What To Do In Tokyo - A 5 Day Tokyo Itinerary

by NERD NOMADS
Tokyo has been on our bucket list for many years, and when we finally booked tickets to Japan we planned to stay five days in Tokyo thinking this would be more than enough. But we fell head over heels in love with this metropolitan city, and ended up spending weeks exploring this strange and fascinating place!

Tokyo has it all – all sorts of excellent and corky museums, grand temples, atmospheric shrines and lovely zen gardens. It is a city filled with Japanese history, but also modern, futuristic neo sci-fi streetscapes that make you feel like you’re a part of the Blade Runner movie. Tokyo’s 38 million inhabitants are equally proud of its ancient history and culture, as they are of its ultra-modern technology and architecture.

Tokyo has a neighborhood for everyone, and it sure has something for you. Here we have put together a five-day Tokyo itinerary with all the best things to do in Tokyo. If you don’t have five days, then feel free to cherry pick your favorite days and things to see and do, and create your own two or three day Tokyo itinerary.

Here is our five day Tokyo Itinerary! We hope you like it!

Maria & Espen

NERD NOMADS

THE TRAVEL BLOG WHERE CINEMATIC INSPIRATION BECOMES REAL ADVENTURE

Nerdnomads.com
Day 1 – Meiji-jingu Shrine, shopping and Japanese pop culture

Areas: Harajuku – Omotesando – Shibuya

The public train, subway, and metro systems in Tokyo are superb! They take you all over Tokyo in a blink, with a net of connected stations all over the city.

This first day, after breakfast, head to the nearest subway station to your hotel and take the JR Yamanote train line to Harajuku station (take the Omotesando exit once you get there).

The Harajuku area in Tokyo is like a catwalk. Harajuku is the place where Tokyo’s youth come to show off their latest fashion outfit and shop for new ones.

It is a fun area to walk around in or grab a seat at a cafe and sit and watch all the people walk by in hypermodern and fashionable clothes and hairstyles.

1. Meiji-jingu Shrine and Yoyogi Park

From Harajuku Station or Meiji-jingu-mae Station, follow the crowds and head to Yoyogi Park and the Meiji-jingu Shrine.

The Meiji-jingu shrine was built in 1920 but was sadly bombed during World War II and rebuilt in 1958. Walking around the temple, it still feels like an ancient temple.
It is beautifully located in a big green and lush park – the Yoyogi Park.

If the weather is good, Yoyogi Park that surrounds the temple is the perfect place to kick off your shoes or sandals, lay down on the grass and relax.

- How to get there: Take the JR Yamanote train line to Harajuku station (take the Omote-sando exit once you get there) or take the green metro Chiyoda Line or the brown Fukutoshin Line to the Meiji-jingu-mae metro station.
- Opening hours: dawn to dusk
- Ticket price: FREE! Yay!
- Web page for the Meiji-jingu temple

2. Takeshita-dori pop culture alley

From the Yoyogi Park, head to the nearby Harajuku shopping area, and walk down Takeshita-dori Street (located just next to the park).

This alley is Harajuku’s famous show-off street packed with Japanese teenagers wearing colorful and eccentric clothes, make-up, hair, and fashion.

3. Omotesando street

Walk over to the Omotesando street for some high fashion (window) shopping and have a look at the architecture of the super cool Dior building, Prada building, Tod’s building and Louis Vuitton building.

This street can be compared to some of the best shopping streets in New York, London and Paris, but a special highlight is the extravagant building facades. Kind of cool, and like nothing I’ve seen elsewhere.

Have an ice cream at Ben&Jerry and visit the grand Apple Store. You will also find some great art museums in this area.
By now you might be hungry, and if you fancy a burger you can take a little walking-detour over to our favourite burger place in Tokyo – The Great Burger.

- **Address:** 6-12-7 Jingumae Street, Shibuya

5. **Ura-Harajuku area**

From Omotesando street, stroll down through the cosy alleys in the Ura-Harajuku district, filled with cool small shops. The area is famous for its many small independent designers shops as well as vintage shops.

Here you will also find small cozy cafes and restaurants. It feels like walking around in a small hip city.

6. **Shibuya**

Shibuya is Tokyo’s center of teen culture, where teens show off their pink hair and funky dressing. Here are plenty of shops, restaurants, and bars.

If you have some more energy left, this is the place to party hard and dance the night away. Must dos:

- Take a selfie with the famous Hachiko statue outside of Shibuya Station. List item #1
- Go for a stroll through the world’s busiest neo crossing in front of the Shibuya Station.
- Have a coffee/ tea break at Starbucks, located right above the easily spotted Tsutaya bookshop, just opposite Shibuya subway station. Sit down, relax, and have a bird’s eye view of the crowds crossing the street in front of the station.
Day 2 – Shopping, fish market, garden, river cruise and Tokyo Skytree

Areas: Ginza & Asakusa

Start your second day by taking the Yurakucho metro line (light orange) to Ginzaichome Station, or the red Marunouchi Line or the grey Hibiya Line or the orange Ginza Line to Ginza Station.

1. Ginza

If you have been to New York City and London, Ginza is Tokyo’s answer to the Fifth Ave in New York or Oxford Street in London. The centre of Ginza is the crossing where Chuodori and Harumidori intersect.

Ginza was the first area of Tokyo that got modernized, where they welcomed western-style brick buildings and things like streetlights and Tokyo’s first department stores.

Go shopping or visit one of the many galleries in this area.
2. Tsukiji Fish Market

From Ginza, walk southeast towards the Sumidagawa River, until you get to the famous Tsukiji Fish Market.

Tsukiji is the biggest seafood market in the world where 2400 tons of seafood get shipped in and out every day! Pretty amazing! Although they sell all kinds of fish here, the bluefin tuna is the star of the show, and there is a tuna auction every morning at 5 a.m. where tunas can sell for over 10,000 us$!

Uogashiyokocho (open 5 a.m. – 2 p.m.), the outer market of Tsukiji is a cluster of small sushi restaurants where you can have some super fresh fish.

- **How to get there:** You can get directly to the market by taking the pink Oedo Line to Tsukijishijo Station (exit A1 and A2).
- **Opening hours:** Closed Sundays and most Wednesdays. If you want to see the inner market, you should come early in the morning. Most of the market where they have fish auctions is over at 11 a.m. But there are still things going on and fish on sale on the outer market. Most of the outer market is over around 2 p.m. so be sure to be there before 2 p.m.
- **Ticket price:** FREE!
- **Web page:** [http://www.tsukiji-market.or.jp/tukiji_e.htm](http://www.tsukiji-market.or.jp/tukiji_e.htm)

3. Hamarikyu Gardens

After some stressful fish dealing, it is time to relax and get the smell of fish out of your nose. Walk over to the nearby Hamarikyu Gardens.

There are several lakes in the garden, and at the biggest one, there are some cozy, old Japanese tea houses.

Drinking tea in Japan is something special, there are certain rules as to how you should sit, how you should drink, how to hold the cup and so on. There are written explanations handed out at the tea house, so don’t worry. 

- **How to get there:** You can go directly to the park by taking the pink Odeo Line to Shiodome station (exit A1).
- **Opening hours:** 09:00 – 17:00 (5 p.m.)
- **Ticket prices (including the audio guide):** 300 Yen = 3 us$ (free for children)
4. Boat trip on the Sumidagawa river

Inside the Hamarikyu garden, there is a water cruise station by the Sumidagawa River. Once upon a time riverboats were the primary means of transportation in Tokyo, and the Sumidagawa river was the main “highway” through the city.

This boat ride on the river is the perfect way to experience this traditional form of transportation while at the same time getting some excellent sightseeing of Tokyo.

Hop off the water bus at Asakusa Pier; the boat ride takes about 35 minutes. Walk over the bridge to the easily spotted communication tower Tokyo Skytree.

- **Ticket price:** 980 Yen = 10 us$, children 370 Yen = 4 us$. Includes admission ticket to the Hamarikyu garden.
- **Estimated time:** The boat ride from Hamarikyu Garden to Asakusa takes about 35 minutes.
- **Departures:** About every 20 minutes. Check the timetable here.

5. Tokyo Skytree

Tickets to the Tokyo Skytree work on a kind of time slot system. This way you don’t have to stand and wait in line for too long.

First, you buy the tickets, and then you return at the time stamped on your ticket.

When you buy tickets at the entrance to this garden, they hand you a complimentary audio guide. Using satellite technology to detect your location, you get interesting stories, all in perfect English, as you stroll through this green and lush garden.

The time between purchase and entry will depend on how many people are ahead of you. At the base of Tokyo Skytree is Tokyo Solamachi, a huge shopping mall with lots of restaurants and shops. Well worth a visit, especially if you have some time to wait until your ticket is up. Solamachi also has a huge aquarium.
The tower has two observation decks, one at 350 m (Tembo Deck) and one at 450 m (Tembo Galleria). We bought tickets for the 350 m one, as there was fog the day we went up so we would not have seen much from 450 m.

On a clear day you can see Mt Fuji even from the lower deck.

- How to get there: If you don`t want to take the water bus here, take the purple Hanzomon Line to Oshiage (Skytree exit).
- Opening hours: 08 a.m. – 22 (10 p.m.)
- Ticket price: 2060 Yen = 20 us$ for the 350 m high Tembo Deck, 1030 Yen = 10 us$ for the 450 m Tembo Galleria. The ticket counter is on the 4th floor.
- Web page Tokyo Skytree: http://www.tokyo-skytree.jp
- Web page Tokyo Solamachi shopping centre: http://www.tokyo-solamachi.jp
Day 3 – Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo National Museum, Ueno Park
Areas: Asakusa & Ueno
Start day three by taking the orange Ginza metro line or the Asakusa train line to Asakusa Station.

The Asakusa area has not gone through the same modernisation process that other parts of Tokyo has, and remains almost unchanged. Except for the Tokyo Skytree, this area consists of low-lying residential buildings.

Asakusa on the other side of the river Sumidagawa is home to the National Sumo wrestling stadium Kokugikan.

1. Senso-ji Temple

You can tell that this is a grand temple complex by its impressive bright red gate – the Kaminarimon Gate. After stepping through the gate, you enter the temple precincts shopping street – Nakamisedori.

Once you get to the end of this alley, you are at the Senso-ji Temple itself. The temple’s 55 m high five-storey Pagoda is easy to spot. This Pagoda is a reconstruction, dating back to 1973. In the evening the pagoda is beautifully illuminated making it look even more impressive.

Senso-ji Temple is Tokyo’s most visited. Apparently, inside the temple, there is a golden image of the Buddhist goddess of mercy, Kannon.
Inside the temple ground, there is a large metal pot full of burning incense. Apparently, the smoke is said to give you good health.

- How to get there: Take the orange Ginza Line or the Asakusa Line to Asakusa Station (Exit 1).
- Opening hours: 24 h
- Ticket price: FREE! Yay!

2. Tokyo National Museum

From Asakusa Station, take the Ginza Line to Ueno Station. Step into the beautiful Ueno Park, located just next to Ueno Station. The park contains several large museums: Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, National Museum of Nature and Science, National Museum of Western Art, and Ueno Royal Museum.

The museum has the world’s largest collection of Japanese art, with pottery, sculptures, samurai swords, woodblock prints, kimonos and so much more. If you only want to visit one museum in Tokyo, this is the one to pick!

- Address: 13-9 Ueno Park, Taito-ku, Tokyo
- Opening hours: 9:30 – 17:00 (5 p.m.). Closed Mondays.
- Ticket prices: 620 Yen = 6 us$
- Web page: [http://www.tnm.jp](http://www.tnm.jp)
3. Ueno Park

Ueno Park is Tokyo’s first public park, established in 1873, although the park structures date all the way back to the 17th century. So if there is anything like an ancient park, this is it! It’s great to go for a stroll in this stunning park, lay on the grass, have something to drink and eat, and relax for a bit. The park also has a big pond where you can go for a paddle in swan boats, or just get entertained by all the Japanese couples going for a romantic swan-paddle-trip.

The park is constructed like a “mini Japan” so that the people of Tokyo could experience their country without having to leave Tokyo. Yep, it sounds crazy, but during the Edo period travel was heavily restricted, so it kind of makes sense. Here you can, for instance, see a model of Kyoto’s most famous temple and a replica of one of the shrines in Nikko.

The park is huge, but there are big easy-to-read maps all over the park (also in English). The park is ideal for cherry blossom viewings if you are there in spring time. If you are keen on seeing another temple, you can walk over to Kaneiji Temple, located on Ueno Hill inside the park.

Ueno Park also houses Japan’s oldest zoo (opened in 1882) – Ueno Zoological Gardens. It’s biggest attractions are Ri Ri and Shin Shin, two pandas that moved to the park from China in 2011. The zoo is closed on Mondays.

4. Dinner at Hantei Restaurant

Top off your day in Ueno with a stroll through the atmospheric Yanaka neighbourhood and have dinner at Hantei restaurant.

Hantei restaurant serves elegant Kushiage (ingredients skewered and then deep-fried) in a beautiful 100-year-old traditional Japanese wooden building.

We ordered the dinner course set that contains six skewers of different meat, fish and vegetables all artistically served. After that, you can order more skewers of your choice. The food is delicious but pricey, and like many high-end restaurants, the portions are small.

- How to get there: Take the Chiyoda Line to Nezu Station (exit 2).
- Opening hours: Noon – 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. Closed on Mondays.
- Price: 5000 Yen = 50 us$ for the dinner set (six skewers), 3000 Yen = 30 us$ for the lunch set.
Day 4 – Pancakes, Gadgets, Robots, Samurais
Area: Shinjuku

1. Pancake Breakfast at Mokes

Start day four by taking the grey Hibiya Line to Naka-Meguro station.

There is a pancake craze in Tokyo. You’ll see pancake cafes wherever you go and the Tokyoites will happily queue up for hours at these super popular places. Naturally, we had to see what all the fuzz was about by visiting the pancake cafe that started the craze years ago with their Hawaiian inspired pancakes, Mokes. And, yes it was totally worth it! Their pancakes are delicious!

If you are two people, consider sharing one plate of pancakes since the portions are huge. You can read more about the pancake craze here: Why Tokyo Is Crazy About Pancakes

- Address: KRK Bldg. 1-17-8 Kamimeguro Meguro-Ku, close to Naka-Meguro Station.
- How to get there: Take the grey Hibiya metro line to Naka-Meguro Station
- Opening hours: 09 – 22 (10 p.m.)
2. Shinjuku

Take the subway to Shinjuku Station, the world’s busiest railway station. Spend the day exploring this urban entertainment district with its many skyscrapers, shopping, and bustling nightlife.

Around Shinjuku Station, you will find many of the world’s largest camera and electronics stores, such as Bic Camera and Yodabashi Camera.

Even if you are not looking to buy anything, it’s still fascinating to take a peek inside these electronic mega malls to see the newest gadgets. There are also plenty of regular department stores in this area.

3. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building

A landmark in this part of town, the Government Building, offers free access to their observation decks on the 45th floor. On a clear day, you can see Mount Fuji from here.

4. Robot Restaurant

This is the one we are kicking ourselves for not going to. We had planned to, but then Maria got sick and we had to skip it. It looks absolutely crazy and fun! A restaurant where the staff wears robotic manga inspired dresses and put on a futuristic cabaret show that is fun, kitschy and completely over the top. What’s not to like about that?!

From what I hear the food is nothing to write home about, and the drinks are overpriced, so save your dinner for later. The show, however, is an unforgettable experience for both adults and kids. One show lasts about 90 minutes.

- Address: 1-7-1 Kabukicho | B2F, Shinjuku
- Opening hours: Shows from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m (each show last 90 min).
- Tickets: From 8000 Yen = 77 us$. You can book tickets in advance.
  Webpage: http://www.shinjuku-robot.com
5. Samurai Museum

Learn about the history and culture of the Samurai warriors at the Samurai Museum.

- **Address:** Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo Kabukicho 2-25-6
- **How to get there:** Take the brown Fukutoshin line or the pink Oedo Line to Higashi-Shinjuku Station (exit A1). It takes about 6 minutes to walk from the station to the museum. Or take the metro to Shinjuku Station (East Exit). From here, there is a 8-minute walk. You can also take the train to Seibu-Shinjuku Station, from which there is only a 4-minute walk.
- **Opening hours:** 10:30 – 21:00
- **Ticket price:** 1800 Yen = 17 us$, 800 Yen = 8 us$ for children.
- **Web page:** [http://samuraimuseum.jp](http://samuraimuseum.jp)

6. Shinjuku Gyoen Park

If you are getting a little tired of the Shinjuku crowds then go for a walk in one of Tokyo’s most scenic green lungs – Shinjuku Gyoen Park. The park is split into three gardens - a Japanese, English, and French garden. There is also a tea house if you get thirsty.

7. Golden Gai

Have a drink or two in Shinjuku’s old neighborhood Golden Gai. In stunning contrast to the modern skyscrapers and the neon-lit urban madness that otherwise dominate this area are the charming small bars and narrow streets that form the Golden Gai.

It is a miracle that this area, a couple of blocks in size at most, has not been redeveloped and have been left alone for such a long time.

Wandering around the Golden Gai, you are effectively taken back to post-war Tokyo. Here every bar is different, many are tiny with room for less than ten guests, and there are still bars that will only cater to locals.

Peeking inside these bars may feel a little intimidating but look for signs in English on the door outside, or step in with a friendly smile. They will politely let you know if they do not cater to foreigners, probably by saying they are full.

The larger Albatross bar has a rooftop terrace with a great view of the Tokyo night lights.

End your day with some food in one of the many small restaurants along nearby Omoide Yokochō.
Day 5– Manga craziness, Rainbow Bridge & Odaiba

Akihabara & Rainbow Bridge

1. Akihabara

To deep dive into the nerdy side of Tokyo, head for Akihabara. While Tokyo has many surprises, this is where the feeling of having entered another dimension kicks in for real.

Akihabara used to be known as the electronics district of Tokyo, often nicknamed “Electric City”. While there are still plenty of electronics stores along the main Chuo Dori street, as well as camera and electronics mega-store Yodabashi, during the last decade Akihabara has transformed itself into the center for Japanese otaku and anime culture.

Here you will find five-story warehouses filled with comic books, video games, music, movies, action figures and other collectibles. Girls dressed in French Maid uniforms walk the streets trying to entice customers into their Maid Restaurants, where they will welcome and serve you as if you are the master just returning to your home. It’s bizarre, but also fairly innocent and fun, if a little embarrassing.

Nowhere else will you find comic books stores like here. In Japan, comic books are read by everyone. It is common to see well-dressed businessmen on the train reading comic books. Comic books are not simply for entertainment but also textbooks and factual works are published as comic books. A little warning, if you go up to the higher levels of the large comic book stores, you will most likely come across some adult-themed comic books.

2. Rainbow Bridge

Walking across the Tokyo Rainbow Bridge provides some truly spectacular views of the Tokyo skyline.

The first decision you must make is whether to choose the north or the south side walkways. The north side provides views of the Tokyo Skytree and the Tokyo Tower. While you can see the Shibaura highway loop and the Fuji TV building from the south walkway.
The best time to do this walk is around twilight just as the city lights are turned on. The walk is about 1.7 km long and takes about 30 minutes.

- Ticket price: The walk is free
- How to get there: Take the metro to Shibaura-futo Station (Yurikamome line)

3. Odaiba

Once you have walked cross the bridge, you are on the island of Odaiba. Odaiba is a man-made island that in the 90’s was turned into a modern shopping and entertainment center.

Along the south shore of the Bay, you will pass Tokyo Beach, a favorite spot for Tokyo’s young couples to meet. It’s also a perfect place from which to take some photos of the bridge itself.

There are plenty of entertainment options available on Odaiba such as the Aquacity Odaiba mall with its 13 cinema screens and a Ramen food theme park (!) where you can sample Ramen soup from all over Japan. The Decks Tokyo Beach Mall has a Madam Tussaud wax museum and a Legoland Discovery Center.

To get home take the metro from the Odaiba-kaihinkoen Station, or walk back the same way across the bridge if you want to see the view from the other side.

The End

There you go, our recommended 5 day Tokyo itinerary. We hope it has given you some ideas for what to do in Tokyo. It’s quite a busy itinerary, so so you might want to skip a few things along the way, so you can have some more time to relax.

There are of course plenty of more things to do in Tokyo. Why not try out a public hot spring bath – Onsen? Or visit one of the 58 Cat cafes in Tokyo? Or one of the many animal cafes, like rabbits, dogs, snakes and goats, yep g-o-a-t-s! Tokyo sure is wonderfully crazy, and it truly has something for everyone! You never get bored in Tokyo, that’s for sure!

For more accommodation recommendations, click here to read our complete guide to where to stay in Tokyo.

You can read the full article that this PDF is based on HERE!

©Nerdnomads 2017 - All rights reserved. The images and texts contained in this PDF are copyrighted.