 4:50 a.m. to 4 p.m., and any entry between 8 p.m. and 4:50 a.m. are prohibited.



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Sannoiwa Rocks showcase beauty, destructive power of northeastern coast

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON KIDD,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: September 24, 2026

Along the rugged Pacific coast of Japan's Iwate prefecture, three enormous rock formations rise from the sea at Sannoiwa, one of the most distinctive sights along the Sanriku coast.

The largest — Otoko-iwa, or Male Rock — towers nearly 165 feet above the water, accompanied by Onna-iwa, or Female Rock, and Taiko-iwa, or Drum Rock.

Together, the Sannoiwa Rocks form a striking silhouette off-shore, particularly at sunrise,

when the formations stand against the morning light.

Visitors can follow a walking path with several vantage points overlooking the formations and surrounding coastline. The scenery changes dramatically with the seasons, from thick summer greenery to snow-covered winter landscapes.

The area also bears reminders of the Pacific's destructive power.

During the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami, a boulder estimated to weigh more than 200 tons was swept nearly 100 feet inland at Sannoiwa.

Now known as the Taro

Tsunami Boulder, it remains where the wave deposited it as an example of the tsunami's force. A lone pine tree just steps away also survived the disaster and has become a local symbol of resilience.

Reaching Sannoiwa is relatively straightforward. From Shin-Taro Station on the Sanriku Railway Rias Line, the site is about a 25-minute walk. Drivers can reach it in about seven minutes from the Taro-Minami interchange on the Sanriku Coast Expressway. Parking and restrooms are available.

Visitors can also explore other reminders of the region's history nearby, including the preserved

Taro Kanko Hotel, heavily damaged by the 2011 tsunami and maintained as a disaster memorial.

kidd.aaron@stripes.com
@kiddaaron

THINGS TO KNOW

ADDRESS: 1-1-80 Miyamachi, Miyako, Iwate 027-0052.

DIRECTIONS: Drivers can reach the site in about seven minutes from the Taro-Minami interchange on the Sanriku Coast Expressway.

DRESS: Casual

OTHER INFO:

Food options available in the nearby town of Taro.



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Kyoto hotel blends modern comfort, traditional onsen culture

BY JONATHAN BAEZ,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: February 26, 2026

The Onyado Nono Kyotoshichijo, an onsen hotel in Kyoto, onsen creates a welcoming atmosphere.
Photos courtesy of Dormy Hotels

Visitors to Kyoto can experience traditional Japanese culture with a stay at a modern hotel designed in the style of a ryokan — a traditional Japanese inn — in the former imperial capital.

Onyado Nono Kyotoshichijo emphasizes a calm, minimalist atmosphere, most notably in its two-story onsen, or hot spring bathing area.

The lower level features a white silky bath, individual soaking tubs, a cold plunge, two large communal baths and a sauna. The upper level serves as a tranquility room, with dim lighting and ambient nature sounds. In total, the facility includes six baths — five hot and one cold — of varying temperatures.

The hotel's onsen is classified as a true hot spring rather than a sento, or public bathhouse, because its water originates from a natural hot spring. Sento facilities typically use heated tap water.

Guests are encouraged to familiarize themselves with onsen etiquette before bathing. While many

onsens in Japan prohibit tattoos, Onyado Nono Kyotoshichijo provides adhesive covers for small- to mid-size body art. Guests with larger tattoos may use their own waterproof coverings.

Onsen etiquette centers on cleanliness and respect for shared space. Bathers are required to wash thoroughly at shower stations before entering the communal baths.

This bathing experience is quiet and contemplative, marked by minimal conversation and the sound of flowing water and ambient nature audio.

A one-night stay costs about 13,500 yen — less than \$90 — and includes access to the onsen, full-body massage chairs, unlimited matcha and other hot beverages, as well as ice cream and Yakult, a fermented probiotic milk, available after bathing.

A breakfast buffet is offered for an additional 3,000 yen. Served from 6:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., it includes traditional Japanese breakfast items such as sashimi, tempura and natto, along with Western options.

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EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
STARS AND STRIPES
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Breakfast is served buffet style at Onyado Nono Kyotoshichijo.



Onyado Nono Kyotoshichijo features a two-story onsen with six pools of varying temperatures.

THINGS TO KNOW

DIRECTIONS: A six-minute walk from Kyoto Station. Google plus code: XQQ6+JW Kyoto
HOURS: 3 p.m. check-in 11 a.m. checkout. The hotel onsen is open daily, 3 p.m. to 10 a.m.
COST: 13,500 yen per night; breakfast buffet is an additional 3,000 yen.



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Garlic Jo's in Yokohama
goes all-in on its namesake ingredient

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
MARC CASTANEDA,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: September 24, 2026

Garlic Jo's inside Queen's Square Yokohama, steps from Minatomirai Station, makes no attempt to hide its obsession.

Neon signs glow with the word “garlic,” plastic food displays feature piles of golden cloves, and the menu delivers a straightforward message: If you don’t like garlic, you’ve come to the wrong place.

For those who do, it's worth coming back. My wife and I have, several times.

We usually start with what has become our ritual opener: the original garlic pizza. Square-cut rather than served in traditional slices, it arrives hot from the oven with pieces of garlic baked directly into the cheese. It is simple, indulgent and unapologetically garlicky — an appropriate introduction to what follows.

But on a recent visit, I went straight for the Vampire Killer, an appetizer whose name tells you

exactly what to expect. Six whole garlic cloves are topped with cheese and grilled until sizzling, then served with baguette slices for scooping and spreading. It's rich, aromatic and surprisingly addictive.

My wife opted for tako carpaccio, a lighter dish of thinly sliced octopus with olive oil, seasoning and, naturally, garlic. Its freshness

provides a welcome contrast to some of the heavier dishes.

For the main event, we stuck with our usual order: **NEWS FROM:** Garlic Jo's garlic steak.

STRIPES. A generous slab of beef arrives on a bed of onions, minced garlic and roasted garlic, with more roasted cloves piled on top. The meat can be a little chewy, but it delivers on flavor.

Nearly every savory item on Garlic Jo's menu incorporates its namesake ingredient, yet the garlic rarely becomes overwhelming. Instead, it serves as a foundation, complementing the spicy, tangy and savory flavors throughout each dish.

By the time our plates were cleared, dessert was out of the question. Those with room can choose from tiramisu, cheesecake

and espresso affogato, among other options.

Afterward, Queen's Square provides an easy place to walk off the meal, with shops and cafes throughout the sprawling complex.

Minatomirai Station is directly below, making Garlic Jo's an easy stop during a day or evening in Yokohama's waterfront district.

castaneda.marc@stripes.com
@markuscas2025

THINGS TO KNOW

ADDRESS: 2-3-4, Minatomirai,
Nishi-ku, Yokohama-shi,
Kanagawa, 220-0012

DIRECTIONS: Just an escalator ride up from Minatomirai Station.
HOURS: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

PRICES: Expect to pay 1,000 yen per person for lunch and 2,000 yen for dinner.

DRESS: Casual



WEBSITE

Garlic Jo's inside Queen's Square Yokohama, steps from Minatomirai Station, makes no attempt to hide its obsession.



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Catch em' all

Pokémon Go Wild coming to Tohoku Nov. 6–8

BY KIM BERGSTRÖM,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Pokémon GO is turning Sendai and Miyagi Prefecture into a giant playground this autumn, with Pokémon GO Wild Area: Sendai/Tohoku combining gameplay with sightseeing across the region.

The three-day event will center on Sendai, with the gameplay area extending throughout Miyagi. The main venue, including Tsutsujigaoka Park, will feature event booths and photo spots, while an in-game stamp rally will lead Trainers to tourist attractions around the city. With Sendai's trees taking on their autumn colors, November also offers a particularly scenic time to explore on foot.

There will be plenty happening in the game, too. Steel-type and Dragon-type themed periods will alternate during the day, changing the Pokémon appearing in the wild. Dynamax Dialga and Dynamax Palkia will make their

Pokémon GO debut in Max Battles, while Machop wearing a modern jacket will appear in raids. Special GO Safari Balls can be used to catch powerful Pokémon, and limited-time Special Research will add another layer to the adventure.

The organizers are also encouraging visitors to venture beyond Sendai. Miyagi offers plenty of opportunities to build a trip around the festivities, from unique foodie options like gyutan grilled beef tongue and zunda mochi in Sendai

to Sanriku seafood, Sendai beef, hot springs, and mountain scenery elsewhere in the prefecture.

Miyagi has a longstanding connection with Pokémon, including reconstruction and community initiatives following the Great East Japan Earthquake. Lapras, the prefecture's Pokémon Support Character, is also part of local tourism campaigns. The event comes during a milestone year for the franchise, marking 30 years of Pokémon and 10 years of Pokémon GO.



Images courtesy of Scopely Explore Co., Ltd.
/ PR Times

THINGS TO KNOW

ADDRESS: 1 Chome-3-301-3 Gai, Gorin, Miyagino Ward, Sendai, Miyagi, 983-0842

DATE: Open Nov. 6–Nov. 8.

HOURS: Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



WEBSITE



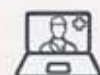
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4 DESTINATIONS FOR A SLICE OF MINDFULNESS IN JAPAN

BY KIM BERGSTRÖM,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Japan has long been a magnet for travelers seeking moments of reflection, and a recent study highlighted by Travel + Leisure crowned Kyoto as Asia’s top mindfulness destination. In saying that, for all its timeless charm, Kyoto’s surge in popularity means crowded streets and booked-out venues can make finding genuine tranquility a challenge. Fortunately, there are countless other places where you can slow down without the crush of overtourism.

Here are four destinations beyond Kyoto that promise a truly mindful getaway.

Kurashiki Okayama

Beautifully preserved Kurashiki offers a serene backdrop for mindful travel. Wandering through the Bikan Historical Quarter, you’ll find yourself slowing down naturally, with willow tree-lined waterways and centuries-old merchant houses providing a step back in time to Japan’s Edo period. The town invites a



Photo by 663highland / CC BY 2.5



KURASHIKI

sense of quiet reflection, whether you’re enjoying a peaceful moment in a hidden teahouse, admiring art at a museum, or watching boats glide along the canal.

Dewa Sanzan Yamagata

For centuries, Yamagata’s Dewa Sanzan, or “Three Sacred Mountains,” have drawn pilgrims seeking spiritual renewal. Each peak symbolizes a stage of life (birth, death, and rebirth), with many agreeing that hiking the trails is more than just physical exercise but a transformative experience. At Mount Haguro, a secluded

five-story pagoda and the enduring rituals of the Yamabushi monks add to the deep sense of calm here.



DEWA SANZAN



MOUNT HAGURO



Photo by Crown of Lenten rose / CC BY 3.0

Koyasan Wakayama

Koyasan is the heart of Shingon Buddhism in Japan, and as a result feels like a natural sanctuary for slowing down. Over 100 temples dot this sacred mountain, many offering shukubo (temple lodging) where visitors can stay overnight, savor vegetarian shojin ryori meals, and join monks for early morning chanting and meditation. A stroll through Okunoin (Japan’s largest cemetery) is especially moving, with towering cedar trees, lanterns, and moss-covered gravestones creating an atmosphere that feels like something from another world.



File Photo



KOYASAN



TEMPLE LODGING



OKUNOIN

Yakushima Kagoshima

This UNESCO World Heritage site is home to ancient cedar trees (yakusugi), with some of them more than 1,000 years old. Hiking trails lead you deep into mossy forests that inspired Studio Ghibli’s Princess Mononoke, with rushing rivers, hidden shrines, and nature sounds serving as the perfect soundtrack for mindfulness. The practice of shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) feels almost inevitable here, which has proven benefits for body, mind, and soul.



YAKUSHIMA



Photo by Takeshi Kuboki / CC BY 2.0



Ropeway provides amazing views in Nikko

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EKATERINA BESPATOVA,
JAPAN TRAVEL



The colors are beautiful in late October.



The ride is really short—about 3 minutes.



The Akechidaira Ropeway: getting ready to board.



The Akechidaira Ropeway, located just off the famous Irohazaka Winding Road in Nikkō, offers unsurpassable views over Lake Chūzenji and Kegon Falls from the top of a nearby mountain. The ride itself is short and not very exciting, but the views are of a kind you won't get anywhere else.

Only here can you truly appreciate the amazing geology of this area, part of Nikkō National Park. The lake is surrounded by mountains on all sides but one, where its waters fall down in a straight line as if trying to escape the confines of its stone basin. Mount Nantai towers to the right, and from late October through November the mountain slopes are ablaze with colors. Winter will present you with the unforgettable sight of Kegon Falls turned into one giant icicle.

Of course, to be able to see all this you need to visit on a clear day. It may get quite chilly at the observation point at any time of year, so bring an extra layer. Also, be prepared to wait in line—Akechidaira is a popular tourist spot and gets crowded on weekends, especially during the fall season.



GETTING THERE

From Nikko Station get on a bus going to Lake Chuzenji or Yumoto Onsen and get off at Akechidaira. If traveling by car, just follow the Irohazaka winding road to Lake Chuzenji—you will not miss the ropeway's large parking lot. No matter what transport option you use, you will only be able to use the ropeway on your way up, not down, so plan accordingly.

ADDRESS: Hosoo Fukazawa, Nikko 321-1445, Tochigi Prefecture



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At Stars and Stripes, we believe the purpose of our community papers, magazines, special supplements, websites and social media platforms is to help you, the military community, make the most of your time while being stationed in the Pacific. We take our job seriously and know that our first-hand experiences are how we can bring you the best tips, directions and recommendations for exploring off base.

This summer, our team including Korea writer Hyemin Lee and Okinawa writer Shoji Kudaka, gathered at our Tokyo headquarters to spend time brainstorming and discussing ways to make sure you're getting the information you need. For one week, our page designers, web editors and writers talked storytelling and presentation with you in mind.

This year, Hyemin, Shoji, their fellow writers Takahiro Takiguchi and Luis Samayoa from mainland Japan, and their editor, Denisse Rauda, brainstormed their perfect half day trips in Tokyo. The four writers partnered up and they spent an entire day exploring Tokyo. Last week, we published a 4-page spread about Shoji and Luis' trip to Shinjuku. This time, they're taking you to their other half day trip at Yanaka Ginza.

Tokyo has an incredible public transit system, so getting around to multiple locations is a breeze. We hope after reading this, you'll get some travel inspo and plan your own fun trip! And don't miss the following editions where Hyemin and Takahiro take us to two other great spots!

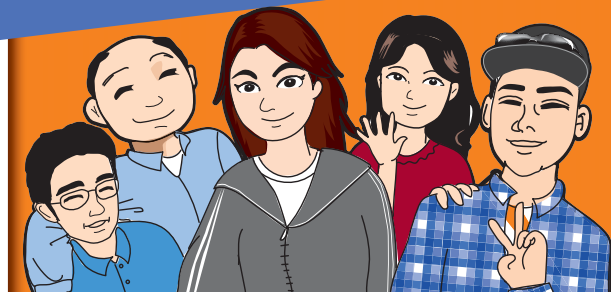
— Chris Carlson,
Publishing and Media Design Manager



Photos courtesy of Stars and Stripes



Check out part 1:
Shinjuku



YANAKA GINZA

Overdue trip to quaint Tokyo district

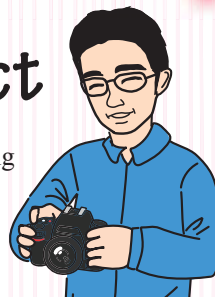
Yanaka Ginza sat on my bucket list for a long time. This old town in Tokyo's Taito ward is known for its old buildings and a shopping street lined with unique shops. Although I lived in Tokyo from 2006 to 2009, I never went there, even though I was tempted many times when it was spotlighted by popular TV show "Shutsubotsu! Adomachikku Tengoku." To be honest, I always slept in on the weekends and always felt Yanaka Ginza would be best explored early in the day.

When I learned that I would have time to go out during my temporary duty in Tokyo, I decided it was time to finally check it out.

I knew I would have to wake up early and go there this time. Although some of my travel buddies

were not so crazy about departing at 6:30 a.m., I didn't want this opportunity to be ruined by the notorious crowded commute in Tokyo.

In addition to an early breakfast at a kissaten housed inside an old wooden traditional house, we walked the neighborhood's narrow streets in search of the local history and alley cats. Though we only found cat statues and cat drawings at Yanaka Ginza, we did find some interesting hidden spots in this quiet, residential area.



— Shoji Kudaka



Photo by Shoji Kudaka

Breakfast at cozy kissaten Kayaba Coffee

We set out to Yanaka Ginza on an early morning train. We could have gotten off at Nippori Station or Sendagi Station, if its famous shopping street was our primary destination. But I chose Nezu Station because it was convenient to go to my first stop of the day, Kayaba Coffee, a café housed in a quaint building.

According to the Taito Cultural & Historical Society, this café opened in 1938. The building itself, however, was believed to have been built in 1916 and was used as either a milk hall, a type of eatery inspired by dairy lunch in the U.S., or a shaved ice store before it became Kayaba Coffee.

My idea was that having breakfast at this café while enjoying the retro atmosphere of the building's interior would put us in the right mood to explore this old town.

Arriving at the café after a 10-minute walk from Nezu Station, we noticed the quaint-looking building really stood out, even in the neighborhood that has many old structures.

As we waited for the café to open at 8 a.m., many other folks came to join us in front of the entry, attesting to its popularity. I was glad that I had booked a table in advance on the web.

When the door opened, we were guided to a table at the furthest corner from the entrance. The building was designed in the style of "Machiya-gata,"

where a narrow, long floor spread from the entrance with tables lined up. Gently lit by sunlight coming through the opaque glass, the interior had a cozy atmosphere.

Among the menu items that included Yasai Sando (Vegetable Sandwich, 1,400 yen) and Tamago Sando (Egg Sandwich, 1,400 yen), I chose Kayaba Classic Tamago Sando, which was meant to be true to the café's old recipes.

The combo of fluffy omelet, whole-grain bread and mustard mayonnaise tasted mild yet satisfying. As someone who likes spicy food, I could have used more mustard to spice it up, but the flavor made sense as it was in tune with the moderate atmosphere of the café. To wash down my sandwich, I had "Russian" (730 yen), a mixture of coffee and chocolate. Its delicate mixture of sweetness, bitterness and milkiness got me hooked. It didn't take me long to finish the hot drink.

By the time we finished our food, about 45 minutes had passed, and all the seats on the floor were full. Although we could have spent another half an hour just chatting in the cozy café, we decided to let those waiting outside take our comfortable seats.

— Shoji Kudaka

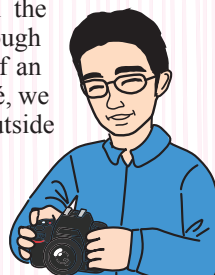




Photo by Shoji Kudaka



Photo by Denisse Rauda

Early wake-up call for tasty breakfast

Shoji was very interested in an early visit to this coffee joint and I came along for the ride.

For food, I ordered blindly from the Japanese menu by saying “this one and that one” in an attempt to simply try something different. I was not disappointed with my corned beef sandwich, salad and espresso on the side.

It was a heavy yet tasty breakfast sandwich that paired great with my coffee. At first, I felt a lack of confidence with my espresso served in tiny cup, but it was still delicious. And I’m sure it was much better than Denisse’s boring regular cup of joe.

If you want to order a different and bigger coffee size, use the English menu. If your day starts at 5 a.m. because your travel partner wants to be first in line, the espresso will be your best friend!

Overall, I would come back to this little cafe again. I liked the lack of tourists when we first got there, but it did fill up quickly, so maybe you’ll need an early morning wake-up, too!

– Luis Samayoa

■ Things to know

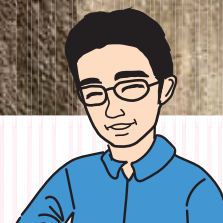
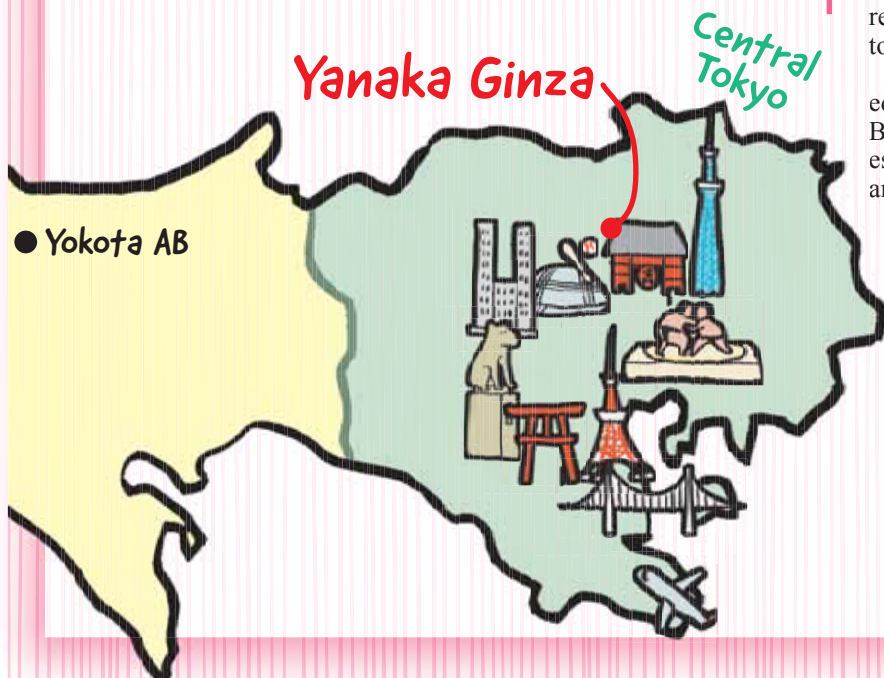
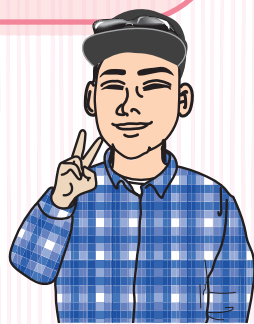
GPS COORDINATES:

35.721174, 139.770755

HOURS: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. (last order at 5 p.m.) *Closed on Mondays. (The café will open if a Monday falls on a holiday and close on Tuesday)



INSTAGRAM



Travel back in time at Kannonji

After breakfast at Kayaba Coffee, we headed to Kannonji, an old temple about a 10-minute walk from the café.

One thing that stands out as you walk in Yanaka Ginza is how many temples there are.

According to an association of volunteer tour guides in Taito-ward, it was during the Edo Period (1603 – 1867) that many temples were moved to the neighborhood because of the Tokugawa Shogunate’s policy. Thanks to a growing number of visitors to those temples, the Yanaka district developed as a temple town, the association notes.

Although I had a rough idea of where Kannonji was located, it did take a while to find it among the other temples as well as stores in quaint-looking buildings.

After a moment, I looked down a back alley and found Tsuijibei, an old wall that Kannonji is known for.

Measuring 37.6 meters in length and two meters in height, this wall is composed of clay and tiles and topped with a tiled roof just like a regular building. According to the Taito Ward Office, it was built in the late Edo Period. Although part of it was knocked down in the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, it was restored to preserve the cultural heritage from the days of samurai.

According to the Ryoko Shimbun, a Japanese newspaper dedicated to tourism, Tsuijibei is often used in location shooting for TV dramas and movies in scenes like a ninja jumping over the wall.

As I walked along this unique, traditional barrier, I imagined myself posing like a samurai, watching out for an intruder.

Though only the southern section of the wall remains today, the temple website said it used to cover the eastern side of the territory as well.

When we headed to the east side, as expected, we couldn’t find any remains of the fence. But we found an entry to the temple’s premises. As I approached its main building, I found another feature of the temple that I was looking

for, a monument in the shape of a square tower topped with a roof with eaves, just like the main building of the temple.

This monument is dedicated to Akoroshi, a.k.a. Akogishi, a group of 47 ronins (samurai who lost their lord) during the 18th century. These men assassinated Kira Kozuke no Suke, a high-ranking official of the Tokugawa Shogunate believed to have humiliated their lord, Asano Takumi no kami, in public. The lord Asano attempted to kill Kira himself at Edo Castle but failed to carry through and was sentenced to death by seppuku. On the other hand, Kira was not punished by the shogunate, which was deemed unfair to Asano’s men.

To settle the score, the ronins killed their lord’s foe with their own hands, although it cost their own lives as they were sentenced to death by the shogunate later.

Kannonji happened to be the location where those ronins gathered to plot their revenge.

This incident struck a chord with the public as a tale of loyalty and sacrifice, leading to several novels, theatrical plays, movies and TV shows, including not only old Japanese shows but also 47 Ronin, an American film adaption from 2013, featuring Keanu Reeves.

Growing up in the 80s, movies based on the episode were on TV at the end of the year, a nod to the fact that the incident took place in the early morning of Dec. 15, 1702.

I still remember a sinister scene where those ronins march on a snowy road to the house of their lord’s enemy.

Today, with the popularity of samurai dramas declining, the story of the ronins no longer appears on TV or screen as often as they once did. So, it was nice looking at the memorial tower and the old fence as it took me back to the old days.

– Shoji Kudaka



VIEW VIDEO



Photos by Shoji Kudaka

■ Things to know

GPS COORDINATES:

35.725623, 139.768178

*Tsuijibei can be found at (35.725306, 139.768208)

SEE MORE YANAKA ON PAGE 10

Photos by Shoji Kudaka



A visit to Nezu Shrine



If you search Yanaka Ginza on the web, you will likely also encounter the word “Yanesen.” It is an amalgam of the first letters of Yanaka, Nezu and Sendagi, three neighboring Tokyo districts. The three are grouped together because they bring a “shitamachi,” or downtown vibe.

Since I was already in Yanaka Ginza, a visit to the other two sister districts was easy to do. Nezu Shrine was a short 15-minute walk from the shopping street’s west end.

According to its website, the shrine boasts over 1,900 years of history and is believed to have been established by Yamato Takereu, a legendary figure who helped the Yamato Court expand its territory in archaic Japan between the mid-4th and mid-7th centuries.

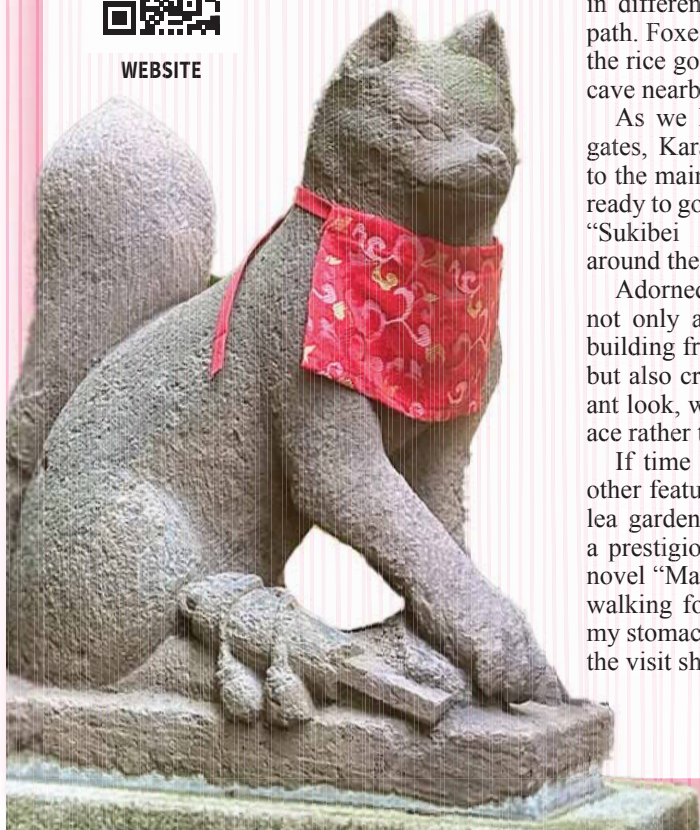
Before the Meiji Era (1868 – 1912), this shrine was called Nezu Gongensha, indicating that it was a location for Buddhism as well as Shintoism.



WEBSITE

■ Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 35.720145,
139.760770



Before 1706, Nezu Shrine was actually in Sendagi District, but was moved under the reign of Shogun Tsunayoshi Tokugawa. This new location was the birthplace of his nephew, Ienobu Tokugawa, whom Tsunayoshi named his heir.

Many of the shrine’s gates, fences and main buildings remain as they were built more than 300 years ago and are thus designated important cultural properties.

Coming from the west end of Yanaka Ginza Shopping Street, we approached the shrine via its North Gate at the opposite end of the main gate. Taking a street that circled around the main buildings, we headed toward the main gate.

Nezu Shrine is known for many photogenic spots, such as Senbon Torii, which we visited first. These torii gates are lined up on a slope, just like the ones you can see at Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto.

According to a report by Asahi Shimbun, there are roughly 200 gates at Nezu Shrine, much fewer than the around 900 gates that the shrine in Kyoto has. At the Nezu Shrine gates, we enjoyed looking at the fox statues in different sections of the torii gate-lined path. Foxes are thought to be messengers of the rice god Inari, which was enshrined in a cave nearby.

As we left behind the last of the small gates, Karamon (gate), a big gate that led to the main building, came into sight. I was ready to go through it, but a fence line called “Sukibei (transparent fence)” that runs around the gate caught my attention.

Adorned with diagonal grids, this fence not only allowed visitors to see the main building from outside, as its name suggests, but also created an intriguing and flamboyant look, which felt like belonging to a palace rather than a shrine.

If time allowed, I could have looked at other features of the shrine, such as an azalea garden and a house where Ogai Mori, a prestigious Japanese writer, authored his novel “Maihime (The Dancing Girl).” After walking for over three hours, I could hear my stomach growling. So, we decided to cut the visit short and go grab lunch.

– Shoji Kudaka

Turtle power!

I was expecting to see some pretty standard shrine features but didn’t expect to see dozens of turtles sunbathing at the shrine pond.

While they may not be named after masters of art, they formed part of the shrine’s tranquil scenery. These noble residents seemed to be enjoying themselves in harmony with the koi they share the pond with. The shrine has a history of over 100 years, so I’d imagine they’ve seen some stuff and been here a while.

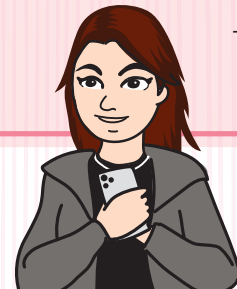
According to local media, turtles are an unofficial symbol of the neighborhood around the shrine, and many locals own their own turtles, and you’ll find turtle motifs on street signs and flyers in the area.

As someone who grew up with many pet turtles in my Texas backyard, I loved seeing relatives of my old friends enjoying the sun tucked away in the middle of Tokyo.

Photo by Denisse Rauda



– Denisse Rauda



Impossible to miss incredible torii gates

Japan has thousands of shrines, but Nezu Shrine stands out for 250 reasons. That’s the number of red torii gates lined up in the grounds that visitors can walk through. A great photo to op!

For its size, Nezu Shrine’s grounds were very scenic and featured a beautiful koi pond that is also home to countless turtles. Yes, another fabulous photo to op!



VIEW VIDEO

Less crowded compared to other nearby tourist areas, the shrine was more peaceful to just roam around and admire the surroundings, especially the torii gates.

I enjoyed the morning stroll under the iconic red gates. I managed to bump my head a few times, which gave me a small confidence boost as a short person.

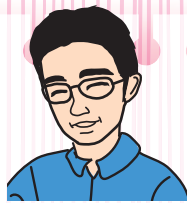
So, if you are looking for a peaceful, serene area that gives off a little bit of a Kyoto vibe in the heart of Tokyo, visit Nezu Shrine. But just remember to watch your head!

– Luis Samayoa



Photo by Denisse Rauda





Disappointment at retro shopping arcade

Yanaka Ginza is often talked about in the context of “Showa Retro,” a concept of longing for the old days of the Showa Era (1926 – 1989). The old buildings lined up along the streets in the neighborhood have been drawing such nostalgic minds who are looking to explore a different side of Tokyo away from busy Shibuya or Shinjuku. Among all the spots in the neighborhood, the shopping street would be the go-to location for the old-fashioned downtown vibe.

Running 170 meters east to west, this old shopping street is home to about 60 shops, many of which are housed in small

wooden buildings.

According to a report by Toyo Keizai, this street is thought to have started as a black market around 1945. Shortly after the war, the residents who came back to the neighborhood set up stalls to sell commodities. Since many parts of the neighborhood were spared, fortunately, when Tokyo was air raided as well as in the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, old streets and wooden buildings remained undamaged.

You won’t find big chain stores here which preserves the nostalgic atmosphere. Tourists go there looking for accessories, sweets, and snack food that they can’t get anywhere else and we were no exception.

I was looking to try Yanaka Menchi, a popular menchi katsu (fried cake of minced meat) sold at Niku no Sato, a meat store. Some of my fellow travelers, on the other hand, wanted to check out Jaakuna Hankoya Shinimonogurui, a stamp store where you can buy custom hanko signature stamps with goofy animal caricatures.

When we arrived at the shopping street, however, it was still around 9 a.m., and all the shops on the street were not open yet. I regretted my bad planning, but it was too late, and we ended up walking on the street without having any snack food or anywhere to buy accessories.

The disappointment didn’t end there. Yanaka Ginza is known

for being the home to many stray cats as marked by the countless cat paintings and sculptures on shop signs and rooftops. On the eastern end of the shopping street, the Yuyake Dandan stairs are a documented hot spot for the neighborhood alley cats. This day, however, it was like cats had never existed here.

With no snack food to try, no accessories to buy, and no “real” cats to play with, it did not take us long to walk down the quiet 170-meter street.

Later, I found a report by Gendai Business from 2024 that said the Yanaka Ginza felines are no longer a common sight since a local movement to protect those stray cats from precarious life on the street gained consensus in the area.

If you plan to visit, don’t expect to see any real cats and plan to be there after 10 or 11 a.m. when the shops open. On a different day, I visited around 5 p.m. and found the area crowded with tourists, lining up in front of the meat store for a fried cake of minced meat and shopping for cat accessories.

At the Yuyake Dandan, there were many tourists taking selfies with the shopping street in the background. “Yuyake” means “sunset,” while “Dandan” refers to “steps.” As the name suggests, the stairs were beautifully lit by the evening glow.

– Shoji Kudaka



VIEW VIDEO

■ Yanaka Ginza Shotengai (Shopping street)

GPS COORDINATES:
35.727662, 139.767076
(east end near Yuyake Dandan)



WEBSITE

Photos by Shoji Kudaka

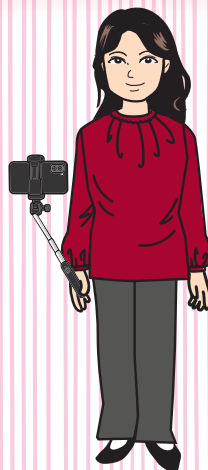


Denisse

I’m Denisse Rauda from El Paso, Texas, but now living in Tokyo. I have been with Stripes for 12 years. My interests include binge-watching TV shows, karaoke, tennis and exploring Tokyo. Nice to meet you!

Soy Denisse Rauda de El Paso, Texas, pero ahora vivo en Tokio. He trabajado en Stripes por doce años. Mis intereses incluyen maratones de series de televisión, karaoke, tenis y explorar Tokio. ¡Encantada de conocerle!

rauda.denisse@stripes.com

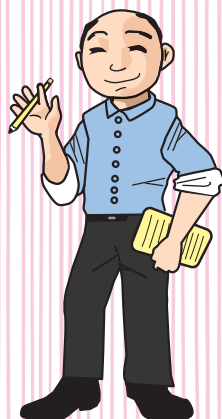


Hyemin

Hi, I’m Hyemin Lee, a Seoul native based in Pyeongtaek. I’ve been with Stripes for 4 years. I love sharing Korea’s destinations, culture, history, local tips and fun things to know with the U.S. military community. Nice to meet you!

안녕하세요. 저는 이혜민입니다. 스타스앤스트라이프와 함께한 지는 4년 정도 됐어요. 미군 커뮤니티에 한국의 여행지, 문화, 역사, 현지 팁, 알아두면 재미있는 이야기들을 소개하는걸 좋아해요. 만나서 반가워요!

lee.hyemin@stripes.com



Hiro

I’m Takahiro Takiguchi from Yokosuka City in mainland Japan. I have been with Stripes for 13 years. My interests include food, drinks, travel and music. Nice to meet you!

神奈川県横浜須賀市在住の滝口隆弘です。星条旗新聞でのライター歴13年。趣味は旅行、食べ歩きに飲み歩き、それに音楽です。

よろしくお願ひします!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



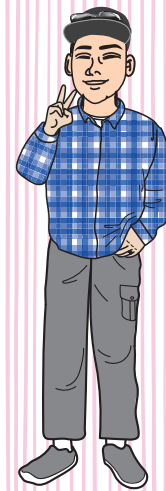
Shoji

I’m Shoji Kudaka from Okinawa. I have been with Stripes for 10 years.

My interests include travel, sports, movies, photography, TV shows, cats and dogs. Nice to meet you!

沖縄県在住の久高将司です。ストライプスに在籍して10年になります。トラベル、スポーツ、映画、写真、テレビ、犬や猫に興味があります。よろしくお願ひします!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



Luis

Hi, I’m Luis Samayoa, from San Diego, California. This is my 3rd and last year with Stars and Stripes as their military staffer. My interests are traveling, eating, exploring Japan and collecting souvenirs like Sake and Milk Bottles everywhere I go. Nice to meet you!

パグ・ライフ
samayoa.luis@stripes.com

Illustrations by Yukiyo Oda

Check the next edition for Part 3: Ebisu!

Photo by Hugo Clément, Unsplash

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THRIFTING IN TOKYO

An in-depth look into the city's hottest shopping areas and secondhand stores

BY VERONICA CARNEVALE,
JAPAN TRAVEL

TOKYO'S BEST AREAS FOR THRIFTING



Photo by Susann Schuster, Unsplash

SHIMOKITAZAWA

An article about thrifting in Tokyo would be incomplete without mentioning the trendy neighborhood of Shimokitazawa. Located outside the busyness of central Tokyo, this laidback area is synonymous with vintage clothing stores, hip cafes, small independent shops, and live music venues. The neighborhood's collection of small streets and alleys create an inviting place where creative people and those appreciative of the bohemian way of life gather. More than just a clothes thrifting hotspot, Shimokitazawa is a treasure trove of all things secondhand, including books, dishware, and vinyls.

DON'T MISS: Stick Out, a used clothing and accessories store where everything costs ¥800!

LOCATION: Shimokitazawa is a neighborhood in Setagaya. Shimokitazawa Station is about a three-minute train ride from Shibuya Station on the Inokashira Line and a 10-minute train ride from Shinjuku Station on the Odakyu Line.

If you are looking for some guidance to help elevate your thrift game in Tokyo, you have come to the right place!

Tokyo is a dynamic playground for fashion lovers—a place where high-end avenues lined with designer brands meet narrow alleyways packed with niche boutiques. Here, you will find an eclectic range of styles, from punk to goth to lolita to American and European vintage to timeless elegance. Unsurprisingly, this mix of mainstream and experimental fashion makes for an exciting thrifting experience. You never know what you will find!

In the guide below, we will introduce Tokyo's most popular thrifting areas and chains, as well as relevant information about typical clothing styles, store locations, and pricing. Be sure to pack light! You are sure to have quite the thrift haul.



KICHIOJOI

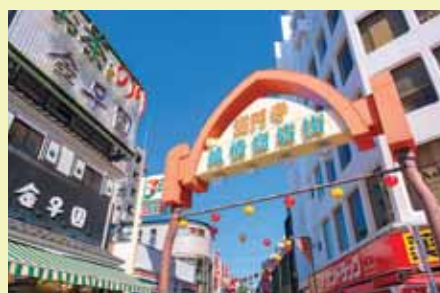
Kichijoji is often hailed as one of Tokyo's best places to live. This stylish neighborhood effortlessly balances urban life with nature. Here, you can unwind in the picturesque setting of Inokashira Park or explore the whimsical Ghibli Museum. For shopping and dining experiences, the area has no shortage of options, from shotengai (covered shopping streets) and vintage clothing stores to lantern-illuminated bars (Harmonica Yokocho Alley) and cozy cafes.

DON'T MISS: Nico, a secondhand clothing shop open until 11pm that sells on-trend clothing from Europe and the US, and Amber Lion, a secondhand apparel store that sells American casual wear from the 1970s and 80s.

LOCATION: Kichijoji is a neighborhood in western Tokyo's Mitaka City. Kichijoji Station is about an 18-minute train ride from Shibuya Station (Inokashira Line), a 15-minute train ride from Shinjuku Station (JR Chuo Line), and a 13-minute train ride from Shimokitazawa Station (Inokashira Line).



File photo



File photo

KOENJI

Koenji is an artsy hub where alternative music, discount shopping, bars, restaurants, and alternative youth culture thrive. In fact, Koenji has long served as a venue for punk rock music and is still home to numerous "live houses," or live music clubs. This music scene, coupled with the area's retro atmosphere, gives it an air of coolness. In terms of thrifting, the district features numerous shotengai (covered shopping streets) and alleys filled with unique vintage clothing stores.

DON'T MISS: Hayatochiri, a store with a monster face facade that sells quirky and colorful fashion items, and Whistler, an American vintage store that specializes in clothes from the 1940s and 60s.

LOCATION: Koenji is a district in Suginami and is about a 10-minute train ride from Shinjuku Station on the JR Chuo-Sobu Line or JR Chuo Line.

HARAJUKU

Harajuku is one of Tokyo's epicenters for youth fashion. The colorful and perpetually busy Takeshita Street is the heart of cosplay, anime, and kawaii (cute) culture and is lined with chic shops, secondhand clothes stores, Instagram-worthy foods (especially crepes), and quirky eateries. The nearby Cat Street, an alley that runs between Harajuku and the area around



File photo

Shibuya Station, is also a notable destination abundant in fashion boutiques, secondhand clothing, cafes, and eateries. However, unlike the flamboyance of Takeshita Street, Cat Street has a more low-key atmosphere. Omotesando, a tree-lined avenue home to brand name stores, cafes, and restaurants, offers a more refined shopping experience for older visitors.

DON'T MISS: BerBerJin, which is known for its vintage flannels, sweatshirts, jerseys, and denim.

LOCATION: Harajuku, located in Shibuya, is nestled between Shibuya and Shinjuku Station. Harajuku Station is a two-minute train ride from Shibuya Station and a four-minute train ride from Shinjuku Station on the JR Yamanote Line.

SHINJUKU AND SHIBUYA

We also want to give shoutouts to Shinjuku and Shibuya, both of which are extremely popular wards in Tokyo. Shibuya stands as the epicenter of modern Japanese culture and is a hub for fashionistas and creative types. In Shinjuku and Shibuya, the shopping and dining opportunities are endless, and at night, the areas' come to life with their bars and nightclubs. Thanks to the wards' constant happenings and mixing of cultures, you are bound to find some interesting shops!

LOCATION: Shibuya and Shinjuku are located directly next to each other and are slightly west of central Tokyo.



POPULAR THRIFT STORE CHAINS IN TOKYO

Below is a list of Tokyo's most popular thrift store chains from least to most expensive. Please note that the pricing estimates are based on average prices store-wide for all products (clothes, accessories, shoes, etc.). Outliers may exist. For the purposes of this guide, prices are represented as follows.

¥ : cheap

¥¥ : medium

¥¥¥ : expensive

Of course, pricing is dependent on the quality of the goods and brands, so although some stores are ranked as "expensive," the prices are still reasonable given the offerings.

TreFacStyle (¥¥)

TreFacStyle, short for Treasure Factory Style, is a fashion brand of Treasure Factory, a general recycling shop that sells a variety of goods, including home appliances, outdoorsy items, musical instruments, and more. TreFacStyle offers a wide mix of contemporary designer and non-designer clothing, accessories, and handbags. Most goods are priced between ¥4,000 and ¥9,000. Brand name items can be more expensive and non-designer items can be as low as ¥1,000 to ¥2,000. TreFacStyle has over 40 stores in Tokyo, including popular branches in Kichijoji, Koenji, and Shimokitazawa.



Photo by スタイル2, Wikimedia Commons

MODE-OFF (¥)

MODE-OFF is an apparel brand from the HARD-OFF Group, a company that focuses on selling recycled and secondhand goods—from furniture and other house-related items (HOUSE-OFF) to liquor (LIQUOR-OFF) to electronics and instruments (HARD-OFF). MODE-OFF is known for its inexpensive clothing, bags, shoes, and accessories for men and women. The store is less focused on trend-driven items and more so aims to sell things for cheap. MODE-OFF has locations in Kichijoji, Koenji, and Ueno (Taito), among others.



Photo by Kentin, Wikimedia Commons

BAZZSTORE (¥ ~ ¥¥)

BAZZSTORE offers a wide range of domestic and foreign brands, as well as non-brand fashion goods, including clothing, bags, watches, shoes, and accessories. Most items fall within the ¥1,000 to ¥5,000 range. However, popular brands can be more pricey. Given its mix of used clothing, BAZZSTORE is a great place for thrifters to find inexpensive deals and affordably priced brands. BAZZSTORE has 14 stores in Tokyo, with some branches in Shimokitazawa, Harajuku, Koenji, and Ikebukuro.



Photo courtesy of Link, Inc.

KINJI (¥ ~ ¥¥)

KINJI is a beloved thrift store popular for its huge selection of trendy items, including contemporary and vintage clothes, accessories, and bags. Prices are reasonable and generally between ¥2,000 and ¥5,000. Though sometimes you can find pieces for as low as a couple hundred yen! KINJI has two locations in Harajuku and one in Shimokitazawa.



Photo by Jamila Brown / JT

NEW YORK JOE EXCHANGE (¥¥)

NEW YORK JOE EXCHANGE sells imported (primarily American and European) and domestic secondhand clothing, including branded and non-branded items. Most products in the store are less than ¥10,000, with the average price being between ¥2,000 and ¥3,000. Also, all items are 50% off every first Sunday of the month! NEW YORK JOE EXCHANGE has locations in Shimokitazawa, Kichijoji, and Shibuya.



Photo by Naoko Takano, Wikimedia Commons

Tanpopo House (¥)

Tanpopo House, founded in 1889, is renowned for its extremely cheap prices, with some items starting as low as ¥105! Each store has an assortment of approximately 20,000 items, including clothes, shoes, bags, and accessories for men, women, and children. Typically, the more expensive items are located near the cash register. Presently, the company has 12 stores in Tokyo, including branches in Shinjuku, Koenji, and Ueno (Taito).



Photo courtesy of Tanpopo House

KOMEHYO (¥¥¥)

Similar to RagTag, KOMEHYO sells carefully selected designer clothing, bags, jewelry, watches, and more for reduced prices. However, given the high status brands, the prices can still be quite expensive. KOMEHYO's most popular branches are located in Shinjuku, Shibuya, Ginza, and Aoyama (Minato).



Photo courtesy of Komehei Holdings Co., Ltd.

Chicago (¥¥)

Chicago offers an intriguing blend of Japanese, American, and European clothing and related goods at reasonable prices. One of Chicago's most unique points is its collection of secondhand kimono, yukata (summer kimono), and kimono accessories. Chicago has three stores in Harajuku, one in Shimokitazawa, and one in Kichijoji.



Photo by Sarashanti, JT

JAM (¥¥)

JAM sells a wide range of high quality vintage fashion, including brand names such as Levi's, Dr. Martens, and Ralph Lauren. The store is known for keeping up with current fashion trends, and prices typically range from ¥4,000 to ¥11,000. There are a number of brand items priced outside this range as well. JAM has stores in Shimokitazawa, Harajuku, and Shibuya (Meiji Dori).



Photo courtesy of JAM TRADING, Inc.

Flamingo (¥¥)

Visually characterized by the neon-lit flamingos by its entrance, Flamingo is a popular American vintage clothes store.

In fact, the majority of the store's stock is imported from the US (and sometimes Europe). Available items include women's and men's clothing, as well as accessories. The store focuses on clothing from the 1950s to 90s, giving it old school Americana vibes. Most items are priced between ¥3,000 and ¥7,000. Flamingo has stores in Omotesando (Shibuya), Harajuku, Kichijoji, and Shimokitazawa.



Photo by Ryosuke Yagi, Wikimedia Commons

RagTag (¥¥ ~ ¥¥¥)

RagTag specializes in secondhand designer clothing, handbags, shoes, accessories, and more. Here, you can peruse brands such as HERMES, CHANEL, LOUIS VUITTON, GUCCI, PRADA, and more for discounted amounts. A large portion of RagTag's items fall within the ¥1,000 to ¥30,000 range. However, high-end brands can be priced much higher. RagTag has locations in Shibuya, Shinjuku, Shimokitazawa, Harajuku, Kichijoji, and Ginza.



Photo courtesy of World Inc.

2nd STREET (¥¥)

2nd STREET is one of Japan's largest secondhand chains, with more than 800 stores nationwide, and sells a mix of Japanese brands, foreign brands, and non-branded items. Here, you can find everything from high quality designer brands to vintage items to trendy clothes, shoes, and accessories. Expect prices between ¥4,000 and ¥10,000. 2nd STREET has nine different store types, three of which focus on fashion—Apparel Reuse (fashion items at affordable prices), Used Select (carefully-selected fashion items, mainly brand names), and Brand Speciality Store (luxury brands). 2nd STREET has over 70 stores in Tokyo Prefecture, including locations in Shimokitazawa, Kichijoji, Koenji, Shibuya, Shinjuku, Harajuku, and Ikebukuro.

HAPPY THRIFTING!

Of course, this guide is far from exhaustive as Tokyo has plenty of other areas and shops where you can find secondhand clothing and fashion items. As a bonus, we also recommend researching if there will be any flea markets held during your visit.

Have fun, and embrace your creative eye in Tokyo!



Get active for Japan's Sports Day on Oct. 12

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Sports Day is one of Japan's 16 national holidays and is usually observed on the second Monday in October, the same time as the Indigenous People's Day/Columbus Day holiday is observed in the U.S.

This year, Japan's Supotsu-no-hi, or Sports Day, falls on Oct. 12.

This interesting holiday was officially recognized in 1966 to commemorate the opening of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. Japan's National Holiday Act defines it as a holiday to promote sports and an active lifestyle to ensure a healthy

mind and body.

On Sports Day, most communities and schools across Japan celebrate the day with a sports festival, called "Undo-kai" (field day).

During the event, children wearing team-color caps (red, white, blue and yellow) compete in traditional track and field events, along with tug-of-war, three-legged race and other events. These days are family events with fathers cheering on kids and videotaping the competitions and mothers making sure the kids stay fueled by preparing elaborate lunches on site.

Happy Sports Day!

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GET TO KNOW JAPAN

Make a wish on wooden ornaments

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

You may have seen these wooden plaques when visiting Shinto shrines around Japan. These are decorated with drawings of the year's zodiac sign or the temple's symbol along with special Kanji characters.

These are called ema, which also means horse in Japanese. Ema are used to write prayers and ask for good luck in certain endeavors.

Followers believe that wishes and prayers will come true if we

go to a temple and write our wish and hang them there as an offering to the Shinto gods. Some of the common wishes asked for include work, family peace, health and — yes, you guessed it — school entrance examinations. Now since exam season is over for the students of Japan, you might still catch many of the ema asking for good final grades.

You can get your very own ema at Shinto shrines starting from about 200 to 1,000 yen (about \$1.40-\$7).

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



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Stripes Sports Trivia

SAY MY NAME! Who was the St. Louis Rams defender that made the tackle on Tennessee's Kevin Dyson to win Super Bowl XXXIV?

Answer
Mike Jones

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DID YOU KNOW?

Most foreigners believe that all public baths are onsen, but that's not true. There is another type of public bath, called a "sento," and it also offers you opportunities to take a good soak. Most sento, which are usually located in the center of a town, use tap or well water and often add artificial bathing salts or powders, various herbs, milk or even sake to the water to enhance bathing effects. Onsen are usually located on or near a volcanic mountain, containing various minerals often cost more than a sento.

Kanji of the week

飲
no(-mu)/in [drink]

Language Lesson

See you again.

Mata aimashoo.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Top of the line

5 Photo keeper

10 "Fernando" singers

14 Plane measure

15 Jennifer's co-star on "The Morning Show"

16 Surrealist Salvador

17 Like unfulfilled orders

19 Mineral salt

20 Think highly of

21 Gentle waves

23 ___-garde

26 Mambo king Puente

27 Woodshop machine

30 "We ___ an impasse"

32 Part of IOU

35 Benefit

36 Brownd at the beach

38 Classic board game

39 Bell sound

40 Helpers

41 Castle entry, often

43 Jessica with two Oscars

44 It's next to nothing

45 Islamic prayer leaders

46 One of Charlie's trio

47 Cannes showing

49 Arboretum item

51 Took a tally

54 Rocky's girl

58 Guard's command

59 Strictly business

62 Capri, for one

63 Hollywood's Eastwood

64 Makes a scene?

65 IM sign-off

DOWN

1 Paul Bunyan's ox

2 Historic periods

3 Small faction

4 "Get lost!"

5 Bakery lure

6 Race part

7 Panhandle

8 Ruse anagram

9 Practice Zen

10 Grow accustomed

11 Airborne activity

12 Cookie

13 Draws a bead on

18 Carpenter's tool

22 Fillable bread

24 New Hampshire city

25 Obvious sayings

27 Key in a Bogart film

Answers to Previous Crossword:

S	T	A	G	T	A	U	P	E	S	L	A	V
L	U	R	E	A	B	N	E	R	M	I	M	I
A	B	B	R	N	A	R	R	A	T	I	V	E
W	A	I	T	E	C	O	M	E	L	E	N	A
T	R	I	C	K	L	E	L	E	N	D	S	
C	A	R	U	S	O	L	A	M	E	D		
L	O	A	D	E	R	S	T	E	P	S	P	A
A	N	T	E	N	N	A	C	H	E	N	A	B
D	E	E	H	E	N	S	S	T	R	I	C	T
C	O	A	T	I	C	H	U	N	K	S		
S	T	R	A	W	I	T	C	H	I	N	G	
O	H	A	R	E	D	U	O	C	E	S	A	R
F	I	B	E	R	B	O	A	R	D	T	H	R
I	R	I	S	O	T	T	E	R	T	O	M	B
A	D	D	S	B	E	E	R	S	E	T	S	Y

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:
Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

7	4	8	3	1	2	6	5	9
2	1	9	8	5	6	4	7	3
3	6	5	4	9	7	2	1	8
9	8	6	5	4	3	1	2	7
4	3	7	2	6	1	8	9	5
5	2	1	9	7	8	3	6	4
8	7	3	1	2	9	5	4	6
1	9	4	6	3	5	7	8	2
6	5	2	7	8	4	9	3	1

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GORGEOUS GORGE

Stray into ink brush painting at Shosenkyo in Yamanashi

STORY AND PHOTOS BY YURIKA USUI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Yamanashi Prefecture may be famous for Mt. Fuji, but Shosenkyo, a gorge in the same prefecture, is another popular spot worth spending some time exploring. The gorge's clear streams, huge and unique granite rocks and towering cliffs draw many visitors each year.

At the entrance of the walking trail towards Shosenkyo, the first thing that caught my eye was the Sengataki waterfall with its 30-meter-high water drop. Despite the 35-degree Celsius temperatures when I visited, the abundant water splashing made me feel cool and relaxed.

Along the trail, I had a view of the tall, strange rock formations sitting in the raging river. Looking up at the cliffs rising over 150 meters above, I could imagine how the rocks in the river were once part of those cliffs. Throughout the area there were many falling rock warning signs, but if such a huge rock fell from above, there would be nothing that anyone on the trail could do. So, it's surprising that this area, also a sacred power spot, was once a place where many Shinto priests climbed the rocky terrain (falling rocks and all) to reach the summit.

From a bridge over the valley, a beautiful landscape emulating an ink brush painting spread across the rocky mountain adorned with pine trees and a glittering stream. As I passed through a tunnel formed by



overlapping rocks, I noticed that the tips of the two rocks were not touching. These ancient stones did not form perfect arches but were perfectly balanced. Some of these rocks have names depending on what shape they form, like "fur seal rock." It was fun to imagine names from the shapes I could make out.

To get to Shosenkyo, it takes about 1.5 hours by express train from JR Shinjuku Station to Kofu Station and then about 30 minutes by car from there. This time I rented a car, but it is also possible to take a bus from Kofu Station. There are many sharp

curves on the way, so I recommend bringing motion sickness medicine if necessary.

I parked my car at the free parking lot downstream. From the lot, it will take about a 30-minute walk, but there is also a bus that can take you upstream. I recommend taking the bus up, then taking the walk back so you can enjoy the scenery.

You can select a variety of walking courses depending on your stamina and time. This time I chose a 2.1 km-long course which takes about 30 minutes to complete. If you have time, however, I recommend the ropeway to the top of the mountain. Though I

visited in the summer, the fall is an especially great time to visit since the autumn colors cover the mountain then. After trekking the gorge trail, you can enjoy fruit and wine from Yamanashi Prefecture at restaurants near Kofu Station.

Shosenkyo will be great option for those who want to take a short trip outside of Tokyo to cool off and enjoy the majestic nature.



Things to know

LOCATION: Kamiobinacho, Kofu, Yamanashi
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ENTRANCE FEE: Free



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