

Shanghai, China

Overview

Introduction

The name Shanghai still conjures images of romance, mystery and adventure, but for decades it was an austere backwater. After the success of Mao Zedong's communist revolution in 1949, the authorities clamped down hard on Shanghai, castigating China's second city for its prewar status as a playground of gangsters and colonial adventurers.



And so it was. In its heyday, the 1920s and '30s, cosmopolitan Shanghai was a dynamic melting pot for people, ideas and money from all over the planet. Business boomed, fortunes were made, and everything seemed possible. It was a time of breakneck industrial progress, swaggering confidence and smoky jazz venues.

Thanks to economic reforms implemented in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping, Shanghai's commercial potential has reemerged and is flourishing again. Stand today on the historic Bund and look across the Huangpu River. The soaring 1,614-ft/492-m Shanghai World Financial Center tower looms over the ambitious skyline of the Pudong financial district. Alongside it are other key landmarks: the glittering, 88-story Jinmao Building; the rocket-shaped Oriental Pearl TV Tower; and the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The 128-story Shanghai Tower is the tallest building in China (and, after the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the second-tallest in the world).

Glass-and-steel skyscrapers reach for the clouds, Mercedes sedans cruise the neon-lit streets, luxury-brand boutiques stock all the stylish trappings available in New York, and the restaurant, bar and clubbing scene pulsates with an energy all its own. Perhaps more than any other city in Asia, Shanghai has the confidence and sheer determination to forge a glittering future as one of the world's most important commercial centers.

Highlights

Sights—The Bund and the Fairmont Peace Hotel; Yu Garden for a visit to the Huxinting teahouse; Jade Buddha Temple and its namesake statue; People's Square for people-watching; the 100th-floor viewing deck of the Shanghai World Financial Center for a bird's-eye view of Shanghai.

Museums—The Shanghai Museum on People's Square for both its architecture and collections; the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre for an eye-opening look at one of the world's fastest-changing cities; the Propaganda Poster Art Center for insights into China's turbulent postrevolutionary years; Shanghai Science and Technology Museum.



Memorable Meals—Nanxiang Dumpling House in Yu Garden for the city's special *xiaolongbao* pork or crab-soup dumplings; fine dining at the Bund, especially at Jean Georges for its retro-meets-modern-Shanghai decor and French-Asian fusion menu; Mr & Mrs Bund, for its glamour, cocktails and inventive European cuisine; home-cooked Shanghainese fare at stylish Lynn; the popular dim sum weekend brunch at Crystal Jade.

Late Night—A Kunju opera performance; elegant cocktails at Glamour Bar or Sir Elly's; drinks and dancing at Mao, Livehouse or Muse; blues at Cotton Club; barhopping in Tianzifeng, Xintiandi or along Yongkang Road; a night cruise on the Huangpu River.

Walks—Admiring the buildings in the old French concession or International Settlement; taking in the view of the Huangpu River along the Bund; strolling through the quaint Old City; watching the crowds at pedestrianized Nanjing East Road.

Especially for Kids—Oriental Pearl Radio and TV Tower with its views from the top and Space City at the bottom; aquatic flora and fauna at Shanghai Ocean Aquarium; the Sketch Aquarium on the 94th floor of the World Financial Center; crossing the river on the Puxi-Pudong ferry.

Geography

Modern Shanghai is split into two distinct and vastly different districts by the Huangpu River. The west side is called Puxi (pronounced *pu-SHEE*), former home to the international settlements. Puxi still boasts the historic architecture for which Shanghai is famous. To the east of the river is Pudong—a modern economic-development area that Deng Xiaoping designated as China's future commercial heart. Though Pudong boasts the city's stock exchange, financial district and main international airport, Puxi is still considered the city center and is home to the revamped and enlarged Hongqiao International Airport (though most international flights touch down at the larger airport in Pudong). The Bund (Waitan) is Puxi's waterfront boulevard—it lines the west side of the Huangpu River and is considered to be Shanghai's main tourist attraction.

In its 1930s heyday, Shanghai was delineated by its foreign concessions, and the former borders still serve a purpose. The old Chinese city lies within the Zhonghua Road-Renmin Road circle. The former International Settlement (the British and the U.S. concessions merged in 1862) stretches north of the Old City. It's bordered by the Huangpu River to the east, Huashan Road to the west, Suzhou Creek to the north and Yanan Road to the south.

The busy and famous Nanjing Road and its pedestrian walkway lie in this part of town, just north of Yanan Road. The old French concession lies south of the Yanan Road overpass, north of Zhaojiabang Road, and stretches from Xujiahui in the west to the Bund in the east (with the exception of the northern half of the old Chinese city). Much of the city's sightseeing, dining and shopping lie in the former French concession, including Xintiandi, the popular pedestrian-friendly entertainment district that houses Western-style clubs, restaurants and shops in a visitor-friendly, if slightly touristic, ambience.

History

Shanghai's beginning was humble—little more than a small fishing village tucked beside a tributary of the Yangtze River, where China's longest and most important river completes its 3,906-mi/6,300-km journey to the East China Sea. In the late 1830s, however, the Chinese emperor's efforts to stem the trade in opium (largely conducted by British merchants) within the country's borders resulted in the First Opium



War of 1839-42, which China lost. The victorious British forced the Chinese to open up a series of treaty ports along the nation's seaboard, thus allowing increased trade between China and foreign powers. Shanghai was one such port.

The small fishing village was soon divided into extraterritorial "concessions" administered by France, Britain and the U.S., who each brought their own particular cultures, architectural styles and sensibilities to the Chinese city. By the 1930s, 90,000 foreigners called Shanghai home, including British, Americans, French, Germans and Japanese, as well as Russians who had fled communism in their own country.

Although the burgeoning metropolis had its own walled Chinese city, many native residents also chose to live in the foreign settlements, where employment was more readily available and foreign police forces administered rule of law, affording a certain level of protection from warlords. In 1939, the city boasted a population of 4 million.

The eclectic mix of cultures and the city's increasing openness to Western influence had a profound effect on Shanghai, which quickly became internationally famous for its culture, arts, opulent buildings, chic hotels and ballrooms, and vibrant commerce. But the gap between the haves and the have-nots was wide—according to firsthand accounts, it was not uncommon for wealthy foreigners to nonchalantly step over starving, dying Chinese in the street without a pause.

This paradox of wealth and degradation gave rise to an increasing sense of anger and injustice among many Chinese, and in 1921, 13 delegates—including Mao Zedong—held the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China at a site that is now open to the public in the Xintiandi area of the city. The Congress started a movement that would change all of China.

The Red Army triumphed following fierce fighting against occupying Japanese forces from the late 1930s to 1945, and a civil war against the ruling Kuomintang, establishing the new People's Republic of China in 1949. Most foreigners had either fled Shanghai before the war or had been shipped home after being released from internment by the Japanese. With the founding of the People's Republic, the city was closed to the outside world behind what was known as "the bamboo curtain."

In the ensuing years, Shanghai was deliberately neglected by a Beijing-centric government scornful of the city's decadent past, and it was starved of investment and attention. A sign of its future renaissance, however, came during former U.S. President Richard Nixon's historic 1972 visit to China, when the Shanghai Communique, a series of formal agreements to re-establish Sino-U.S. diplomatic ties, was signed at the Jinjiang Hotel in Shanghai.

But the city's resurrection wasn't immediate. Shanghai was made to wait until after the launch, in the late 1980s, of Deng's economic reforms before it could hurriedly re-embrace the internationalism that defined its prerevolution identity. Today it's second only to Hong Kong as China's most globalized city—socially, culturally and economically. As Deng famously said, "If China is a dragon, Shanghai is its head."

Now, little more than two decades after Shanghai was officially given the go-ahead to embrace economic development, the city has comprehensively overhauled and revitalized its infrastructure. Shanghai also boasts mainland China's first free trade zone (FTZ), an 11-mi/ 29-km square testing ground in Pudong for China's ongoing experiments with market reform. Its success has led to the program being expanded in other cities.

Port Information

Location

There are three international cruise terminals in Shanghai: the Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal (1 Baoyang Road, Bao Shan District, Shanghai); the Shanghai Port International Cruise Terminal (500 Daming Road East, Hongkou District, Shanghai); and the Waigaoqiao International Cruise Terminal in Pudong where the gigantic cruise ships such as Diamond Princess dock.

During the city's decadent era of the 1920s and '30s, cruise ships sailed frequently into port along the Huangpu River. Although Shanghai remained a stopping-off point for some Asian cruises, there was less oceangoing passenger traffic in recent years. However, the Shanghai International Cruise Port changed that.

The 1.41-sq-mi/3.66-sq-km purpose-built passenger terminal is located on the North Bund development area. The berthing dock, at 2,887 ft/880 m, can accommodate three passenger liners of up to 80,000 tons and handle 1 million passengers annually. The surrounding North Bund area is experiencing ongoing redevelopment with new luxury hotels, shopping and dining options. It's also on Line 12 of the Shanghai metro.

Not all ships dock in North Bund, however. Those bound for Korea and Japan dock at Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal. The Baoshan International Cruiser Homeport, and more than 200 ships representing more than a dozen cruise lines dock there annually.

Potpourri

Shanghai got its name from its location. Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, where it empties into the East China Sea, the city name is loosely translated as "above or next to the sea."

Shanghai's local dialect is only 50% comprehensible to Mandarin speakers.

Despite chilly winter temperatures, the river that bisects Shanghai, the Huangpu, never freezes.

In Chinese, *Xi* and *Dong* mean "west" and "east." So downtown Shanghai, which is west of the Huangpu river is known as Puxi. The land on the east side of the river is called Pudong.

The vibrant Pudong commercial area was built on a field of former rice paddies.

The term "to shanghai" was coined in the 19th century when overseas laborers were kidnapped into indentured servitude as crew members for various ships.

Almost 10 million individual journeys are taken on the Shanghai metro each day, even though the city's subway system has only operated since 1995. With lines being perpetually added and extended, Shanghai's metro network has grown into one of the world's largest and fastest-growing underground rail networks.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Start your exploration of the city with tea at Huxinting teahouse in Yu Garden. It is said to be the very teahouse on the willow pattern that graces crockery in homes across the world. Then explore the surrounding old Chinese city, with its quaint traditional homes and bustling antiques market and street-food stores, before strolling on the waterfront boulevard known as the Bund.

Stroll down Nanjing East Road, which has been transformed into a people-only thoroughfare with several retail malls, and soon you'll arrive at People's Square, an ideal spot for people-watching. There, you can see past and present Shanghai interacting: The "square" was originally an oval-shaped racetrack, and it's flanked by some of Shanghai's most modern skyscrapers and finest art-deco architectural treasures, such as the Park Hotel and former YMCA building on the north side. While you're there, don't miss China's ancient treasures on display at the Shanghai Museum, which is shaped like a ancient *ding* cooking vessel.

Also take an awe-inspiring look at Shanghai's future at the Urban Planning Exhibition Centre. The Jade Buddha Temple is a short cab ride away, as is Shanghai's vibrant contemporary-art district on Moganshan Road.

Be sure to spend some time in the former French concession, particularly around Huaihai, Fuxing, Sinan and Yongfu roads, for a view of old Shanghai and the city's chic stores and restaurants. You can tour the former residence of Sun Yat-sen, considered the father of modern China, and check out the Xintiandi area, which houses the site of the first Chinese Communist Party meeting as well as a host of upscale restaurants and bars.

One of the best ways to enjoy twilight is to make a trip to Pudong. Cross the Huangpu River on the ferry, view the Bund from the cafes and park flanking the Pudong riverside, and then catch a bird's-eye view of the city from the 100th-floor observation deck at the Shanghai World Financial Center, the top of the modern, art-deco Jinmao Tower or the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, the gaudy, spaceshiplike symbol of modern Shanghai.

Also in Pudong, some parts of the World Expo site will remain open to the public permanently—notably the site's tallest structure, the vibrant red China Pavilion, which was reborn post-Expo as the China Art Museum with an interesting selection of modern art, and the saucer-shaped Expo Pavilion, which became the Mercedes-Benz Arena and hosts world-class sporting events, concerts and theatrical shows.

If you still have some energy once night falls, take a Huangpu River night cruise or enjoy a leisurely cocktail-with-a-view on the grand terrace of one of the Bund's new generation of classy lounge bars.

Some spots outside Shanghai offer getaways from the city's urban chaos. If possible, take a day trip to the traditional gardens of Suzhou, the lakeside city of Hangzhou or to a quaint river town, such as Zhouzhuang or Xitang.



Historic Sites

The Bund (Waitan)

This waterfront boulevard is Shanghai's most-photographed landmark. Europeans, Japanese and Americans built their banks, clubs, trading houses, hotels and consulates there, in styles ranging from neoclassical to Gothic to art deco. Many of the historical structures, such as Nos. 3, 5 and 6, have been heavily renovated and converted into luxury shopping, dining and nightlife centers, and luxury hotels have also moved in, including Peninsula and Waldorf-Astoria. Two architectural marvels to check out are the art-deco masterpiece that is the Fairmont Peace Hotel, and the former Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (No. 12, now the Pudong Development Bank), the dome of which is decorated with an exquisite Italian-tile mosaic. The Bund is a bustling gathering place for both tourists and residents at all times of the day and night. It's interesting to note that although overseas visitors tend to point their cameras west to the old structures, Chinese lenses are firmly focused on the modern skyscrapers across the Huangpu River in Pudong. The Bund stretches along East Zhongshan Yi Lu, between Yan'an Lu and Suzhou Creek.

Sun Yat-sen's Former Residence (Sun Zhongshan Jinianguan)

7 Xiangshan Road (South Shaanxi Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5306-3361

http://www.zs.gov.cn/english/topics_e/2-2-1.htm

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was the father of the Chinese republic, which was established in 1911. He and his wife, Soong Qingling, lived in this two-story house 1919-24. Admission price includes a tour of the grounds and entrance to the museum.

Daily 9 am-4 pm. 20 yuan.

Site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Zhonggong Yidahuizhi)

374 Huangpo South Road (Huangponanlu metro station)
Shanghai, China

The first National Congress was a secret meeting held in July 1921 at the Bo Wen Girls School, in the area that is now Xintiandi. Thirteen delegates, including Mao Zedong, from communist, Marxist and socialist groups from around the nation, gathered in one small back room. The room stands today as it looked then, complete with a table set for 13 people at tea. There's a small museum with relics, documents and photos.

Daily 9 am-4 pm. Free entry.

Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum

62 Changyang Road (Dalian Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Tens of thousands of Jews, first fleeing the Russian Revolution and then escaping Hitler, arrived in Shanghai from Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia in the first part of the 20th century. In 1943, the victorious Japanese forced all stateless Jewish immigrants into the "Designated Area for Stateless Refugees" in Hongkou District, where they lived until the end of the war. This synagogue was built in



1927. It no longer holds services, but its small museum documents the Ashkenazi Jewish community of old Shanghai.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. 50 yuan.

People's Square

Shanghai's rather chaotic main square was built for the people (*renmin*) and has become one of their most important social and cultural centers. Constructed in the mid-19th century by the British as a racetrack for the city's elite, today it's home to the Shanghai Museum, the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai Grand Theatre and municipal offices. The northeastern part of the square has been extensively remodeled, and the whole area is now a nexus of commuters and traffic, though the pleasant landscaping in front of the Shanghai Concert Hall attracts families and children to sit and chat as well as, on evenings and weekends, the city's skateboarding youth. It's bordered by Weihai, Xizang, Huangpi Bei and Fuzhou roads.

Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower (Dongfang Mingzhu)

1 Century Ave. (Lujiazui metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-5879-1888

<http://www.orientalpearltower.com>

The people of Shanghai consider this their Eiffel Tower, although it's not half as elegant: It's gaudy and UFO-like, 1,535 ft/468 m high, and made up of 11 steel spheres of different sizes that are supposed to represent pearls (as in Shanghai, Pearl of the Orient). You can walk on transparent panels in the 360-degree observatory or ride the roller coaster inside the Tower's lower sphere. At the bottom is the Shanghai Municipal History Museum. Go on a clear day for the best views.

Daily 8 am-9:30 pm. 60 yuan-100 yuan.

Jin Mao Tower

88 Century Ave. (Lujiazui metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 5047-5101 or 5047-6688

<http://www.jinmao88.com>

This awe-inspiring, 88-floor, pagoda-influenced, art-deco-style skyscraper is another of Pudong's incredible structures. At 1,381 ft/421 m (including antenna) it is currently the third-tallest building in mainland China and among the 10 tallest in the world. The city may be full of aesthetically questionable structures, but the Jin Mao is an attractive mix of traditional and modern influences, as well as Eastern and Western. It blends the classic 13-tier Buddhist pagoda with postmodern steel and glass; the 555-room Grand Hyatt Shanghai occupies floors 53-87. On the 88th floor, an observation deck offers great views of Shanghai. Two high-speed elevators get you there in 45 seconds.

Observation deck is open daily 8:30 am-9:30 pm. 120 yuan.



Jade Buddha Temple (Yufo Si)

170 Anyuan Road (Changshou Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6266-3668

<http://yufotemple.com>

Completed in 1918, this temple is new by Chinese standards. It's known (and named) for its more than 6-ft-/2-m-tall seated Buddha made of white jade, originally brought to Shanghai from what is now Myanmar (Burma). The temple is built with symmetrical halls and courtyards, upturned eaves and bright yellow walls—the ancient style of the Song (or Sung) dynasty. It's crowded with worshippers during Chinese New Year (usually February).

Daily 8 am-4:30 pm. Temple admission 20 yuan. Jade Buddha Hall admission 10 yuan.

Museums

The Propaganda Poster Art Center

868 Huashan Road, Room B-OC
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6211-1845 or 1390-184-1246

<http://www.shanghaipropagandaart.com>

Lurking in the dark basement of a nondescript apartment block, this miniature museum charts three turbulent decades in modern Chinese history through colorful propaganda art. The posters provide fascinating insights into the political thinking that shaped a nation. The center is the brainchild of tour guide Yang Pei Ming, who has more than 5,000 propaganda posters and believes he has amassed the world's largest collection of Chinese revolutionary art.

Daily 10 am-5 pm. 20 yuan.

Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

100 Renmin Ave. (People's Square metro station)
Shanghai, China

Don't let the mundane-sounding name fool you: The Urban Planning Exhibition Centre is the city's monument to itself, stunningly showcasing Shanghai's development, past and present. Follow the crowds upstairs to a 1:500 scale model representing what the city should look like in 2020. You can find every individual building in Shanghai, from tiny one-story alley houses to towering skyscrapers. Anxious residents crane their necks over the model to see if their pleasant French concession houses will be left standing. The museum also features scaled models of yesteryear Shanghai, plus side-by-side photo comparisons of how various intersections looked decades ago and today—the change is mind-boggling.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. 30 yuan.



Shanghai Museum

201 Renmin Ave. (People's Square metro station)
Shanghai, China

This beauty of a museum, shaped like a bronze *ding* urn, is mainland China's foremost showcase of artifacts and relics. State-of-the-art galleries house paintings, sculpture, ceramics, calligraphy, jade, Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, and coins. The collection of bronzes is among the best in the world. Each gallery chronologically illustrates the development of the individual art forms over centuries. Information is well-presented in English, and the audio guide is highly informative. The excellent gift shop on the first floor has an extensive range of books and scrolls.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. Free.

Shanghai History Museum

1 Century Ave., Pudong
Shanghai, China

Also known as the Shanghai Municipal History Museum, this small museum recalls Shanghai's pre-1949 heyday. Relocated to the ground floor of the Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower, it's an interesting place displaying more than 1,300 photos and artifacts, including the boundary tablets of the former International Settlement and French concession. It's also home to the famous bronze lions that once guarded the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank on the Bund. Some information is presented in English.

Daily 8 am-9:30 pm. 35 yuan.

China Art Museum

161 Nan Lu (Shanghai Pudong New Area)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-400-921-9021

<https://www.artmuseumonline.org/art/art/index.html>

The former Shanghai Art Museum changed its name and moved into the China pavilion on the former Expo 2010 lands. The government-sponsored museum focuses on modern art, mostly Chinese, but one floor has some foreign art.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-5 pm. Free.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Xuhui

The westernmost portion of the former French concession that reaches to the southwestern banks of the Huangpu river, Xuhui is largely a residential district, but it is a nice area in which to stroll down pleasant tree-lined lanes. It is also home to some of the city's finest European-style houses and apartment blocks, and it showcases art-deco, French, neoclassical, Spanish revivalist and an assortment of other architectural styles from the early 20th century. A number of impressive art museums, including the Power Station of Art, the Long Museum West Bund and the Yuz Museum, are located there.

Xintiandi

This shopping, dining and entertainment area has become the second most visited spot in Shanghai for Chinese tourists (after the Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower). Developed by a Hong Kong company and designed by Bostonian Ben Wood, Xintiandi is a massive creation meant to fuse the old Shanghai with the future one.

Set along winding lanes, the development includes chic restaurants, bars and shops that are housed in rebuilt stone gate (*shikumen*) homes, complete with redbrick, stone facades and terra-cotta roofs. A park and artificial lake border the area. The whole effect is a bit contrived and Singapore-clean, but young Chinese professionals and foreign expatriates like to go there to look fashionable and consume the latest in Western and Asian food, fashion and entertainment.

Xintiandi also houses the site of the first meeting of the Communist Party. The very place where Mao Zedong and his comrades conceived the People's Revolution is now part of a trendy shopping and entertainment district: This mixture of capitalism and communism makes Xintiandi a perfect symbol for today's Shanghai. Xintiandi is in the central part of the former French concession and is bordered by Taicang, Huangpi South, Madang and Xingye roads.

The Old City

This area within the Zhonghua Road-Renmin Road circle remained under Chinese law and administration after the country was defeated in the first Opium War. And it was in these winding back alleys that Shanghai gained notoriety as a haven for gangsters and opium dens. Today the drugs and the crime are gone, and the narrow wandering lanes are surrounded by a new generation of high-rise towers. Still, many of the crowded yet quaint neighborhoods and tiny, pre-1949 houses remain. A stroll through the Old City, even in areas where it has been modernized and gentrified, offers a look at how most residents once lived. It's best visited during the day.

Pudong

This is Shanghai's financial center, and because much of it is still being built, it seems to grow a little more each day. It's hard to believe that until the early 1990s, rice paddies dominated the ground that now supports some of the world's tallest skyscrapers. Although most visitors forgo Pudong in order to see Puxi's historic centers, it's worth a visit for an eye-opening look at Shanghai's fast track to modernity.

The central financial zone of Lujiazui is the heart of the district. Most of Pudong's attractions are along Lujiazui Road and Century Avenue. To the north of the road, along the Huangpu River, is the space-age Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower. Just south of the road is the Binjiang Avenue, the waterfront promenade. A little farther east stands the 88-story Jin Mao Tower and 101-story Shanghai World Financial Center (SWFC). Both towers host Hyatt hotels, the Park Hyatt in the SWFC and the Grand Hyatt in the JinMao Tower. Also in this district are the Ritz-Carlton Shanghai and The Shangri-La.

Nanjing Road

The Chinese used to consider Nanjing Road the busiest street in the world, with its multitude of people, cars and bicycles. But in the late 1990s, the government closed off much of the eastern section to cars, cutting down on some of the chaos. Between Henan and Xizang roads, it is now a pedestrian walkway, full of shops and restaurants, as well as people-watching opportunities. The western part of Nanjing Road, between Shaanxi Lu and Jing'an Temple, is now the city's showpiece upscale shopping and business district, known collectively as Jing'an.

Former French Concession

The former French Concession is the most charming part of the city. It's a historic district known for its tranquil atmosphere and beautiful old architecture, as well as shops, bars and cafes. The main thoroughfare is tree-lined Huaihai Lu, a relaxed, upscale shopping street that is still marked by old French buildings.

Parks & Gardens

Yu Gardens

257 Yuyuan Road (Yuyuan metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6373-6950

<http://www.yugarden.com.cn>

This traditional Chinese meditative garden was built 1559-77 by the Pan family, who were officials in the Ming dynasty. It was destroyed during the First Opium War (1839-42) but later rebuilt. Besides its signature bridges, winding walkways, carp-filled ponds, dragon-lined walls and pavilions, the gardens encompass an old opera stage, a museum dedicated to the Society of Small Swords rebellion against French colonialists in the mid-1800s, and the Chenghuang Miao (Temple of the City God). Some think the complex is too touristy (particularly on Saturday and Sunday when it gets very crowded), but it is one of Shanghai's few old attractions still left standing. Surrounding the garden is a modern bazaar of stores that sell overpriced arts, crafts and souvenirs.

In the middle of the lake just outside the garden gate is the Huxinting Teahouse, which opened in 1856 and is said to be the very building depicted on the willow pattern on fine china. Although tea is cheaper on the first floor, the view is better from the top floor. A traditional tea ceremony is performed there on Monday afternoons, accompanied by live traditional Chinese music. To get to the garden, you must wind your way through the bazaar to the ticket booth, which is just north of the lake. The gardens are bordered by Fuyou, Jiujiachang, Fangbang and Anren roads.

Daily 8:30 am-5 pm (teahouse is open 8:30 am-9 pm).

Riverside Promenade

Binjiang Avenue
Shanghai, China

This sterile park that runs 8,200 ft/2,500 m along the Huangpu River features more concrete than grass. But it does offer scenic views of the Bund and of the barges working on the river and provides access to the Pudong-Puxi ferry terminal. A growing number of restaurants, coffee shops and bars have led this area to be referred to as "The New Bund of Pudong."

Daily 8 am-11 pm.



Recreation

Given its overwhelming air and water pollution, Shanghai isn't the best city for recreation. It is also huge and sprawling, meaning there is very little in the way of hiking or outdoor sports within easy reach—it would be necessary to board a plane or train and leave the city to pursue those activities. There are vibrant sports groups and leagues for all types of activities and team sports, started some years ago by many of the city's longer-term expatriates.

Visitors may find it easier to participate in some of the city's indoor sporting options, which include swimming, tennis, snow skiing, bungee jumping, rock climbing, martial arts and scuba diving. Golfers will find several 18-hole golf clubs and driving ranges in Pudong and the outskirts of Puxi. A limited number allow nonmembers to play.

Golf

Shanghai Binhai Golf Club

5333 East Highway (Pudong New Area)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 3800-1888

<http://www.binhaigolf.com>

This golf resort offers two 18-hole championship-standard courses (one of which is a links course, and the other features Shanghai's longest par-5 hole) and two driving ranges, plus a hotel, clubhouse and tennis courts. It also hosts regular invitational tournaments.

Nightlife

Shanghai's nightlife is now truly world-class, ranging from pulsing clubs that attract the world's top DJs and classy Bund-front cocktail lounges to playing pool at an American bar or sipping beer on a garden patio in a converted French concession villa. Most of the popular clubs don't close their doors until 2 am or so.

Things are always changing, however, with old bars shutting down and new bars popping up out of the blue. The smartest upscale bars are on the Bund, and the best place to barhop is in the former French concession, where you'll find Shanghai's most popular bar areas—Xintiandi, Fuxing and Yongfu roads. The area around Nanjing Road, near Tongren Road, has a few gritty sports bars popular with expats, most notably The Big Bamboo.

Shanghai is also known for karaoke. It's ubiquitous, as KTV (Karaoke TV) establishments abound, with private rooms complete with serving girls, fine cognac and fruit platters. Just beware of the prices.

Bars, Taverns & Pubs

Sasha's

11 Dongping Lu (corner of Hengshan Lu)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6474-6628

<http://www.sashas-shanghai.com>



Charming Sasha's serves up jugs of cold beer, quality comfort food and good times, along with a substantial dose of history, housed as it is in a charming, three-story villa in the old French concession. Once the home of T.V. Soong, one of the richest men in prerevolutionary China, the house later fell into the hands of Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's wife, who made it administrative headquarters for her revolutionary Chinese opera troupe in the 1960s. Now renovated, it has brought sophistication back to one of Shanghai's most historical and delightful buildings. One of the city's best expat theater troupes, Urban Aphrodite (phone 187-2152-8625, <http://urbanaphroditeinternational.weebly.com>), hosts plays and musicals in the cozy third-floor theater.

Daily 11 am-2 am.

M Glam Bar

Five on the Bund, 5 Zhongshan No. 1 E. Road, Sixth Floor
Shanghai, China

Shanghai's classiest cocktail lounge is a clever melange of modern finesse and 1930s Shanghai chic. The large windows offer fine views of the Huangpu River, and the interior features a variety of modern and ancient sofas and armchairs, retro Chinese furnishings and art-deco accessorizing. The large, oval bar means service is always quick; the waiters mix a mean martini. Other highlights include a corner champagne bar, regular live jazz and classical music, and the annual Shanghai Literary Festival.

Daily 4 pm-late.

Dr Wine

177 Fumin Road (near Julu Lu, Jing'an District, Changshu Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

This split-level venue has become an after-work favorite for local office workers in need of a glass of *vino*. An extensive wine menu is supplemented by a daily specials board, as well as assorted finger food in the downstairs bar area. Upstairs is more spacious and more formal with dining tables and a full evening food menu. Service is amiable, and the clientele is a convivial mix of locals and foreigners.

Daily 11:30 am-2 am.

Cotton's

132 Anting Road (corner of Jianguo Road, Hengshan Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6433-7995

<http://www.cottons-shanghai.com>

Occupying a renovated three-floor French concession villa, this is one of the city's friendliest and most laid-back bars. Owner Cotton Ding and her brother run a tight ship, serving well-priced beers, wines and cocktails, plus bar food, in a homey atmosphere—note the real fireplaces on each of the three levels. There's also a spacious garden patio and outdoor bar for the long, hot summer nights. There is a second location at 294 Xinhua Lu near Panyu Lu (phone 6282-6897).

Monday-Friday 11 am-2 am, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-4 am.



Performing Arts

Artistic development is slowly gaining momentum in Shanghai. Most visitors catch Era, renowned for incredible acrobatic feats and stunts, or a performance of traditional Chinese opera.

Traditional arts such as Beijing Opera and other regional Chinese opera are popular. China's best Kunju opera is in Shanghai. Although lesser-known internationally than Beijing opera, Kunju is considered more elegant, simpler and more melodic.

The premier place to see international and domestic theater, ballet and music is the spectacular, modern Shanghai Grand Theatre (Daju Yuan) at the north end of People's Square. It's also worth passing by at night, when its glass facade twinkles with lights. <http://www.shgtheatre.com>.

Check the Shanghai Cultural Information website for information and tickets to theater, opera and dance performances as well as concerts being held at Shanghai's theaters, concert halls, arenas and art centers. <http://www.culture.sh.cn>.

Music

Shanghai Symphony Orchestra

105 Hunan Lu (near Yongfu Lu, Xuhui District; Shanghai Library metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-2426-6162 or 6437-5617

<http://www.sh-symphony.com>

Although not on par with major orchestras from around the world, the Shanghai Symphony performs classical concerts at the Shanghai Concert Hall. Various international headliners use the concert hall when the symphony is not in its season.

Opera

Yifu Theater

701 Fuzhou Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6351-4668

<http://tianchan.com>

Tianchan Peking Opera Centre Yifu Theatre, as this theater is called, hosts performances of Beijing, Huju, Kunju and Shaoxing opera styles

Theater

Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center

288 Anfu Road (near Wukang Road, Xuhui District)
Shanghai, China

Modern Chinese interpretation of international and local dramatic theater can be found at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center. High-quality performances—mostly in Chinese—in a quiet part of the former French concession.



Era

Shanghai Circus World, 2266 Gonghexin Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6652-5468

<http://www.era-shanghai.com>

If you see only one acrobatic show in Shanghai, make sure it's Era. This spectacular fusion of Chinese acrobatics, dance, traditional theater and music is performed nightly, and it packs in the punters. The daredevil motorcycles-in-a-cage climax is breathtaking. Great entertainment.

Venues

Shanghai Grand Theatre

300 Renmin Lu
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6386-8686

<http://www.shgtheatre.com>

This venue hosts international and domestic theater, ballet and music.

Box office is open daily 9 am-7:30 pm.

Majestic Theater

66 Jiangning Road (near Fenxian Road; West Nanjing Road metro station)
Shanghai, China

This small theater hosts regular music and dance, including the famous (and spectacular) Shaolin kung-fu monks' martial-arts shows, which play at least two seasons per year.

Spectator Sports

Shanghai is increasingly a thriving city for spectator sports, and you can catch popular games of soccer and basketball, as well as international-standard golf, tennis, athletics and motor racing. The city now hosts major international events in a variety of sports.

The city's main sporting venue, Shanghai Indoor Stadium, is a grandiose, UFO-like stadium that seats 80,000 people. It hosts many athletic events, but its primary use is for soccer matches. 666 Tianyaoqiao Lu (near Lingling Lu), Shanghai. Phone 6426-6666.

Shopping

Thanks to Shanghai's obsession with commercialism and internationalism, the city has the widest variety of goods in the nation—except for Hong Kong. Shiny shopping malls now dominate the city's shopping streets. New downtown brand stores pop up nearly every month in an attempt to satisfy the locals' seemingly insatiable appetite for *ming pai*, or famous labels, with such upscale locations as the Bund and Xintiandi specializing in uberchic brand boutiques.



Two streets, Nanjing Road and Huaihai Road, have been the city's shopping meccas since the concession era, and smaller venues such as the lanes of Tianzifang shops at 210 Taikang Road offer small, independent boutiques as well as clothing and home-accessory stores.

Trendy clothing boutiques intersperse with individuals hawking knockoff designer bags on Julu Road near Fumin Road and on Xinle Road near Shaanxi Road. Outdoor markets located in the city's nooks and crannies are also interesting and give insight into Shanghai's bustling street life.

Antiques, Chinese arts and crafts, silk and linen are available in established stores as well as on the street. Be careful when buying antiques, however. Fakes are frequently hidden among the real treasures, and only items dated after 1797 can be legally exported. Contact the Cultural Antique Export Verification Unit of the Beijing Cultural Antique Bureau if you aren't sure. Phone 6500-3311, ext. 255.

No matter what you buy—particularly at markets—be sure to bargain vigorously. Keep in mind that a purchase is not a deal unless both sides think they've done well. We usually start at one quarter of the asking price, and stay firm. Walking away often encourages the vendor see things your way.

Within 20 years, Shanghai's contemporary art scene went from nearly nonexistent to burgeoning, with pieces now selling for millions of yuan. Luckily for art lovers, nearly all of it is housed in the abandoned factories and warehouses at 50 Moganshan Road. It all started when artists found the cheap, empty space and started moving their studios there, and the galleries soon followed. The complex is a great place to browse for the day and enjoy lunch at a funky cafe.

Shopping Hours: Generally, daily 10 am-10 pm.

Department Stores

Shanghai No. 1 Department Store

830 Nanjing E. Road
Shanghai, China

This has been Shanghai's largest and most important state-owned department store for decades. It used to reflect communist disarray, but today it looks much shinier. On weekends it attracts masses of Chinese shoppers.

Daily 9:30 am-10 pm.

Galleries

ShanghART

50 Moganshan Road, Buildings 16 and 18
Shanghai, China

Phone: 6359-3923

<http://www.shanghartgallery.com>

The city's first Chinese contemporary-art gallery is also its most consistent and has evolved into a bustling hub of art activity. Look for work by some of China's best-known artists, including Ding Yi, Xue Song, Zhou Tiehai, Wu Yiming and Shen Fan. The staff are some of the most knowledgeable in the country on contemporary Chinese art. An adjoining H-Space also hosts smaller exhibitions. Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Markets

South Bund Fabric Market

399 Lujiabang Road, near Nanchang Road
Shanghai, China

Local vendors gather in and outside of this venue to sell a wide range of silks and other fabric. If you have several days in Shanghai, this is the perfect place to have any Western clothes ordered (or copied) or Chinese clothes made by professional tailors.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Fuyou Road Antiques Market

457 Fangbang Middle Road, Old City
Shanghai, China

A bit of a misnomer, this market is not actually on Fuyou Road but on Fangbang Road. In any case, you'll find everything from old wicker baskets and Mao paraphernalia to real and fake antique porcelain in this warehouse of a market. As the years go by, more and more fakes appear alongside the genuine items. On the weekends, hawkers set up outside the warehouse in the wee dawn hours, and the top level of the structure is open to even more temporary sellers from upcountry. Get there early for the best selection.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Dongtai Road Antiques Market (Liulichang)

Dongtai Road (at Liuhe Road, one block west of South Xizang Road, near People's Square or Xintiandi; Laoximen metro station)
Shanghai, China

This antiques market is one of Shanghai's best known. You'll find porcelain, Victrolas, jade, Mao paraphernalia, antique baskets and lots more. Dealers set up outdoor stalls lining the street, a few blocks west of the Old City. Prices have shot up in the past few years, and fakes abound, so be careful what you buy. It's always fun to browse, though.

Daily 9 am-6 pm.

Bird and Flower Market (Hua Niao Shichang)

Xizang Road (across from the Dongtai Road Antiques Market, near People's Square or Xintiandi)
Shanghai, China

This colorful market sells more than just birds and flowers. Hawkers also sell pets such as fish, cats, turtles and frogs, a whole range of plants, bonsai trees, orchids and clay pots. Knickknacks and yummy, greasy Chinese snacks, too.

Daily 8 am-dusk.



Shopping Areas

Plaza 66

1266 Nanjing W. Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 2225-1800

<http://www.plaza66.com>

Even for those who don't much care for luxury brands, Plaza 66 has become a tourist attraction all its own. Four floors of top designer stores—think Hermes, D&G, Zegna and Bulgari—in an airy and spacious modern mall. It boasts a dine-to-be-seen atrium cafe, high-end dining on the upper levels and a luxe cafe and bar underneath the Dunhill store, and, on weekends, a classical sextet playing in the lobby, which make this the city's premier shopping address.

Daily 10 am-10 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

Shanghai's tradition of culinary creativity has been revived after a half-century of communism, and since China's opening to the West and economic reform, it has become a city of international tastes.

Although Shanghainese is sometimes called a regional cuisine, akin to Cantonese or Sichuanese, it's really a fusion of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui cuisines. Most Chinese restaurants in Shanghai serve dishes from different regions, and many still serve true, authentic fare. Typical dishes include *jiachang doufu* (home-style tofu), *pao fan* (a thick rice soup) and *su ban dou* (cold bean mash with vegetables). Dishes are usually built on foundations of oil, sugar and dark sauces. Fish is extremely popular, with river fish preferred over ocean varieties. Shanghai hairy crab is the region's pricey fall specialty, served in October and November. The city also has its version of Cantonese dim sum, such as the ever-popular *xiaolong bao* (pork or crab soup dumplings) and *shengjian mantou* (pan-fried pork dumplings). You can often find steamed buns and dumplings, *you tiao* (fried breadsticks), Shanghainese fried noodles, and baked and fried breads being sold by street vendors.

If you're not hungry for Chinese food, delicious foreign foods—from Japanese and Korean to Cajun and oven-fired pizza—are readily available. And new restaurants arrive on the scene monthly.

Many Chinese restaurants have English-language menus. Sometimes you have to ask for one, and you may find it difficult to order at eateries that don't have them. In those cases, if you can't find an English-speaking server, pantomime and drawings can suffice, but there is a good chance that mistakes will be made and adventurous surprises may be in store.

You could have every meal of your visit in Shanghai's ever-popular entertainment district Xintiandi. Fashionable—and usually expensive—eateries are housed in its old *shikumen* (stone gate) houses. If you find yourself doing business or staying at a hotel in the Hongqiao district, where the domestic airport is located, there are also some great restaurants. And the Bund is home to a few excellent, if expensive,



dining rooms. The main shopping thoroughfares of Nanjing Road and Huaihai Road are packed with hundreds of eateries of every hue and stripe.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines for a two-course dinner for one, excluding tip or drinks: \$ = less than 100 yuan; \$\$ = 100 yuan-180 yuan; \$\$\$ = 181 yuan-350 yuan; \$\$\$\$ = more than 350 yuan.

Local & Regional

Ye Shanghai

338 Huang Pi Nan Road, Xintiandi (Huangpi Nan Lu Station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6311-2323

<http://www.elite-concepts.com/page.aspx?corpname=elite&i=425>

Popular both with business travelers and leisure tourists, this restaurant serves regional cuisines in an elegant retro Shanghainese setting. The food is a refined mixture of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghainese cuisine. It's naturally lit during the day, but at night the red lanterns and heavy, dark wood floors and wall paneling echo ritzy 1920s Shanghai. The highly rated seafood comes baked, poached, steamed, braised, sun-dried and drunken. Dim sum is excellent, and vegetarians also have options—unusual for upscale Xintiandi.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Sichuan Citizen

378 Ferguson Lane
Shanghai, China

Phone: 5404-1235

<http://www.sichuancitizen.com>

Sichuanese food is known for its use of hot red chilis, and this stylish restaurant, designed as an updated traditional teahouse, keeps the flavors sizzling. The scarlet interior is packed every evening with a young crowd dining on garlicky cucumber salad, tangy crispy chicken and a pungent *mapo doufu*. The menu is huge, and the chefs can modify some of the dishes for vegetarians. Service is excellent, and the cocktails list is another plus—try the sweetly refreshing basil-drop martini to becalm those fearsome chilis

Sunday-Thursday 11 am-10 pm, Friday and Saturday 11 am-11 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Nanxiang Mantou (Dumpling House)

85 Yuyuan Road (in Yuyuan Bazaar, adjacent to the lake and the Bridge of Nine Turnings), Old City
Shanghai, China

Established in the early 1900s, Nanxiang is one of Shanghai's premier places to savor the city's signature dumplings. Located in Yuyuan Bazaar, the restaurant's ground floor is constantly crowded with long lines of locals waiting to get their dumplings to go. Go upstairs for a more refined dining experience. You'll be served delicious *xiaolong bao*, little steamer dumplings filled with pork and crab meat. (Here's the secret to enjoying *xiaolong bao*: Dip the dumpling in vinegar, bite a small hole off the top, and suck out the soup within before you eat the filling.) This is the real Shanghai deal.



Daily for breakfast, lunch and early dinner. \$.

Jesse's (Lao Ji Shi)

41 Tianping Road (Jiaotong University metro station)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 6282-9260

<http://www.xinjishi.com>

This simple two-story restaurant has only 12 tables. It's a local favorite with a community feel, and it is the perfect place to sample home-style Shanghainese food, including river shrimp and *jiachang* tofu. The atmosphere is friendly and unpretentious. There is a second, more upscale location with more seating in Xintiandi at House No. 9 (phone 6336-4746), with additional outlets—known as Xinjishi, or "new Jesse"—dotting the city.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Guyi

87 Fumin Road
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6249-5628

<http://www.guyi2001.com>

This Shanghai gem (often overlooked by visitors) is packed every evening with local diners seeking the fiery "hot pot" cuisine of Hunan province. Many chefs from the city's plusher joints vouch for the authenticity of the food, especially the green beans with minced pork. Additional locations on West Nanjing Road and at IAPM mall

Reservations absolutely necessary. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

1221

1221 Yanan W. Road (near Fanyu Road)
Shanghai, China

This unpretentious eatery's tasty Shanghainese food has made it a long-established expatriate favorite. The simple but postmodern interior and great service offer an escape from the chaotic dining rooms of most Chinese restaurants. Creative dishes include *you tiao* (fried breadsticks) with shredded beef; crispy duck; garlic-fried shrimp; and shredded pork served with scallions and pancakes. The house-made chicken soup with wontons is the real deal, and on top of all that, prices are reasonable.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

Asian

Simply Thai

5-C Dongping Lu
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-40088-07729

<http://www.simplythai-sh.com>

Located in an unpretentious two-story building on a small and unprepossessing street of interior-decor shops and tailors, this is one of the best, and most ubiquitous, Thai restaurants in town. Founded more than 10 years ago, Simply Thai is a local institution because of its dependable food and fine service, both of which can be hit-or-miss in Shanghai. Multiple locations.

Sunday-Thursday 11 am-11 pm, Friday and Saturday 11 am-midnight. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Itoya

24 Ruijin No. 2 Road
Shanghai, China

A well-established Japanese restaurant with several locations around town, Itoya serves some of the most succulent, melt-in-your-mouth raw fish in Shanghai. The fish arrives fresh daily and makes for huge pieces of delicious sushi and sashimi. The salmon is especially good, but also be sure to try the broiled cod, tempura and *udon* noodles. The set lunches are good values.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Fusion

T8

House 8, North Block, Lane 181, Taicang Road, Xintiandi
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6355-8999

<http://www.t8-shanghai.com>

This restaurant has become a Xintiandi favorite with its slick, trendy identity, excellent wine list and regularly updated menu. A dining area fitted in glass and traditional Chinese furniture surrounds an open kitchen. People go there to be seen and to dine on such creative fusion dishes as cured salmon and goat cheese roulade; Sichuan seared king prawns with octopus; garlic cream and crab spring roll; and tuna with prosciutto and caviar.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Afternoon tea is served 2:30-5:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



Jean Georges

Three on the Bund, 3 Zhongshan No. 1 Road, Fourth Floor (at Guangdong Road)
Shanghai, China

Phone: 21-6321-7733

<http://jean-georges.com>

This place is unlike any other restaurant in Shanghai. Top-grade French cuisine with a Chinese accent is served in a thickly carpeted old-world interior, offering a stunning view of the Bund. The variety of foie gras on the menu makes it difficult for diners to escape without trying at least one dish. Desserts are highly recommended.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6-11 pm. Reservations required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Mediterranean

M on the Bund

Five on the Bund, 5 Zhongshan East No. 1 Road
Shanghai, China

This restaurant represents everything that Shanghai's return to glamour is all about. It is situated on the seventh and top floor of the former Nisshin Kisen Kaisha Building, which was erected in 1925 for a Japanese shipping line. It features Mediterranean-influenced cuisine in a chic modern-meets-retro interior. The terrace overlooking the river is a perfect spot for brunch. Try the *crepes parmentier* with caviar, followed by the famous slowly baked, salt-encrusted leg of lamb. And leave room for the pavlova.

Monday-Friday 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6-10:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11:30 am-3 pm and 6-10:30 pm. Reservations required for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Vegetarian

Zao Zi Shu (Vegetarian Lifestyle)

258 Fengxian Road (near Jiangning Road)
Shanghai, China

Zao Zi Shu's tasty Chinese vegetarian cuisine is rated as firmly in the mainstream. Clean, friendly and eschewing MSG, trans-fatty acids, alcohol and smoking diners, it's the real veggie deal. Most of the dishes are fashioned—using tofu, gluten and mushroom protein—to resemble meat and fish favorites. The spicy Sichuan-style chicken with peanuts is excellent, as are the gingered chicken and vegetarian *xiaolongbao*. Also serves a broad range of Chinese teas and fresh juices. Additional locations in Luwan and Gubei.

Daily 11 am-11:30 pm. \$. No credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it in closer contact with the rest of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—You will need to establish local business contacts before journeying to China. Begin by contacting the department of your government that deals with international business (the U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance, or the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai; <http://www.amcham-shanghai.org>). It can put you in touch with business and government personnel in China. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is very important (for both business and social occasions). If you are late, it not only reflects badly on you, but it can be perceived as a slight that may put the whole business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshakes are the norm, accompanied by a slight nod of the head or a slight bow. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: "Mr.," "Ms." (unmarried female) and "Madam" (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the one that should be paired with the title (thus, Hu Jintao is referred to as President Hu).

Your business cards should have English on one side and a Chinese translation on the other; in swapping them use both hands to give and take each card. Visibly read the business cards you receive and treat them with respect by leaving them on the table in front of you during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, place the cards in a dedicated business card wallet or holder, separate from that in which you carry cash and credit cards.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with a short interval of polite conversation of a general nature, usually over tea or drinks. Hard-driving, get-right-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands; unflustered patience is critical. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that, too, is a clue that the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and often exotic foods. Expect many toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink or are among the many foreigners who don't enjoy its taste, politely decline by toasting with your tea or other drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a very formal body posture. Refrain from touching, and keep gestures to an absolute minimum.

Gift Giving—On the whole, gift giving in business is not common, and caution should be exercised. Gifts given to an entire group or company usually get a better response than those given to an individual. Do



not bestow the gifts until negotiations have been completed. If you receive a gift, do not unwrap it until you are out of the presence of the giver. The color of a gift and its wrapping paper have great significance. Two good choices are red (the color of luck) and yellow (the color of prosperity). Avoid items and wrappings that are white, because that color is associated with funerals. Clocks of any color can have the same connotation.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as Taiwan, Tibet, the Communist Party, China-U.S. relations, human-rights issues or the 1989 uprising in Tiananmen Square. Regardless of your acquaintances' real feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable expressing themselves to you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are all good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone on their possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you comment on favorably may be offered to you—don't accept.

Personal Safety

Shanghai, like China in general, has very low crime rates. A woman can walk home in the middle of the night, through the center of town, and feel safe.

However, travelers should still use common sense. China's changing economy has brought a growing disparity between rich and poor, as well as increased migration to the cities from poor rural areas. Also, street begging and crimes have increased. Most is petty crime. Keep your belongings close to you and watch out for pickpockets, especially around the train station, on the subway and in front of large hotels.

Do be wary of friendly, English-speaking locals who may invite you to tea. This is a common scam that unfortunately often leaves tourists stuck with a huge bill.

Like other large Chinese cities, Shanghai seems to be constantly under construction. Give construction areas and workers plenty of space, and cross the street rather than walk beneath scaffolding. Pedestrians have occasionally been struck by falling objects, and there is little recourse or compensation for such accidents.

Also be wary of Chinese drivers, many of whom consider traffic laws and stoplights to be suggestions rather than the rule. Busses and taxis are particularly loath to brake for pedestrians, even if they have the right of way. Pedestrian crosswalks are denoted by zebra crossings, though they are frequently ignored by drivers. Similarly, scooters often drive on sidewalks, beeping at any pedestrians who dare get in their way. Be especially careful in the evenings, as vehicles don't always use their headlights.

If you become the victim of crime, call the police hotline at 110.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Don't drink Shanghai's water: Opt instead for bottled or boiled water. Both are readily available. As far as eating goes, visitors generally go through a period of adjustment to the food. Most of the food is safe to eat, even if the restaurant looks a bit unhygienic. But use common sense: If you're uncomfortable with the cleanliness of a restaurant, don't eat there.



In the past, most foreign visitors complained about public toilets, which were merely concrete slabs placed over large pits. However, Shanghai has modernized at a rapid rate, and these days most tourist spots, hotels, restaurants, office buildings and shopping centers have clean, modern facilities.

Shanghai's air pollution has become a serious problem. On especially polluted days, visitors aren't even able to see across the Huangpu River. The city experiences its worst air during winter months, when residents are forced to don face masks and limit their time outdoors. Check <http://aqicn.org/city/shanghai>, a website based on real-time air quality measurements published by the American consulates in China, for uncensored air quality index (AQI) updates. You can also order face masks through the website.

In case of a medical emergency, you should go to a hospital or health-care center specifically geared to foreigners. For example, Huashan Hospital, one of the best in the city, has a special 24-hour clinic for foreigners (phone 6248-9999; ext. 2500; 8F, Building 1, 12 Wulumuqi Middle Road; <http://www.sh-hwmc.com.cn/html/b3a197e91f274091a44e88a26bf52ddc/en/enindex.html>). Another good option is Parkway Medical Center, a Singapore-run chain of clinics in Shanghai; the most central is in Shanghai Center (for the 24-hour medical hotline, phone 6445-5999; 203/4 West Retail Plaza, 1376 Nanjing West Road; <http://www.parkwayhealth.cn>).

Most Western-style hotels have arrangements with health-care professionals who speak English. If not, the hotel will be able to direct you to an appropriate health facility. Be sure to take sufficient supplies of any prescription medicine you use (in a pinch, your best bet for medications is at one of the foreign health clinics). Though 120 is the official number to call for an ambulance, take a taxi—you'll get there faster.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Although Shanghai is growing more aware of the needs of the disabled, by and large it is not structured in a way that is friendly to visitors with disabilities. There is no office, organization or service that addresses the needs of disabled visitors or offers specialized equipment. However, as Shanghai hosted the 2007 Special Olympics and the 2010 World Expo, wheelchair-accessible and other handicap-accessible facilities are increasingly factored in to the city's infrastructure planning. The relandscaped Bund, for example, features broad sloping ramps that enable wheelchair users to access the elevated riverside boardwalk. Some metro stations are also equipped with accessible elevators. It's not uncommon to see locals wheeling their elderly parents and grandparents down Shanghai's wide, generally well-maintained sidewalks for a stroll.

Most of the city's five-star hotels provide access and facilities for disabled visitors.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Don't tip a taxi driver or servers in local restaurants. This is not part of Chinese culture and once was officially forbidden. In practice, any tip you add to your bill will be divided among the entire restaurant staff and will thus not even get to your server. The acceptance of tipping in luxury hotels and upscale restaurants is more prevalent, however.



Do try using a few Mandarin (or Shanghainese) expressions, such as *xiexie* (pronounced *sheay-sheay*) for *thank you*, or *duo shao qian* (*dough shaow chee-en*) for *how much*? For *hello* and *good-bye*, say *ni hao* (*knee how*) and *zaijian* (*zai jee-an*). A smile and even one phrase will get you a long way.

Do keep your temper under control, even in the most trying circumstances—ranting tantrums and the loss of self-control are considered undignified and vulgar. Causing someone to "lose face" is a serious offense in China, and, by causing the other person to dig in their heels, will only exacerbate the situation further.

Don't be offended when you are asked how much money you make or other personal questions. Locals relish the opportunity to find out more about foreigners and are not trying to pry into your private life.

Do join in an early-morning tai chi or evening dancing group in the local parks. Most locals enjoy sharing their exercises.

Do beware of the fake luxury pen and watch sellers on Nanjing Road. Their prices may seem cheap, but you always get what you pay for, and despite the carefully counterfeited branding, the products themselves are typically inferior quality.

Do take off your shoes when entering a Chinese temple or someone's home.

Don't be surprised if locals approach you to practice their English or take a picture.

Don't write in red ink, the color of protests.

Don't point the soles of your feet directly at anyone, touch someone's head or point at a person with your index finger. Similarly, tossing objects, like a pen, towards someone is considered highly disrespectful and rude. Hand objects to another person with both hands. Similarly, if you'd like to beckon someone over, wave them over with your hand, palm down.

Do be wary of street meat, as rat, fox and mink meat have been presented as lamb.

Don't be afraid to call out to the waitress (*foo yoo en*) for your check (*mai dan*). While considered rude in the United States, it's normal to politely beckon the staff in casual Chinese restaurants.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports and prepaid visas. (China has no visa-on-arrival service.) Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 23,900,000.

Languages: Mandarin Chinese, known locally as *Putonghua*. The locals also speak the Shanghainese dialect, which is distinct from Mandarin. English is increasingly spoken across the city.

Predominant Religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.



Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 21,city code;

Money

Taxes

A Value Added Tax (VAT) of 17% is included in the sale of many products and services, though some smaller vendors are often exempt. Regardless, the tax will have already been folded into the ticketed shelf price.

There is additional luxury goods sales tax of at least 10% (and sometimes higher) on upscale items in China, rendering goods such as luxury brands, computers, camera equipment and any imported items rather expensive.

There is usually a 10-15% accommodations tax added to your hotel bill, although this is typically included in the rack rate. A program to allow duty-free shopping for foreign tourists in Shanghai is said to be in the works.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary and generally not expected. Many hotels and Western-style restaurants add a 15% service charge to your bill, but don't count on the staff seeing any of it. If you're staying at a Western hotel, you may want to tip the staff there, as they're more accustomed to tipping.

Don't feel obliged to tip taxi drivers unless they're extraordinary at using the shortest, fastest route—which is rare (and, even then, the tip will most likely be refused. If that's the case, do not insist). Tour guides do expect a small gratuity, around 10% of the service price.

Weather

A Shanghai resident once claimed that she had never lived in a city where the weather was so rarely perfect. That's a very apt description. In summer it's hot and humid, especially July and August, with temperatures reaching the 100s F/40s C. Spring and fall are the most temperate seasons, with sunny skies but some rain. In winter, especially December-February, temperatures become uncomfortably cold and damp, sometimes dropping to freezing. (It rarely snows, however.) For much of the year, gray skies can continue for weeks.

What to Wear

Visitors to Shanghai should take lightweight clothes in summer because of the high temperatures and humidity. In winter and spring, warmer clothes are more in order, and during September and October, a combination of light clothes that you can layer, plus a jacket for cool evenings, should suffice. A raincoat or umbrella is necessary at all times of the year.

Given that a business meeting, especially an introductory one, is a time to establish credibility, appropriate dress is essential to create confidence and a good first impression. For men, a suit with tie goes without saying. Details are likely to be noticed: Shoes should be polished, and nails clean and manicured. Nothing flashy. For women, a skirt or dress is recommended; although pantsuits are acceptable in the workplace, at a business meeting it's better to err on the side of formality. Avoid scoop necks that show cleavage. Skirts are worn higher in China these days than in America; nonetheless in a



meeting, it makes sense to wear a skirt above the knee but not thigh level. Heels, makeup and minimal jewelry complete the picture of sobriety and trustworthiness.

Transportation

The best way, by far, to get around Shanghai is by taxi. They're plentiful—unless it is rush hour or raining—and amazingly cheap (flag fall is 14 yuan for the first 2 mi/3 km, 18 yuan after 11 pm). You can save money by taking the subway, but the network closes relatively early each day (around 11 pm). Buses aren't worth the savings: They're crowded, and you'll probably have to transfer a few times to get where you want to go.

Central Shanghai is also a good walking city. The old buildings and small alleys are actually best explored on foot. Just be careful when crossing the street. You may have to cross the street lane by lane. If so, thread your way carefully and steadily among the vehicles.

Public Transportation

Shanghai has invested billions of dollars in its public transportation in recent years, and it shows. The integrated system—still a work in progress—is excellent. The 16 subway (metro) lines connect with four main train stations, two international airports and virtually every destination that visitors might want to access during a stay in the city. A perplexing but comprehensive bus system is also in operation, although buses are generally very crowded (unbearably so at rush hour), uncomfortable and inconvenient.

For most residents and visitors, the fast, efficient metro system is the best option for traveling around both Puxi and Pudong, even though they (like most places in Shanghai) are hopelessly packed during rush hour. Taxis are also cheap and readily available, except during rush hours and storms.

Subway

The Shanghai metro was extended significantly in the lead-up to the 2010 World Expo. There are 17 lines crisscrossing both Puxi and Pudong, and network maps in English and Chinese are displayed in all stations. The two busiest and most useful lines for visitors are No. 1 (red, running north to south) and No. 2 (green, running east to west).

The metro is modern and clean, but trains get crowded during daily rush hours and during national holidays. Station announcements are in both Chinese and English. Daily 5:30 am-10:30 pm. Fares are 3 yuan-9 yuan. Hold on to your ticket, as you'll need to swipe it again as you depart the station. Shanghai, China. <http://www.exploreshanghai.com/metro>.

Buses

Shanghai's bus system covers the entire city and its suburbs and runs 24 hours a day. Stops are clearly marked with signs listing the number of the line and its stops. Most bus maps are comprehensive, but they're printed only in Chinese. You can buy them at almost any bookstore.

Although buses are generally not recommended for visitors, there is an exception: the pleasant No. 911 double-decker buses that run down Huaihai Road through the former French concession. The buses are imported from Hong Kong and have plenty of seats. If you sit on the top deck, you'll get a great view of the beautiful old buildings that line the street.



Big Bus Tours (<http://eng.bigbustours.com/shanghai/home.html>) run open-top hop on, hop off tours around the city, with tickets starting at US\$38 for adults. Shanghai, China.

Taxi

The most convenient way to get around Shanghai is by taxi. Cabs are plentiful, cheap and easy to spot. Most are yellow, blue and green, although you'll see a few in other colors. A cab is available for hire if there's a red "For Hire" sign in the window on the passenger side. You can also request one by phone. All are metered. Fares start at 14 yuan for the first 2 mi/3 km (18 yuan 11 pm-5 am). If your taxi doesn't have a top light or a meter, chances are good that it's illegal.

Most cab drivers don't speak English, so it's best to give them a piece of paper with your destination written in Chinese. Hotel doormen can also tell the driver where you're going. It's a good idea to study a map beforehand: Some drivers may try to take you for a ride, literally. You'll usually get where you want to go, but it may cost you more time and more money.

Train

The Shanghai Railway Station is located in the northern part of the city and connects Shanghai to most other cities, villages and towns in China. The newer Shanghai South Railway Station is located in the southern district of Xujiahui and is the base for many high-speed bullet departures and arrivals linking major cities in the Yangtze River Delta. The even newer Hongqiao Transport Hub integrates the new generation super-high-speed trains and Hongqiao Airport. There is no hard-and-fast rule regarding train destinations from the two main stations, so you will need to check your ticket carefully. At present, only super-high-speed trains to and/or from Nanjing link with Hongqiao.

Several high-speed trains run every day to Beijing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing and other nearby destinations as well as three trains per week to Lhasa, Tibet (journey time is 52 hours; Tibet entry visa required). The best train to catch to Beijing is the overnight express. An express train also runs to Hong Kong. 303 Moling Road. Phone 6317-9090.

Visitors to the western region of China can now easily explore the wealth of destinations on the eastern side, and vice versa. A bullet train on the Shanghai–Wuhan–Chengdu High-Speed Railway has taken guests between Chengdu and Shanghai in less than 15 hours and 20 minutes, which is five hours shorter than the preceding train system. The D2206 train departs Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station at 6:36 am, passing through Nanjing, Hefei, Hankou and Chongqing, before reaching Chengdu at 9:54 pm. Travelers coming from the opposite direction can take the D2208/D2005 train from Chengdu, departing at 8 am and arriving at 10:58 pm. <http://www.cnvol.com>.

The best place to buy tickets apart from the stations themselves is at the downtown rail ticket office at 77 Wanhangu Road, directly behind Jing'an Temple (some basic Chinese is needed).

Access to both Shanghai Railway Station and Shanghai South Railway Station is via taxi or Line 1 subway. Access to Hongqiao Transport Hub is by taxi or Line 2 subway.

Seoul, South Korea

Overview

Introduction

Much of Seoul bears the distinct stamp of the 21st century: Multilane highways carry a constant stream of traffic among steel-and-glass skyscrapers. But look closer and you'll find ancient temples miraculously spared destruction in the Korean War, as well as painstakingly restored historic palaces whose designs date back centuries. Great effort has gone into preserving Korean history and culture despite a headlong rush into the future. Mere steps away from the bustle of commerce, you can find the serenity of a traditional garden or an open marketplace overflowing with ginseng, jade and dried squid.



Seoul is the center of South Korea, despite its location in the country's northwest corner. It is the hub of the nation's government, economy, education and culture, and it's where everyone wants to be. Seoul's growth has helped it become a major player in the world economy, but its rapid expansion has come with a price. Transportation, housing, utility and recreation resources have been severely strained.

To ease the congestion, the Korean government has relocated several government offices to Sejong City, 75 mi/120 km south of Seoul, while the President's office and defense ministry, as well as the center of tourism, business and finance, remain in Seoul.

Travelers will find that Seoul has luxurious modern hotels, excellent public transportation and an array of colorful cultural experiences. The city is also an attractive and convenient stopover hub in the heart of east Asia—thanks to the futuristic Incheon International Airport—with convenient connections to Japan and China.

Highlights

Sights—Biwon Garden and Changdeok Palace; Gyeongbok Palace; Bongeun Temple; Namdaemun Market; N Seoul Tower; Han River Ferry Cruises.

Museums—The National Museum of Korea; the War Memorial of Korea; Seodaemun Prison History Hall; National Folk Museum.

Memorable Meals—Traditional Korean cuisine at Doore; Italian by candlelight on the terrace at Ahndamiro in Insa-dong; multicourse Korean dinners at Sanchon; authentic French cuisine in an intimate bistro at Le Saint-Ex in Itaewon.



Late Night—Clubbing at Club M2 in the Hongik neighborhood; live jazz at Once in a Blue Moon; karaoke at Luxury Su.

Walks—A hike up one of the many trails on Namsan; strolling in the Insa-dong neighborhood; walking amongst the attractions of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project; exploring Olympic Park and the ancient fortress on its grounds; a walk along the Seoul Fortress Wall in Seongbuk-dong.

Especially for Kids—Lotte World Adventure and Magic Island; SeoulLand; one of PMC Production's *Nanta* performances; a tae kwon do exhibition; COEX Aquarium.

Geography

Seoul is surrounded by mountains, which offered the city natural protection from invading armies. Namsan (South Mountain) is an easily recognizable landmark in the city's center. (As its name implies, it used to be south of the city, but Seoul has grown around it.) The east-west flowing Han River bisects the city. Though no longer much of an island, Yeouido (*do* means "island"), on the Han's southeastern bank, is home to major broadcasting companies and securities firms and is being established as the financial heart of Seoul, with hotels, parks and shops creating a mini-Manhattan and an ever-growing skyline. Existing attractions include the 63 Building—one of Korea's tallest—with its observatory, aquarium and restaurants.

Downtown covers a broad area north of Namsan, made up of the Jongno-gu and Jung-gu areas (*gu* means "district"). Jongno (*lo* and *no* mean "street") is the major east-west thoroughfare. The major north-south artery changes its name from Sejong-no near Gyeongbok Palace to Taepyeong-no south of Jongno to Hangang-no past Seoul Station (the country's main railway hub) farther south. This area is what might be considered "Old Seoul," with the city's palaces, City Hall and most of Seoul's long-established businesses. It's also where you'll find Namdaemun (Great South Gate) and Dongdaemun (Great East Gate), two of the original nine gates in the protective wall that once surrounded the city. Parts of the fortress wall can still be seen in the northern part of the city on Bugak Mountain in the neighborhood of Seongbuk-dong.

South of Namsan, in Yongsan-gu, is Itaewon-dong. Mainly because of its location next to Yongsan Garrison (the headquarters for the U.N. Command and U.S. Forces Korea), Itaewon is the main place where foreigners congregate, with dozens of shops, restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Many embassies are located nearby, giving the area an international flavor.

Gangnam (literally "south of the river") is the district that exemplifies the new generation of Seoul. Mostly farmland until less than a generation ago, Gangnam-gu now has the city's most affluent neighborhoods, trendiest cafes and the biggest underground shopping mall. Most of Korea's leading venture-capital firms and high-tech companies are located in the area, on Teheran-no, with COEX, Seoul's key conference center and one of Asia's largest shopping centers, also nearby.

Be aware that transliteration of Korean characters into a Roman alphabet yields many different spellings. The names of streets and sites are sometimes written in different ways. Complicating matters further, the South Korean government switched to a different official system of transliteration for use on signage in 2000, and the transition of signs still isn't complete. Many directions are given using the nearest subway station, and street names are rarely used, even in addresses.

History

Human settlements have existed in the area of modern-day Seoul for about 6,000 years. However, the city of Seoul really came into prominence in 1392, when King Taejo, the founder of the Joseon Dynasty (sometimes referred to as the Yi Dynasty), decided to move the capital in an effort to build political stability. For his new capital city, he chose the area known as Hanyang because of its strategic location on the Han River, surrounded by mountains. He renamed the area Seoul, after the old Korean word for capital city, "seorabeol" or "seobeol."

Invading armies repeatedly threatened Korea and its capital over the years. As a result of those threats, the country withdrew from the rest of the world to such an extent that it became known as the "Hermit Kingdom." For the most part, Seoul developed quietly, ruled by a series of kings and dynasties. The isolation was shattered in the early part of the 20th century, when Japan formally annexed the country in 1910. Korea remained under Japanese control until the end of World War II. However, the joy of liberation was short-lived—five years later, the Korean War erupted. Seoul was captured twice by communist forces from the north, and fighting leveled most of the buildings, destroying many of the city's palaces and cultural assets. A cease-fire was called in 1953, but with no formal peace agreement, a state of war technically still exists, and tensions between North and South Korea remain.

Since the time of its nuclear testing into the East Sea in the late 2000s, North Korea has agreed to shut down its main nuclear reactor and has participated in six-nation talks aimed at ending any nuclear threat on the Korean peninsula. In October 2007, a second historical meeting took place between the two Koreas. South Korea's then-President Roh Moo-hyun made a symbolic gesture of walking over the border between South and North Korea at the start of the summit. He was the first sitting South Korean president to have done so. Most South Koreans are convinced that a peaceful reconciliation is still possible, provided that their allies support the South's diplomatic efforts rather than undermine them with unilateral actions. But for now, the grim fortifications along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea are about an hour's drive from Seoul.

Following the war, Seoul quickly rebuilt, its economy fueled by a voracious demand for industrial products such as automobiles and electronics. Seoul successfully hosted the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, giving the city renewed international attention, and then celebrated its 600th anniversary as the capital in 1994. Growth was slowed by an economic crisis in Asia during the late 1990s, but recovery is under way.

After a few further glitches, Korea's economy continues to show modest growth, with a reputation for high-tech development, rampant consumerism and heavy reliance on exports. The number of foreign companies almost doubled over recent years, an influx of foreigners means more than a half-million now live in the country, and Seoul is among the world's most expensive cities.

The city took the international spotlight again in 2002, when it co-hosted the World Cup with Japan. In addition to a continuing love affair with soccer, baseball, golf, shopping, online gaming and karaoke also warm the hearts of the next generation of switched-on Seoulites. A thoroughly modern population may seem besotted with some elements of western culture and fashion, but they are still traditional people. Matchmakers maintain an eye out for likely couples, customs are respected and kimchi remains the flavor of the day.



Potpourri

Hallyu (the "Korean wave") refers to the surge in popularity of Korean pop culture, especially in TV dramas shown in China, Japan and much of Southeast Asia, as well as K-Pop music heard around the world.

One of the international premieres for the James Bond movie *Casino Royale* took place in Seoul in December 2006. Daniel Craig made a personal appearance at the premiere. The premiere was largely seen as a show of goodwill toward South Koreans who felt that the portrayal of soldiers in the Bond film *Die Another Day* reflected a bad image of Koreans to the world.

In 2007, Korean pop sensation Rain announced plans for a U.S. tour with hopes of making it big in North America. Soon after, comedian Stephen Colbert, of the popular Comedy Central program *The Colbert Report* as well as *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, created a viral music-video spoof of one of Rain's songs (Colbert sang entirely in Korean). This video significantly helped to boost Rain's recognition in the U.S.

Seoul is one of the densest cities in the world.

There are more than 200 varieties of kimchi, a ubiquitous pickled side dish in Korean cuisine. Although kimchi dates from the seventh century, the dish did not get its red color or spicy flavor until the 17th century, after Japanese colonialists introduced red peppers to the region.

The average South Korean consumes 40 pounds of kimchi per year. Many families have second refrigerators specifically dedicated to keeping a year-round supply of the fermented dish.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Hidden among the skyscrapers of modern Seoul are many landmarks of the city's past. The royal heritage is especially visible in the older part of the city, where Gyeongbok Palace and Deoksu Palace can be found in parklike settings with halls and pavilions among the gardens. Biwon (the "Secret Garden"), located within the grounds of Changdeok Palace, is worth visiting in its own right. You also should take time to visit Bongeun Temple, home to one of the largest Buddha statues in South Korea. Museums, palaces and other government buildings tend to close on Monday (or sometimes Tuesday), so plan accordingly. Seoul also is home to sports shrines: Olympic Park, the venue for the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, as well as the Seoul World Cup Park and Stadium.

Seoul's museums cover a wide range of subjects from art and history to cuisine. The National Museum of Korea is an enormous and architecturally impressive museum with peaceful gardens to rest in after taking in all the exhibits. The National Palace Museum of Korea is on the grounds of Gyeongbok Palace and recounts the life of the Joseon Dynasty. The country's turbulent past, particularly the Korean War, is documented in the War Memorial of Korea. On a lighter note, the Kimchi Museum pays tribute to the country's most popular dish.

Seoul is also a great place for art lovers—there are many places to appreciate Korean and international art, from the Leeum Samsung Museum, to the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Seoul



Museum of Art. Endless galleries line Insa-dong, the city's cultural mecca, and Samcheong-dong, where there is a whole street of galleries, is tagged as Korea's SoHo.

Natural landmarks are also highlights of the city. Namsan is the small mountain in the middle of downtown. You can take a cable car up to the top or hike along one of its many trails. Among the attractions at the peak is the landmark N Seoul Tower. Check it out for great views of the city, especially on a clear night.

The city has seen constant change and renovations in recent years. One prime example is the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project, the restoration of a stream downtown that has been covered by concrete for decades. It's now a pleasant place for a stroll, with small parks, fountains, bridges, ceramic wall paintings and activities along the way.

Historic Sites

The Seoul government has made it possible for visitors to buy one all-inclusive ticket for 10,000 SKW for entrance to the major palaces—Changdeok, Gyeongbok and Deoksugung. The ticket is good for a month.

Jongmyo Royal Shrine

155 Jongno 1-ga (Jongno-gu; Jongno 3-ga Station line 1, exit 11 or line 3 or 5, exit 8)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 765-0195

<http://jikimi.cha.go.kr>

This UNESCO World Heritage site houses the ancestral tablets, small pieces of wood inscribed with the names and relationships of a deceased person's family, for the Joseon Dynasty's kings and queens. A memorial service commemorating the monarchs takes place on the first Sunday of May. The quiet surroundings and greenery in the middle of downtown make for a scenic stroll, especially on weekdays. The shrine connects to Changgyeong Palace—the same ticket admits you to both.

Open daily except Tuesday 9 am-6 pm (October-February till 5:30 pm). English tours 10 am, noon, and 2 and 4 pm. 1,000 SKW.

Jogye Temple

Suseong-dong (Jongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 6 or Jonggak Station line 1, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 02-732-2183

<http://jogyesa.kr>

Founded in 1395, this temple serves as the headquarters for the Jogye sect of Buddhism, Korea's largest. It is also the main focus for Lotus Lantern Festival activities in Seoul, held in celebration of Buddha's birthday each year in May (the exact date changes with the lunar calendar). Buddhist supply shops near the temple sell art, statues, incense and other products to monks and visitors alike. Free guided tours in English are available—ask at the Information Office for Foreigners.

Daily 24 hours; Daeungjeon and Geungnakjeon open 4 am-9 pm. Free but donations welcome.



Gyeongbok Palace

1 Sejongno (Jongno-gu; Gyeongbokgung Station line 3, exit 5 or Ganghwamun Station line 5, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-738-9171 or 3700-3904

<http://royalpalace.go.kr>

This was the primary palace for Joseon royalty after the capital moved to Seoul in 1394. Many of the buildings were destroyed during wars with Japan and North Korea, but much has been restored to its original beauty, and restoration is ongoing. The National Folk Museum and the National Palace Museum of Korea are also located on the grounds, and the Royal Guard Changing Ceremony (March-November every hour) is worth a look

Open March-October daily except Tuesday 9 am-6 pm (Saturday and Sunday till 7 pm); November-February daily except Tuesday 9 am-5 pm. 3,000 SKW adults.

Deoksugung Palace

5-1 Jong-dong (Jung-gu; City Hall Station line 1 or 2, exit 12)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-771-9955

<http://www.deoksugung.go.kr>

This served as the royal residence for many years after other palaces in Seoul were burned during a Japanese invasion in 1592. The palace's parklike grounds in the middle of downtown contain several halls and pavilions from different eras, and there's also a small art museum. The Royal Guard Changing Ceremony takes place at the main gate daily except Monday at 11 am, and 2 and 3:30 pm.

Palace open daily except Monday 9 am-9 pm, last admission one hour before closing. 1,000 SKW adults.

Bongeunsa Temple

73 Samseong-dong (Gangnam-gu; Samseong Station line 2, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-3218-4800

<http://www.bongeunsa.org>

One of the oldest and largest Buddhist temples in Seoul, first constructed in the 10th century, was an influential Zen center. Nowadays, it overlooks the COEX Center and offers a tranquil retreat from the urban melee. Next to the temple is the Building of Scriptures, which contains more than 3,000 Buddhist scriptures printed with a wood-block method. Another key landmark is the towering 75-ft/23-m statue of Maitreya Buddha, one of the largest Buddha statues in Korea. Meditation and lectures are offered (advanced reservations required).

Daily 3:30 am-9 pm. Free, but donations are welcome.

Biwon Garden and Changdeok Palace

1 Waryong-dong (Chongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 3 or Jongno 3-ga Station line 1, 3 or 5, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 762-8261

<http://english.cha.go.kr>

The main attraction at this UNESCO World Culture Heritage site is a "secret" garden—as well as the adjoining Changdeok Palace. Representative of royal palace parks, the Biwon Garden has shrines, wooden pavilions and ponds. Visitors may view the palace independently, while the garden is only accessible as part of a guided tour, offered in English at 11:30 am and 3:30 pm.

Palace and garden open daily except Monday 9 am-6:30 pm (9 am-5 pm December-February, till 5:30 pm November and March, till 6 pm in October). 3,000 SKW for palace entrance; 8,000 SKW for garden tour.

63 Building

60 Yeouido-dong (Yeongdeungpo-gu; Yeouinaru Station line 5, exit 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-789-5663

<http://www.63.co.kr>

One of Korea's tallest buildings (60 stories aboveground and three stories underground), the 63 Building contains restaurants and the 63 Sky Art museum and observation room on the top floor. It also boasts an aquarium, IMAX theater, shopping area and a variety of restaurants offering international cuisines.

Museum and aquarium open daily 10 am-10 pm, with the last admission at 9:30 pm. 63 Sky Art 11,000 SKW. Combined admission to art museum, IMAX theater, wax museum and aquarium is 34,000 SKW.

Museums

War Memorial of Korea

8 Yongsan-dong 1-ga (Yongsan-gu; Samgakji Station line 4 or 6, exit 12)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 709-3139

<http://www.warmemo.or.kr>

Korean War memorabilia takes up the largest part of this museum, housed in the former headquarters of the Korean infantry. Other exhibits tell about turbulent periods in Korean history from ancient times to the present, including invasions by Japan, China and Mongolia, as well as Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War. The collection includes more than 8,000 weapons and relics of past conflicts. Several vintage airplanes, tanks and other large weapons are displayed outside alongside a huge reflecting pond and some poignant monuments to those lost in war.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-6 pm. Free.

Seoul Museum of History

55 Saemun-ro (Jongno-gu; Gwangwhamun Station line 5, exit 7)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 724-0274

<http://www.museum.seoul.kr>

Staffed by local volunteers, with extended opening hours and many artifacts donated by area residents, this museum's motto seems to be "by the people, for the people." It covers the city's history and astonishing growth, as well as daily life there in different eras. The best part is the miniature replica of the



sprawling city that you can walk over. There are multimedia presentations and hands-on exhibits. English audio guides available.

March-October Tuesday-Friday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-7 pm; November-February Tuesday-Friday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-6 pm. Free.

Seoul Museum of Art

37 Seosomun-dong (Jung-gu; City Hall Station line 1, exit 1 and line 2, exit 11 or 12 or Gwanhwamun Station line 5, exit 5)

Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-2124-8800

<http://seoulmoa.seoul.go.kr>

One of Seoul's many excellent examples of public art, this one sits in the rather fine building that housed the Republic of Korea Supreme Court from 1948 to 1955. Although it's a small museum, it holds Korean art and international shows from such luminaries as Picasso.

Open Tuesday-Friday 10 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-7 pm (November-February till 6 pm). Last admission one hour before closing. 700 SKW.

Seodaemun Prison History Hall

251 Tongil-ro, Seodaemun-gu (Seodaemun-gu; Dongnimmun Station line 3, exit 5)

Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-360-8590

<http://www.sscmc.or.kr>

Built in 1908 during the Japanese occupation, this prison-turned-museum is a historical reminder of Korea's tumultuous past. Exhibits include prison cells, torture devices and a memorial list of prison victims. Guided tours in English available on Sunday at 1 and 2 pm, and by reservation.

Open March-October daily except Monday 9:30 am-6 pm (till 5 pm November-February). Last admission 30 minutes before closing. 1,500 SKW.

Pulmuone Kimchi Museum

B2 COEX Mall, 159 Samsung-dong (Gangnam-gu; Samseong Station line 2, exit 6)

Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 6002-6456

<http://www.kimchimuseum.or.kr>

For people who think kimchi (pickled vegetables) comes in one flavor, a trip to this museum is an eye-opening experience. Displays show many of the various types of kimchi, explain how kimchi is made and stored, and give an in-depth lesson in the nutritional value of Korea's national dish. Visitors can sample various types.

Open daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm, last admission at 5:30 pm. 3,000 SKW.



National Palace Museum

12 Hyojaro, Jongno-gu (Jongno-gu; Gyeongbokgung Station line 3, exit 5)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 02-3701-7500

<http://www.gogung.go.kr>

This impressive and sizable museum devotes itself to relics and stories of the Joseon dynasty. The royal costumes are particularly striking, as is the furniture that was once used within palaces such as Gyeongbok, on whose grounds the museum sits.

Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm; Saturday and Sunday 9 am-7 pm. Free.

National Museum of Korea

137 Seobinggo-ro, Yongsan-gu (Yongsan-gu; Ichon Station line 4, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-2077-9046

<http://www.museum.go.kr>

This museum is the sixth largest in the world, showcasing an array of Korean art, ceramics and relics, with additional Chinese, Japanese and Central Asian galleries. It also has a vast plaza, reflecting pond, tranquil gardens and a children's museum. Visitors can walk around by themselves or rent a recorded guide in English. English-guided tour daily at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm at the Permanent Exhibition Hall.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10 am-6 pm, Wednesday and Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 10 am-7 pm. Admission free for main exhibit hall but varies for special exhibits.

National Museum of Contemporary Art

30 Samcheong-ro, Sogyeok-dong (Gyeonggi-do; Seoul Grand Park Station line 4, exit 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-2188-6000

<http://www.moca.go.kr>

The main branch is in Seoul Grand Park and contains a permanent collection of Korean art starting with the 1950s. In addition to its large gallery space, it has a sculpture garden and an outdoor stage. A shuttle takes visitors from the Seoul Grand Park Station to the entrance of the museum every 20 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes in the evening.

Sunday-Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10 am-6 pm, Wednesday and Saturday 10 am-9 pm. Admission varies with exhibit.

National Folk Museum

37 Samcheong-ro (Jongno-gu; Gyeongbokgung Station line 3, exit 5)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-3704-3114

<http://www.nfm.go.kr>



More than 4,000 artifacts depict the history of Korean daily life at this museum, located within Gyeongbok Palace grounds. Visitors also learn about Korea's Confucianism roots, and how this ideology shaped many of Korea's cultural customs.

March-October daily 9 am-6 pm, November-February daily till 5 pm, June-August Saturday and Sunday till 7 pm. Free.

Lotte World Folk Museum

Lotte World Adventure, Third Floor, Jamsil 3-dong (Songpa-gu; Jamsil Station line 2 or 8, exit 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 411-4761

<http://www.lotteworld.com>

Part of the huge Lotte World Adventure complex, this museum offers more than you'd expect. Exhibits present Korea's history from life-size models of dinosaurs to period costumes for royalty and nobles. You'll also see miniature exhibits of Korea's most famous temples and palaces, as well as performances of folk music, plays, dances and rituals.

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-9 pm. 5,000 SKW adults.

Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

747-18 Hannam 2-dong (Yongsan-gu; Hangangin Station line 6, exit 1)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-2014-6901

<http://leeum.samsungfoundation.org>

In a quiet residential area, this museum is innovative inside and out (as the name suggests, its benefactor is the electronics giant), with three connecting buildings housing a mixture of traditional and modern Korean and international art, as well as a cultural education center.

Tuesday-Sunday 10:30 am-6 pm. 10,000 SKW.

Parks & Gardens

Yeouido Park

2 Yeouido-dong (Yeongduengpo-gu; Yeouinaru Station line 5, exit 3)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 761-4078

<http://parks.seoul.go.kr>

Skyscrapers soar on Yeouido, the island known as "Korea's Manhattan," but ponds, pavilions and paths are all nestled within this public park. For two weeks in April, an annual cherry blossom festival fills the park with petals and people. It's a good place for in-line skating and bike riding, but it's usually crowded on weekends in spring.

Open daily 24 hours. Free.



Seoul World Cup Park and Stadium

Seongsan-dong, Mapo-gu (World Cup Stadium Station line 6, exit 1 or 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2128-2002 for stadium or 300-5500 for park information

<http://worldcuppark.seoul.go.kr>

Built for the 2002 World Cup competition, Asia's largest soccer stadium was designed in the shape of a kite. World Cup Park surrounds the stadium and features areas with various environmental themes, focusing on the need for harmony between people and nature. It includes a handful of smaller parks.

Pyeonghwa and Nanjicheon park open 24 hours daily. Haneul and Noeul parks open daily 9 am-7 pm January, until 6:30 pm November and December, until 7:30 pm February and October with longer hours during warmer months. World Cup Stadium open daily 9 am-6 pm. Admission to the parks is free; admission to the stadium is 1,000 SKW for adults, 500 SKW for children.

Olympic Park

424 Olympic-ro, Songpa-gu (Songpa-gu; Olympic Park Station line 5, exit 3 or Mongchontoseong Station line 8, exit 1)

Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 822-410-1114

<http://www.olympicpark.co.kr>

This is the site of many of the sports facilities used during the 1988 Summer Olympic Games. It contains Mongchon Toseong Fortress, an ancient earthen wall believed to have been built during the Baekje Kingdom (18 BC-AD 660). The park also houses the Seoul Olympic Museum of Art, or SOMA (<http://www.somamuseum.org>).

Olympic Park is open 6 am-midnight, with the last park admission at 10 pm. SOMA is open 10 am-6 pm. Admission to the park is free; SOMA admission 3,000 SKW adults.

Namsan

On Namsan, 100-177 Hoehyeon-dong 1-ga (Jung-gu; numerous entrance points, including Myeong-dong Station line 4, exit 4 for the cable car)

Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-753-2563 or 753-1330

<http://parks.seoul.go.kr>

Located in the heart of downtown, where the iconic N Seoul Tower juts out as a beacon across the city. The park contains the Namsangol Traditional Korean Village and a cable car that takes you to the top of Namsan peak. It's a pleasant place for a stroll or a jog.

Namsan Park open 24 hours; cable car 9 am-11:30 pm; N Seoul Tower 10 am-11 pm (Friday and Saturday till midnight). Admission to the park is free. Cable car 6,000 SKW one-way, 8,000 SKW round-trip adults; 3,500 SKW one-way, 5,000 SKW round-trip children younger than age 13. N Seoul Tower 9,000 SKW.

Shopping

The best buys in Seoul are quality clothes, shoes, blankets, beauty products and leather goods. Korea also produces a number of specialty items, such as ginseng, tea and bamboo products. Electronics are big export items, but visitors probably won't find many bargains.

Large, open-air markets attract hundreds of vendors. The best bargains are offered in the wee hours of the morning, but be wary of counterfeit goods.

Dongdaemun has a number of high-rise buildings with brightly lit shopping areas catering to teenagers and young adults, and Namdaemun is trying to follow suit. Insa-dong is famous for traditional crafts and has a very artsy atmosphere, with numerous stores for window-shopping. Itaewon generally has been a major stop for foreign shoppers because most store owners speak English and other foreign languages, but prices tend to be higher and less negotiable. Most goods are less expensive in Namdaemun or Dongdaemun, although clothing in larger sizes is easier to find in Itaewon. Namdaemun and Itaewon are good places to buy large suitcases to carry all your purchases.

Anyone who has gone searching in vain for a cashier in Western department stores will love the numerous employees in Korean department stores. It seems that each section has at least two employees for each shopper. As a result, prices tend to be higher than elsewhere, but the department stores have huge sales several times a year.

Prices in department stores and other large retail outlets are fixed, but bargaining is expected in markets and smaller shops. Make an offer that is lower than what you are actually willing to pay but don't expect the final price to drop more than 25% below the initial asking price. You're likely to do better when buying multiple items from the same seller. Then, negotiate a total price for all your purchases. Although department stores will accept credit cards, be prepared to pay cash to vendors in open markets, especially if you're asking for a discount.

Many Korean vendors also offer small thank-you gifts for large purchases, known as "service"—a great Konglish invention at work.

Shopping Hours: Most large stores are open Monday-Saturday from around 9:30 or 10 am to 8 pm. Stores close a little earlier on Sunday. Most stores close one day every other week. Dongdaemun and Namdaemun areas have wholesale markets that are open during the early morning hours.

Department Stores

Shinsegae Department Store

52-5 Chungmuro 1-ga (Jung-gu; Hoehyeon Station line 4, exit 7)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 1588-1234

<http://department.shinsegae.com>

One of the three largest department stores in Korea, this flagship store downtown is *the* place to go. Grocery items, prepared foods and Korean "fast food" can be found on the basement floor. Clothes, accessories and cosmetics can be found on the other floors. The 10th and 11th floors offer more sit-down meal options. Daily 10:30 am-8 pm, closed one floating Monday per month.

Lotte Department Store

1 Sogong-dong (Jung-gu; Euljiro 1-ga Station, exit 8)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 771-2500

<http://www.lotteshopping.com>

Conveniently located downtown, Lotte is one of the largest and oldest department stores in Seoul. The high-rise, high-quality department store has just about everything, including groceries, restaurants and fine clothing—all in one building. Interesting for observing Korea's take on department stores.

Daily 10:30 am-8 pm, closed one floating Monday per month.

Hyundai Department Store

429 Apgujeong-dong (Gangnam-gu; Apgujeong Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 547-2233

<http://www.ehyundai.com>

This is a central meeting place for residents south of the Han River for shopping and dining in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Seoul. Also has an open market and bazaar every other Sunday during the summer. A branch of the upscale store can also be found at COEX Mall in Gangnam-gu, with most of the world's designer brands and popular Korean ones.

Daily 10:30 am-8 pm, closed one floating Monday per month.

Galleries

Insa Art Plaza

22 Gwanhun-dong (Jongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

The art shop on the ground floor of this Insa-dong complex offers great gifts and regular exhibitions of local artists. Vendors in the rest of the building sell everything from *hanji* (traditional handmade paper) to folk crafts and pottery.

Daily 10 am-8 pm.

Markets

Yongsan Electronics Market

Hangangno 2-ga (Yongsang-gu; Yongsan Station line 1, exit 2 or Sinyongsan Station line 4, exit 5)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 704-3060

<http://www.yongsan.co.kr>

This area, covering several blocks, is the largest electronics market in Seoul. You can find almost anything you need related to computers, software, video games, personal electronics and appliances.

Most stores are open daily except Monday 10 am-8 pm.



Namdaemun Market

21 Namdaemun-sijang 4-gil (Jung-gu; Hoehyon Station line 4, exit 5)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 753-2805

<http://tour.junggu.seoul.kr>

This large, open-air market, named for nearby Namdaemun (Great South Gate), has existed in the same place for more than 600 years and is Korea's largest traditional market. Though it specializes in clothing, with hundreds of vendors selling shirts, pants and jackets, it sells just about everything.

Open 24 hours (discounts are best 11 pm-3 am) Monday-Saturday.

Gyeongdong Market

Yongdu-dong area, Jegi-dong (Dongdaemun-gu; Jegi-dong Station line 1, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 969-8721

<http://www.kyungdongmart.com>

This market, specializing in ginseng and other herbal medicines, is a holdover from olden times. Spices and other dried goods are sold from more than 1,000 stalls.

Traditional market open 4 am-7 pm; medicine market open 9 am-7 pm. Some stores are closed on Sunday.

Dongdaemun Market

Jongno 5-7 ga (Dongdaemun Station lines 1 and 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 778-0333 for the Dongdaemun Tourist Office

<http://www.dongdaemun.com>

This huge shopping area near Dongdaemun (Great East Gate) is roughly divided into two sections. The northern area has more traditional stores, specializing in clothes, fabric and wedding gifts (many newlyweds go there to do all the shopping for their new homes). The southern area has many new buildings targeting younger shoppers with trendy clothes and fashion accessories.

Most retail businesses are open daily 10 am-6 pm, and wholesalers 8 pm-9 am, essentially creating 24 hours of shopping. Many stores close on Sunday or Monday.

Shopping Areas

Myeong-dong

Myeong-dong (Myeong-dong Station line 4, exit 5, 6, 7 or 8)
Seoul, South Korea

<http://www.myungdong.co.kr>

This shopping neighborhood's mainly pedestrianized streets throb with Seoul's young trendsetters hitting the rails and racks of boutiques and big-name stores. Also home to Lotte Department Store, many sports-



clothing stores and underground shopping arcades for cheaper Korean goods. There is also a small Chinatown in the area, as well as the city's first Catholic church, the brick-built Myeong-dong Cathedral

Itaewon

Itaewon (Itaewon Station, line 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Itaewon is the best place to find a blend of Korean artifacts, custom-made goods and unique gifts from around the world. Though driving to Itaewon is not recommended because of heavy street congestion and lack of parking spaces, sidewalks on either side of Itaewon-dong are the perfect place for pedestrians to acquire a wide variety of trinkets. Be sure to explore the side and back alleys for additional treasures. Korean tailors are some of the best in the world, and custom-made items there are much cheaper compared to prices found in Western countries. The area also has the highest concentration of international restaurants.

Most shops open daily 9 am-10 pm.

Insa-dong

Downtown (Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

This famous art and antiques district is very popular with foreign visitors. Specialty items include ceramics, paper art, modern versions of traditional Korean clothing (*hanbok*), calligraphy supplies and antique crafts. Art theaters, galleries, traditional restaurants and shops line the alleys. Sunday is especially pleasant for exploring the area because the street is closed to traffic. Be sure to stop in one of the traditional teahouses.

Most shops are open daily 10 am-8 pm.

COEX Center

513 Yeongdong-daero, Gangnam-gu (Gangnam-gu; Samseong Station line 2, exits 5 or 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 6002-5304

<https://www.starfield.co.kr/coexmall/main.do>

This large underground shopping area in the convention center complex has dozens of stores, movie theaters, an aquarium and a huge food court.

Daily 10:30 am-10 pm.

Apgujeong- and Cheongdam-dong

(Apgujeong Station, line 3)
Seoul, South Korea

This is one of the best areas in the city for fashion shopping, from Hello Kitty to Hilfiger. Cafes and bars suit the young, fashionable crowd, and the Galleria (phone 3449-4114) is one of the most exclusive department stores in the city. There's also Dosan Park to sit in for a break from shopping. The self-proclaimed "Rodeo Drive of South Korea" is located there. (Apgujeong Station, line 3).

Dining

Dining Overview

Korean food is all about bold flavors and balance. Seeing all those little side dishes (*banchan*) can be daunting at first. But a little experimentation will bring many pleasant surprises. Meat eaters should try *galbi* (beef short ribs) and *bulgogi* (marinated sliced beef)—these dishes are usually cooked at your table. Though Koreans eat a wide variety of vegetable dishes, strict vegetarians will have a tough time, as meat and fish are hidden in many meals, including the broths for vegetable soups and salted seafood in many kinds of kimchi. Opt for temple-style food since the monks eat vegetarian for purity of mind, body and spirit.

Most meals are served with rice, soup and at least one kimchi (salt fermented vegetables). Many Korean restaurants have floor seating where guests take off their shoes and sit on cushions on a raised (and during winter, heated) floor. Sitting that way can get uncomfortable after an hour or more, so try to shift your position frequently.

The area downtown, around Jongno and Insadong, has the biggest concentration of Korean restaurants, with menus both traditional and trendy. The Itaewon neighborhood has a number of international restaurants, catering to the high concentration of foreigners in the area. It also has a number of Korean-style restaurants with English-speaking staff. South of the Han River, in the Gangnam area, you can find many fusion-style restaurants that mix foreign ingredients and techniques with Korean dishes. Also in Gangnam, you'll find a number of international chains. Except for the very top-end establishments, Korean restaurants are generally less expensive than those serving international fare.

Dining times are generally 6-10 am for breakfast; 11 am-2 pm for lunch; 5-10 pm for dinner. *Note:* Koreans eat the same foods for breakfast as they do at other meals (soup, rice, kimchi and so on). If that doesn't appeal to you, we suggest heading to one of the many bakeries or cafes with dining areas for a quick pastry and coffee.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than 7,000 SKW; \$\$ = 7,000 SKW-15,000 SKW; \$\$\$ = 15,001 SKW-25,000 SKW; \$\$\$\$ = more than 25,000 SKW.

Local & Regional

Tosokchon

85-1 Chebu-dong (Jongno-gu; Gyeongbokgung Station line 3, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Samgyetang, Korean-style chicken soup with rice and ginseng, is served in an old-fashioned *hanok* house near Gyeongbok Palace. It is frequented by political elites and common folk as well as tourists. Often bustling with little atmosphere, but a good place to see and enjoy how the locals appreciate soup.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



Seocho Sariwon

1327-1 Seocho-dong (Seocho-gu; Gangnam Station line 2, exit 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 3474-5005

<http://www.sariwon.co.kr>

Galbi (marinated beef ribs) are a local favorite, but this restaurant is known for its *bulgogi* made from fruit juice-soaked filet mignon. The beef is served with *naengmyeon* (cold buckwheat noodles) in a modern, smoke-free setting. There is also a fairly nice wine list.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

Sawore Boribap

610-5 Sinsa-dong (Apgujeong Station line 3, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 540-5292

<http://www.aprilbori.co.kr>

Especially good in spring and summer, specialties there include barley rice that can be mixed with fresh vegetables and boiled pork wrapped in kimchi. Trendy and modern atmosphere, great for groups.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Samwon Garden

623-5 Sinsa-dong (Gangnam-gu; Apgujeong Station line 3, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 548-3030

<http://www.samwongarden.com>

This long-established restaurant is hidden away, offering some peace from Seoul's hectic streets. Very traditional menu, especially ribs and barbecue beef, or *bulgogi*.

Daily noon-10 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Korea House

10 Toegye-ro 36gil, Jung-gu (Jung-gu, Chungmuro Station line 3 or 4, exit 3)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-2266-9101

<http://www.koreahouse.or.kr>

This is an ideal place to sample a range of traditional Korean royal banquet food and enjoy a cultural performance at the same time. It's a little touristy, but a good introduction to Korean cuisine.

Daily noon-9 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Kimbap Cheongook

Headquarters located at 1503-9 Maegang Building, Fifth Floor, Seocho-dong, Seocho-gu
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 574-1212

<http://www.kimbabchungkuk.co.kr>

This no-frills Korean restaurant chain is ubiquitous throughout South Korea. In Seoul, there are locations in nearly every neighborhood. When visiting the restaurant (the name means "Kimbap Heaven"), it's best to try the variety of rice and other items rolled in seaweed, including the *chamchi kimbap* (tuna kimbap roll). This chain is budget restaurant dining at its finest.

Most locations open daily 24 hours. \$. Generally cash only, but some locations accept major credit cards.

Gogung

Insa-dong-gil (Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 776-3211

<http://www.gogung.co.kr>

This nice-looking restaurant is in the very fashionable Ssamziegil craft and shopping area off Insa-dong. The specialty is Jeonju *bibimbap* (rice mixed with vegetables). It can be served in a hot stone pot.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Doore

8-7 Insa-dong (Jongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 732-2919

<http://www.edoore.co.kr>

Expect gourmet Korean cooking, *han-jyeongsik*, in an elegant traditional setting. Offers multicourse menus that cater to business and political bigwigs.

Daily noon-4 pm and 6-10 pm. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

Asian

Thai Orchid

736-9 Hannam-dong (Itaewon Station line 6, exit 3)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-792-3338

http://www.thai_orchid.blog.me

This is one of the oldest and most authentic Thai restaurants in the city. It serves excellent curries and *tom yum*, a soup made with prawns and lemongrass.



Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Taj

B1, 73, Myeongdong-gil, Jung-gu (Myeong-deong Station line 4, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 02-776-0677

<http://taj.co.kr>

A charming restaurant with a friendly welcome and delicious menu. Particularly great tandoori options. Anyone craving Indian food will be happy there, and vegetarians will find a set menu for 35,000 SKW.

Daily noon-10 pm. Reservations available by phone. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Pho Hoa

21-1 Cheongdam-dong (Gangnamgucheong Station line 7, exit 4)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 518-6778

<http://www.phohoa.com>

This popular Vietnamese food chain has great spring rolls and refreshing noodle soups with vegetables and meat. Locations throughout the city, including in Sinchon, Apgujeong and Cheongdam-dong.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

New Delhi Indian Restaurant

455-33 Itaewon-dong (Yongsan-gu; Noksapyeong Station line 6, exit 1)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 797-3648

http://enjoyitaewon.com/new_delhi

Tucked away on a side hill in Itaewon, this Indian restaurant is a gem worth taking the time to discover. The buffet offers the best chance to sample authentic Indian food, but a menu is also available on weekends. The chicken tikka masala is arguably the best item on the buffet. Friendly staff and quiet surroundings make this restaurant a favorite with expats.

Open daily except Monday for lunch, daily for dinner. \$\$.

Moghul

116-2 Itaewon-dong (Yongsan-gu; Itaewon Station line 6, exit 1)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 796-5501

<http://www.moghulkorea.com>

Long-established halal restaurant serving Pakistani and Indian cuisine in Itaewon, where Muslim-friendly shops and eateries have sprouted up near one of the city's few mosques.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$.



Ho Lee Chow

119-25 Itaewon-dong (Yongsan-gu; Itaewon Station line 6, exit 1; inside the Hamilton Hotel)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 793-0802

<http://www.holeechow.co.kr>

The Hong Kong-style Chinese food is made to suit Western tastes. The original restaurant is in Itaewon, but it has expanded to other locations, such as Apgujeong.

Daily 11:30 am-10:30 pm. Reservations available by phone. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Dal

144-2 Sogyeouk-dong (Jongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 1)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 736-4628

<http://www.dalindia.com>

Indian food is gaining popularity in Seoul, and this sophisticated restaurant in the Sonje Arts Center offers quality Indian food combined with a beautiful setting. The chicken tandoori and curries are gentler on the palate than those of other Indian restaurants.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

French

Le Saint-Ex

Mapo-gu Wausan-ro 21gil 20-21 (Itaewon Station line 6, exit 1)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 795-2465

<https://www.facebook.com/lesaintex>

This authentic modern bistro serves seafood and meat specials that change with the season, along with excellent desserts. Proprietor Benjamin Joinau also recommends good wines.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$.

Le Petite France

135-55 Itaewon-dong (Yongsan-gu; Itaewon Station line 6, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Along with steaks, this small restaurant serves French standards such as gratine in a cozy atmosphere. It also has a good wine selection. The owner spent years in France and speaks French and English.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



Italian

Puccini

17-37 Yeoksam-dong (Gangnam-gu; Gangnam Station line 2, exit 7 and take a right at the cinema)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-552-2877

<http://www.puccini.co.kr>

Located in the trendy Gangnam area. Although the food is a big draw, particularly the handmade pastas, the three floors of unique ambience keep this restaurant a favorite.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

La Tavola

12F, 33 Itaewon 1-dong (Yongsan-gu; Itaewon Station line 6, exit 2)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 2-793-6144

<http://www.latavola.co.kr>

The first to bring Seoul a wood-fired oven to make pizza, this restaurant also serves wonderful pasta dishes—try the porcini mushroom pasta.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Ahndamiro

Insa-dong (Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 730-5777

<http://www.ahndamiro.com>

Tucked away in a small alley, this pretty restaurant boasts a lovely terrace and is one of the most authentic-looking Italian places in town. Serves Tuscan-inspired pasta, meat and fish.

Reservations available by phone. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Middle Eastern

Marakech Night

2F, 131-3 Itaewon-dong (Yongsan-gu; Itaewon Station line 6, exit 3)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 795-9441

<http://www.marakechnight.com>

This Moroccan restaurant is famous for its music, hookahs and relaxing atmosphere. In the heart of Itaewon, this venue is most popular on Friday and Saturday. Food is prepared fresh to order, so you may wait a while—but it's worth it. The chicken couscous is a favorite.

Open daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



Vegetarian

Sanchon

14 Gwanhun-dong (Jongno-gu; Anguk Station line 3, exit 6)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 735-0312

<http://www.sanchon.com>

This famous Buddhist and vegetarian restaurant is run by a former monk. Dishes are created from seasonal vegetables grown around Korea's mountains and woods. Seasonings are all natural, and garlic and chili peppers aren't used in temple cuisine. Performances nightly at 8 pm.

Daily for a 16-course lunch or dinner. \$\$\$\$.

Continental

Top Cloud

Jongro Tower 33-F, 51 Jongro, Jongro-gu (Jung-gu; Jonggak Station line 1, exit 3)
Seoul, South Korea

Phone: 02-2198-3300

<http://www.topcloud.co.kr>

As the name suggests, this restaurant is located "in the clouds" on the 33rd floor of the Jongno Tower. The main attraction is the sweeping view it offers of Namsan from its floor-to-ceiling windows. Most meals have an international flair suitable for any palate.

Daily for lunch, dinner and late-night "candlelight" service. \$\$\$\$.

Security

Etiquette

Many Koreans shake hands when introduced, but most still bow when meeting someone or leaving someone's presence, so it's best for you to bow in return.

Always present your business card when meeting a business client—as with other items, give and receive business cards with both hands. After accepting a card, be sure to look at it for a few moments before putting it away.

Businesspeople are more likely to do business with those with whom they have had drinks. In fact, the amount of money spent wining and dining a client often determines the size of the contract awarded.

When pouring drinks, pour with your right hand and support your right arm with your left hand. Receive the drink in the same fashion. (This is a sign of respect and goes back to when traditional clothes had wide sleeves.) Pour drinks for others: It's considered somewhat rude to pour your own drink. Wait until the person has finished or is almost finished before pouring more. However, it is considered rude to let someone sit with an empty glass.



After getting a new job or promotion and receiving your first paycheck, it is customary to take your Korean friends out to dinner for continued good luck.

Showing a lot of skin, especially for females, is considered improper. Long pants should be worn when visiting Buddhist temples, and always remove your shoes when entering a home, a Korean-style motel room or the prayer hall in a temple.

Avoid blowing your nose in public—Koreans consider it rude. If the need arises, find a restroom or other private spot. On the other hand, don't be surprised at how frequently Koreans spit—clearing phlegm is seen as vital to a healthy-functioning body.

Never write a Korean's name in red ink. This indicates that the person is deceased or you wish them to be so.

Koreans, especially older Koreans, are very adamant about properly queuing when waiting for buses and sometimes taxis.

Personal Safety

In general, Seoul is a very safe place. Crime levels are far below most other major cities, especially for violent crime. The biggest hazard (especially for pedestrians) is reckless driving—look both ways before crossing a street, even when you have the green light. In a speeding taxi, an emphatic "*Cheon-cheon hi!*" ("Slowly!") may slow the driver down.

On subways and crowded buses, keep a hold of your purse or wallet since pickpockets will take opportunities, especially from foreigners.

Anti-American sentiment sometimes runs a little high, and there have been a few incidents against foreigners in Itaewon and university areas. For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Most people drink bottled or purified water—we recommend you do the same. The water served in restaurants is safe to drink, as is washed produce. Sanitation is generally good; however, smaller restaurants and street vendors may use only cold water to wash dishes used by patrons.

Visitors with respiratory problems or asthma should take a supply of breathing medication, as the air quality can get bad in Seoul. Yellow dust (or yellow sand) blows over from the deserts of China and causes deterioration of Seoul's air quality. Children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to yellow dust. The U.S. military monitors yellow dust levels on its website (<http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/weather-yellowsand>). Consider staying indoors when yellow dust levels peak, or wear a face mask when you go outside.

The health care system in Korea is similar to Western countries. Ambulances and paramedics are readily available in case of emergency, as are emergency rooms in major hospitals. In a medical emergency, dial 1339 (119 for fire and ambulance). Operators can understand basic English, and calls are traced, so rescue personnel can be dispatched even if the caller cannot communicate the location well. For less



urgent matters, ask your hotel to arrange for a taxi to the nearest emergency room. Most doctors speak English, but other medical personnel may not. Many of the larger hotels have a nurse on staff or on call.

The Samsung Medical Center has top-notch doctors, state-of-the-art equipment and 24-hour emergency care (50 Irwon-dong, Gangnam-gu, Suseo Station; phone 3410-0200). For nonemergency care, Yonsei University Severance Hospital's International Health Care Center (134 Sinchon-dong, Sodaemun-gu) has staff fluent in English. It's open Monday-Friday 9:30 am-noon and 2-5 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-noon. Phone 2228-5810.

For medical clinic services, Dr. SooYoung Kim at International Clinic (737-37 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu) speaks fluent English. It's open Monday-Wednesday and Friday 9 am-6:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-4 pm (closed for lunch noon-2 pm).

Korea has two types of pharmacies: Western-style pharmacies (*yakguks*) that sell over-the-counter medications and can fill doctors' prescriptions, and Asian-medicine pharmacies (*haniwons*) that dispense traditional tonics and Chinese medicines. Pharmacies are located in every neighborhood (but they aren't open 24 hours). Just look for the green cross symbol.

For more information, contact your country's health-care agency.

Disabled Advisory

Until fairly recently, concern for the disabled has been a low priority in Seoul. Most subway stations—especially newer ones—are now equipped with elevators, chair lifts and restroom accommodations. Most older stations have been retrofitted with disability accommodations, although a handful of stations have not been retrofitted because of design issues. Nearly all subway trains have special seating for the elderly and people with disabilities, and certain cars have wheelchair areas and are marked accordingly. The subway ticket booths also offer voice guidance for people with vision impairments.

Most buildings do not have access ramps or other facilities for the disabled, although large buildings and newer buildings are more accommodating. Many busy intersections have underground passages, but aboveground crosswalks have been created in areas with lots of pedestrian traffic. Some palaces and newer museums are equipped with ramps and elevators for accessibility and will provide wheelchairs, if needed.

Accessible buses, which lower to sidewalk level for ease of entering and exiting the bus, have slowly been rolled out on certain routes, such as those that stop in front of hospitals. Newer buses also have space allocated for wheelchairs, although this is still a small majority.

Special taxi vans with ramps can be reserved for people with wheelchairs. To make a reservation, call 1588-4388. In an effort to ensure the service properly serves people with disabilities, the city government asks users to report any issues by calling 2290-6510.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has created a website to handle disability concerns, list available services and offer resources for people with disabilities. <http://disability.seoul.go.kr/en>.

For more information on disability concerns in South Korea, contact the South Korea branch of Disabled Peoples International. Daesan Building, 2F, 1140-55 Jaegi 2-dong, Dongdaemun-gu. Phone 457-0427. <http://www.dpikorea.org>.



Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do learn a few words of Korean: *annyeong haseyo* (how are you?), *gamsa hamnida* (thank you), *ye* (yes) and *anio* (no). This will get you quite far in making Korean friends if they know you're trying to learn their language.

Do address people with respect and be sensitive to the hierarchies in relationships. For business associates, position titles with last names is appropriate. Even with strangers, titles are often used, such as *hakseng* for student, *ajeossi* for middle-aged man, *ajumoni* for middle-aged woman or *harabeoji* for elderly man.

Don't bother showing an address to a cabdriver, because no one but postal workers and delivery people will recognize it. Give him the name of a nearby landmark or building instead.

Do be polite to the elderly—offering your seat on a train or bus will be appreciated.

Don't be put off by the *ajummas* (middle-aged married women) who hustle their way and bump into people without saying "excuse me."

Don't expect men to hold open doors for women.

Do try some local snacks sold by street vendors. There are a surprisingly wide variety of flavors to choose from.

Do try to taste as many different kinds of kimchi as possible. Not all varieties are hot and spicy.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of the U.S. need passports but not visas for stays shorter than 90 days, and Canadian citizens can stay in country visa-free up to 180 days. Proof of onward passage and sufficient funds also are required. Departure tax of 4,000 SKW for domestic flights is included in airfare. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 9,735,860.

Languages: Korean, English.

Predominant Religions: Christianity, Buddhism.

Time Zone: 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+9 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: Outlets for 220 volts are the most common—the older 110 volt outlets are quickly disappearing.

Telephone Codes: 82, country code; 2, city code; 010, 011, codes for mobile phones;



Money

Taxes

Korea has a 10% value-added tax (VAT) that is normally included in the price. Larger hotels and restaurants add the VAT separately. Foreigners who present a passport can shop at duty-free stores.

Tipping

Tipping is neither required nor expected. However, it's customary to let the taxi driver keep the change. Some larger hotels and restaurants add a 10% service charge to the bill.

Weather

Seoul has four distinct seasons. Spring and autumn are definitely the best times to visit. In spring, cherry blossoms make some areas look as if they just received another snowfall. During the fall, the mountains explode into a symphony of colors as the leaves change. The monsoon season brings lots of rain from late June to late July. Summer temperatures range from the mid-70s F/24 C to the mid-80s F/30 C, with high humidity. During August, nighttime temperatures drop very little. Winters are dry with some snow, and temperatures average 30 F/-1 C. The winds can be biting, so take along warm clothes and dress in layers.

What to Wear

Summers are very hot and rainy—always carry an umbrella (Seoulites use them as parasols, too), and wear shoes that are appropriate for wet conditions. Winter weather alternates between subfreezing days of blustery wind and milder, sunny days above freezing, so take warm clothing. You can easily buy clothes in Korea, but very tall or large people may have difficulty finding sizes that fit.

Businesses tend to be conservative, especially older, more established companies, with most inveterate workers wearing suits every day. Younger companies, especially high-tech ones, tend to have more relaxed dress codes.

For women, short skirts are common and acceptable. Low-cut shirts, however, are not. Tank tops are slowly becoming more acceptable during the summer months, but in general women wear conservative tops.

Beijing, China

Overview

Introduction

The famous portrait of Mao Zedong still looks out over Beijing as though he's guarding communist austerity and discipline. But the Beijing he stares out upon is hardly the city he left behind.

Change is everywhere—in the clothes (you could wear them to the office in any cosmopolitan city); in the increasingly paralyzing traffic (more and more foreign- and Chinese-made automobiles jam the streets); in the electronics (smartphones, smartphones, smartphones); and in the construction (high-rises, high-rises, high-rises). If you scrub off the Gobi Desert dust, which is glued to everything with diesel exhaust, you'll find Beijing's true patina—a mixture of old and new. It may surprise you that you can still catch the glimmer of a lacquered temple or a traditional jadeite bracelet contrasted with the machine-made gleam of chrome and glass.



No doubt it's a calculated gleam. The Chinese government wants Beijing to be recognized as a modern world capital—especially modern enough for foreign investment. Beijing is a huge, burgeoning metropolis, with bulldozers carving the way to its future.

Highlights

Sights—Tiananmen Square; the Forbidden City; the Drum and Bell Towers; the Summer Palace; the Temple of Heaven; the Lama Temple; *hutong* neighborhoods, which consist of quaint, winding alleyways; a 360-degree city view from the top of Jingshan Park; Olympic Park; the Great Wall; Dashanzi art district, better known as the 798 Art Zone.

Museums—Beijing Museum of Natural History; the National Art Museum of China; the Capital Museum of China.

Memorable Meals—Peking duck at Wangfujing Roast Duck Shop; a Xinjiang meal at Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant; a classic Mongolian hot pot on Ghost Street or at Ding Ding Xiang.

Late Night—Bars and clubs along the renovated *hutong* lanes or in Beijing's old town, Houhai.

Walks—Make your way up Wangfujing, one of Beijing's prime shopping streets; stroll around the lake in Beihai Park or in the remaining *hutongs* in Dongcheng District; walk through, across or around Tiananmen Square.



Especially for Kids—Joy City Choyang or China World Shopping Mall for ice skating; the Beijing Zoo and Aquarium.

Geography

Beijing is geographically vast, exceedingly flat and largely treeless (except in parks, scenic spots and areas around the old legation quarter and Forbidden City), with a mishmash of ancient, Communist and, increasingly, futuristic high-rise architectural styles. Sights of interest to visitors are scattered. Tiananmen Square is at the heart of the modern city, but no one would call it downtown. The area east of Tiananmen Square along Chang'an Dajie, focused around the China World Center and CCTV Tower, is a modern commercial business district.

Travel with a good map (printed in both Chinese and English) and have your destinations written down in Chinese characters (ask your hotel's staff to help you). It might be helpful to ask your hotel for this information in advance for the transfer from the airport. For planning purposes, you may find it helpful to know the district where an attraction is located. For instance, Haidian District (Beijing Zoo, Summer Palace) is to the northwest, Chaoyang District (an embassy and nightlife area popular with expats and nouveau-riche Chinese) is to the east, and Chongwen District (Temple of Heaven) is to the southeast. When you're out and about, you'll discover that the city is built along avenues aligned in a grid. Roads may change their names several times as they continue across town.

Several "ring" roads form concentric circles in and around the city, with Tiananmen at the center. Somewhat confusingly, the first is not actually a ring road—it is made up of a series of small local streets. The Second Ring Road (Erhuan Lu) roughly follows the location of the old city wall, which was dismantled in the 1950s. A subway line also follows this route. The Third Ring Road (Sanhuan Lu) goes mostly through residential areas but also hits some major commercial districts, and the Fourth Ring Road (Sihuan Lu) runs primarily through suburbs and residential districts. Another subway line takes travelers along the eastern side of the Third Ring Road and along the north side of the Fourth Ring Road, connecting the Central Business District with the north side of the city. The Fifth and Sixth Ring roads, which visitors are unlikely to use, effectively orbit the city. A seventh (and regional) ring road is being considered.

The light-rail system makes a huge arc across the north of the city and connects Dongzhimen (in the east) to Xizhimen (in the west) through some of the city's university areas.

History

Beijing, planted on the edge of a fertile coastal plain, rose from agrarian roots. Nomadic tribes invaded and destroyed it many times over the course of several centuries, but the city was always rebuilt. By the fifth century BC, the area had developed sophisticated administrative networks under a feudal system. It became part of a vast, technologically advanced Chinese empire that was protected—and isolated—from the rest of the world by distance, harsh terrain and a huge wall.

In the 13th century, the Mongols under Genghis Khan conquered Beijing and ran the then-sitting emperor out of town. Genghis' grandson, Kublai Khan, built a new city at the site beginning in 1267 and made it the capital of his vast empire. This was the time of Marco Polo's travels—a period of extraordinary prosperity and power in China.



The area blossomed again in the 15th century when the Ming dynasty—which succeeded the Mongols in 1368—returned the capital to Beijing after some years in Nanjing. Vast sums were spent to refurbish the city as a major capital, called Beijing ("northern capital"). An immense imperial palace was built, and the Great Wall was fortified and extended by millions of laborers over a period of 100 years. Many of the city's best-known artifacts are legacies from that era, when architecture as well as arts and letters flourished. The Ming were overthrown by northern invaders, the Manchu Qing, who preserved and expanded the city during the following 300 years. Elaborate palaces and gardens still remain from what was China's last dynasty.

A chaotic period of warlord rule followed the downfall of the last emperor in 1911. In the same year, the capital was moved from Beijing to Nanjing, in Jiangsu province, and for a period it was known as Beiping ("northern peace"). Beijing became a flashpoint of political and cultural dissent, expressed in a student-led demonstration in 1919 and calls for reforms in government, women's rights, science, literature and the arts. The beginning of the Chinese Communist Party dates from this time, when a young Mao Zedong worked as a librarian at Beijing University, although the Party's first meeting was officially held in Shanghai.

A struggle for power ensued between the Communists and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), the leading political force that wanted to supplant the warlords and reunify the country under a military dictatorship. The struggle was temporarily interrupted when Japanese forces occupied the city during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). But after that war ended, a civil war broke out. It ended in 1949 when Communist forces entered Beijing unopposed. The Nationalists (led by Chiang Kai-shek) fled to the island of Formosa, taking the country's entire gold reserves, many art treasures and much of the air force and navy, and founded Taiwan. The People's Republic of China was founded on the mainland 1 October of that year in Beijing, when the city became the capital once again.

During the following decades, Beijing became the center of a new kind of empire. Mao tried to restore central rule, instill self-sufficiency and protect the country from outsiders, as well as to rebuild an economy devastated by huge inequalities. He oversaw the building of huge dams, canals and power-generating stations (instead of grand palaces and temples), but the country remained underdeveloped compared to the Western world.

A power struggle in Beijing between moderate reformers and Mao's revolutionary socialists resulted in the devastating Cultural Revolution that started in 1966 when Mao encouraged zealous Red Guards to root out his political enemies within the Chinese Communist Party. The violent and bloody initiative, which lasted until Mao's death in 1976, resulted in the persecution of many intellectuals and would-be reformers, effectively halting the nation's development. Since Mao's death, more moderate leaders, especially the late premier Deng Xiaoping, have opened the doors to trade opportunities and modernization.

Today, the regime continues in line with the policies set by Deng and continued by subsequent leaders, including current President Xi Jinping. Following its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China's economic development continues to progress at breakneck speed, to the continual amazement—and some degree of concern—of the rest of the world. Trade, manufacturing, the stock market and real estate have boomed.

Crucial situations still loom: bureaucratic corruption, Xinjiang separatism, human rights, uncertainty regarding Taiwan and Tibet, a huge migrant-worker population, nationwide pollution, urban overcrowding, inflation and an economy in danger of overheating are among the problems that China must resolve in order to achieve its aims.



Beijing achieved its goal of being in the international spotlight when it hosted the Olympic Games in the summer of 2008—the world's first attempt at an ecofriendly Olympics and among the most expensive on record, costing around 1.5 trillion yuan. That was an affirmation to China of its status as a modern nation, ready to sit at the table with the other major countries of the world. But the question is, at what price? Beijing residents and visitors together mourned the death of many of Beijing's most charming historic areas, bulldozed to make way for the construction of glass and steel symbols of modernization as the city turned a new face to the world. The changes will continue to shape the city's character for decades to come.

Port Information

Location

Because China's capital is inland, cruise ships dock at Tianjin, another large city about 80 mi/150 km away from Beijing. There are two ports in Tianjin, but only the Tianjin International Cruise Home Port, located on the southern end of the Dongjiang Port Zone, serves international cruise ships. Passengers embarking from Tianjin should be sure they arrive at that terminal, not at the older Xingang Passenger Terminal, which is now used primarily for domestic travel. The newer terminal is filled with plenty of dining and shopping, as well as an art gallery and a museum.

The drive to Beijing takes two to three hours, but allow plenty of time for traffic. High-speed trains to Beijing depart from Tanggu Railway station, reaching the capital in less than an hour. This is the quickest and cheapest option, but logistics are difficult for non-Mandarin speakers, who must book a taxi and buy tickets from railway employees who speak little English. Train tickets also sell out quickly as Tanggu station is popular with Chinese commuters. It may be most convenient to make use of the Beijing shore excursions offered by your cruise line.

Potpourri

The city used to be known in the English-speaking world as Peking, but its name hasn't changed. "Beijing" simply follows the currently accepted style of transliterating Chinese into Roman letters. The main university there still goes by its original English name, Peking University.

Beijing is built on strict cosmological principles, with the Forbidden City the center point of a north-south axis, known as a dragon's vein, which also includes Qianmen and the Drum Tower. The Olympic Park, constructed on the outskirts of the city directly north of the Forbidden City, adheres to this axial template. The north-south axis also makes Beijing very easy to navigate.

The eerie humming sound you hear above your head in the springtime is probably a flock of pigeons, whose owners have attached tubes to their legs to make an airborne symphony as they fly.

In late 2007, Fendi hosted the first catwalk fashion show on the Great Wall of China. Each fall, runners take their place to run full- or half-marathons along the wall. There is also a roller coaster-like track that runs along a portion of the wall.

Despite the rumors, the Great Wall of China isn't really visible from the moon.

Many older city residents raise crickets or songbirds in cages as pets to keep them company as they pass the time in the city's parks.



In Beijing, pet owners are not allowed to keep dogs taller than 14 in/35 cm from the ground to the shoulder, and only one dog per household is permitted. Strict regulations are also in place as a measure to restrict the spread of rabies, which has spread among humans in China. Most pet dogs are pekinese, pomeranians, chihuahuas or caramel-colored poodles.

Standard Chinese is based on the Beijing dialect and is known as Mandarin Chinese; it has become the literary and official form of Chinese learned by every child in the country's schools.

In a country with only 4,000 surnames (compared to more than 151,000 surnames in the U.S.), Wang is Beijing's most common surname, shared by about 10% of the city's inhabitants.

The Forbidden City, named so because it remained off-limits to the general population for 500 years, consists of 980 buildings and 9,999 rooms. At one time, it even housed a Starbucks, which sparked a great deal of controversy and subsequently closed.

On an average day in Beijing, air pollution is five times higher than the standard of safety set out by the World Trade Organization. It is common to see locals wearing face masks around town especially when outside; they are not sick, rather trying to avoid breathing in unhealthy particles.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Visitors should make the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, and the Drum Tower and Bell Tower their top priorities, along with the Olympic Park for sports fans. Other temples may be of interest, too. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have flourished alongside one another since the first century. Most temples and monasteries were damaged during the Cultural Revolution, but several, including the Lama Temple and nearby Confucius Temple, have been repaired and are worth seeing.

Do not underestimate the size of the city nor its traffic. What may look like a short distance on a map can take an hour or more by taxi. Whenever possible, take the efficient subway system and its linking bus routes. Current city maps include the mass transportation system. If necessary, ask your hotel for directions; the distances are so great that most receptionists and concierges know the quickest route by public transport. If you do decide to take a taxi, show the driver the name of the destination in Chinese characters (not Pinyin) and make sure the driver turns on the meter when you get in. Legal taxis have meters equipped with automatic printers for receipts that drivers are required to give customers at the end of the trip.

Although many have been razed in the name of 21st-century progress, the city has hundreds of miles/kilometers of ancient *hutongs* (alleys), which are lined with housing in Beijing's distinctive, traditional low-slung style. Just pick a direction and start walking. Most lie within the Second Ring Road that runs East and West of the Forbidden City; and some of the best are located in the area just south of the Drum Tower and Bell Tower, along Di'anmen Street. Several have been redeveloped and include a growing number of small hotels, bars, restaurants and shops.

Beijing also has some of Asia's most eye-catching new architecture, including Herzog & de Meuron's National Stadium (built for the Olympics), Paul Andreu's controversial domed National Grand Theater of China and Rem Koolhaas' angular CCTV HQ Tower.



No trip to Beijing would be complete without seeing the Great Wall of China. It's preferable to make a day of it; leave early, because it's quite a drive from the city. Tour companies and hotels can arrange half-day trips to the Juyongguan section for time-strapped travelers. Most tourists go to the Badaling for spectacular scenery, and Mutianyu if kids and seniors are part of the tour. For the less-visited parts of the Wall, check out Jinshanling, Huanghuacheng or Lianyunling. Although they're farther away, you'll find fewer tourists. Other sights worth seeing include the renovated White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan), the oldest Taoist temple in the world, and Xiangshan (Fragrant Hills) Park northwest of the city.

Those who can't imagine visiting China without seeing a panda will want to stop at the Beijing Zoo although the panda parks in Chengdu offer a much more immersive experience.

Save some yuan and avoid the queue with the Beijing Museum Pass, which includes free or half-price admission to a number of Beijing's top sights, including the Confucius Temple, the Bell Tower, the White Dagoba, the Beijing Planetarium and the Beijing Natural History Museum. The pass should be available at the more than 100 participating museums and post offices, but it becomes harder to find later in the year. The price does not change even if purchased later in the year. To reserve a pass, phone 8298-6620 or 8666-0651 with a bilingual speaker on hand to translate. Passes can also be ordered online. <http://www.bowuguan.com.cn>.

Observant travelers will notice the repetition of the following words in place names: *Lu* means road, *dajie* means boulevard; *bei* means north; *nan* means south; *dong* means east; *xi* means west; *liang* and *qiao* mean bridge.

Note: Many sites have both winter and summer hours, reflecting Beijing's low levels of light and early sunsets in the middle of winter. Many are closed Monday, and ticket offices often close an hour or 30 minutes before closing time. Some sites may prohibit cameras or charge an extra fee for them. Security checks are common at museums and other major sites, and many require larger bags to be checked at the entrance. Additionally, some museums close for a lunch break around noon. Plan your visits accordingly.

Historic Sites

White Dagoba Temple (Baitasi)

Fuxingmennei Dajie, Xicheng District
Beijing, China

On a small islet in Beihai Park stands a stupa known for its collection of Buddhist cultural relics (hence the term *dagoba*) that were once hidden inside its roof. The pagodalike structure was built by Lamaists from Tibet in honor of a visit by the fifth Dalai Lama in 1651. It has been destroyed and reconstructed twice.

Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. 20 yuan. Admission includes entrance to Beihai Park.

White Cloud Temple (Baiyun Guan)

6 Baiyunguan Jie, Xibianmenwai (Muxidi metro station), Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

The world's oldest Taoist temple—also the center of Taoism in north China—is located among the smokestacks of southern Beijing. Monks are still in residence, and every February during Spring Festival,



a temple fair is held there. Inside, you'll find an amazingly tranquil world of exotic deity statues, religious artifacts of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and long-haired Taoist priests. The public can visit a meditation chamber during chanting periods four times per day at 8:30 and 10 am, and 2 and 3:30 pm.

Daily 8:30 am-4:30 pm in summer, 8:30 am-4 pm in winter. 10 yuan.

Tiananmen Square (Tiananmen Guangchang)

Tiananmen Square (Tiananmen Xi, Tiananmen Dong or Quamen metro stations)
Beijing, China

The world's largest public square is a huge, open space (covering 122 acres/49 hectares) and is the beating heart of Beijing. It is three times the size of Moscow's Red Square, which was the whole point of its construction—Mao wanted to show up his rivals at the Kremlin by building a bigger public square. Most travelers will see it while passing through the city or while visiting the Forbidden City, which can be accessed through the Gate of Heavenly Peace at the north end. Said to hold as many as 1 million people, Tiananmen Square was where Mao Zedong inaugurated the revolutionary People's Republic of China in 1949 and where, 40 years later, the government used tanks to cut down reform-minded students.

Mao's iconic, unsmiling portrait hangs above the entrance. Mao's Mausoleum, open for free viewing Sunday-Tuesday, is behind the Monument to the People's Heroes, on the square. Cameras are not allowed inside this building. On the square's south side is a 15th-century gate (Qianmen) that once was part of an outer wall surrounding the city. The Great Hall of the People lies on the west side of the square. A flag-raising and lowering ceremony takes place at sunrise and sunset in Tiananmen Square. Traffic is halted as the soldiers march to and from the square across Chang'an Jie and into the Forbidden City through the Gateway of Heavenly Peace.

The Great Wall (Chang Cheng)

Beijing, China

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/31255.htm>

Built during a span of 1,100 years, with most construction taking place during the Ming Dynasty, the Great Wall is one of the most awesome sights in the world—an elevated highway that snakes across the countryside for more than 3,000 mi/4,830 km. In some places it is wide enough for carts and horsemen to travel along the top. A barrier to persistent invaders from the north, it also served as a dividing line between settled agriculture on the plain and nomadic life in the mountains. It is built of brick and stone and filled with earth—and supposedly the bodies of conscripted laborers who died building it. Much of it is in disrepair, but several sections near Beijing have been reconstructed.

At Badaling, about 50 mi/80 km to the northwest of Beijing, and at Mutianyu, 90 minutes away by car, visitors can climb a hill or ride a cable car to the top of the wall. (At Mutianyu there's a steep walk from the main gate.) At Juyong Pass, which is closer to the city, you'll find lots of teenagers trying to sprint up the 350-plus steps. Badaling, Mutianyu and Juyong Pass are heavily visited and developed, with gift shops, theaters, snack stands and even amusement-park-style rides. *Note:* The government has apparently outlawed hiking along sections of the "wild wall" (unrestored sections of the wall around Simatai and elsewhere), although people still do it. Admission 45 yuan; cable car roundtrip 60 yuan; <http://www.badalinggreatwall.com>.

Be advised that visitors to remote parts of the Wall may encounter "guides" and roadblocks. The guides are local peasants who, although they speak little or no English, want to guide you along the Wall for



payment. The result is unwanted company when you feel like you're going to have the Wall to yourself. Although it's possible they may accept a small tip and get lost, giving them money early on makes it more likely that they will hang around and walk with you all the way—and expect more at the end. A polite, but firm no should do the trick, and then you should avoid further eye contact.

The roadblocks are simply the collection of a toll by local peasants who see that section of the Wall as their own. Visitors who refuse to pay the toll, usually 5 yuan per person, may find themselves threatened physically. Either pay the toll and go on, or turn around if you refuse. These are annoyances, but they grow out of poverty more than greed.

Some hotels will arrange a tour to any of these wall sections, but many include unwanted stops for shopping en route. For a more unstructured visit, take a taxi or a bus. You can easily spend a whole day at the wall: Pack a picnic lunch (take plenty of water) and enjoy the fresh air and vistas. Be aware that temperatures at the Great Wall are almost always cooler than in Beijing, so plan ahead in winter. A visit to the Great Wall may be most rewarding for the physically fit (most sections offer strenuous up-and-down climbs), but just seeing the wall is worth the trip.

Admission varies depending on the section of the wall, but is usually about 45 yuan. Cable car fees at Mutianyu are extra.

The Drum and Bell Towers (Gu Lou and Zhong Lou)

9-A Zhonglouwan (at the corner of Gulou Dajie and Dianmenwai Dajie, at the latter's north end; Gulou metro station), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-8402-7869

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/beijing/31182.htm>

These magnificent ancient towers have existed in various incarnations for 700 years. The Drum Tower houses replicas of 24 giant drums that were used to announce the time during imperial days. Today, the tower houses 25 drums that are struck for visitors every hour 9:30-11:30 am and 1:30-4:50 pm. The drum room offers a great view of the northern part of the city.

Just north of the Drum Tower is the Bell Tower (not to be confused with the Big Bell Temple). Inside is a 500-year-old bronze bell with 4-in-/10-cm-thick walls.

Both towers open daily 9 am-5 pm. Fees are 20 yuan for the Bell Tower, 20 yuan for the Drum Tower, 30 yuan for a combination ticket to see both.

Temple of the Azure Clouds (Biyunsi)

Xiangshan (Fragrant Hills Park, just outside the north gate), Haidian District
Beijing, China

Built during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), this Buddhist temple contains religious statuary and the Diamond Throne Pagoda. It's the most magnificent of the temples in Beijing's western hills. It's especially nice in the spring when surrounded by blossoms. Also includes the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall.

Daily 8 am-5 pm. 10 yuan.

Temple of Heaven (Tiantan)

Yongdingmen Dajie (south gate; Qianmen metro station, then take a taxi), Chongwen District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6301-7620 or 6701-2483

<http://en.tiantanpark.com>

Located in spacious Tiantan Park, south of the central city, the Temple of Heaven is less a religious site than a historical one. Dating from the 15th century, it was where the emperor made an annual pilgrimage, complete with a huge entourage, to pray for good harvests (commoners were prohibited from viewing the ceremonies). It is made up of several circular, blue-tiled buildings—the color blue represents the heavens. The crown jewel is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest, which stands on a square marble terrace (representing the earth).

Amazingly, the three-story building was fitted together without a single nail, peg or bit of cement. It was reconstructed in the 19th century after a fire destroyed the original. The whole park easily lends itself to a self-guided walking tour. Take a taxi or metro line No. 5 there, pay at the entrance, find a map (usually near the entrance) and then wander to your heart's content.

Daily 6 am-10 pm. 10 yuan (park only), 30 yuan (park and buildings).

Summer Palace (Yiheyuan)

Yiheyuan Lu (Xiuyuan metro station), Haidian District
Beijing, China

Once the summer home for the emperor and his court, the palace consists of a series of less-formal buildings nestled in a hilly, wooded setting on a splendid lake, with gardens, bridges, pavilions, halls and towers. Though its contents were plundered, the Summer Palace recalls the opulent lifestyle of the privileged few during Qing times. Today, visitors enjoy a far less exclusive experience, as tour groups dominate the Palace in peak months. Look for the marble replica of a boat, which was built by the last empress using funds meant to modernize the navy. The Long Corridor, a covered 2,275-ft/700-m wooden walkway along the lake, is painted in extraordinary detail. It takes you from one great photo opportunity to the next—most tour groups walk through far too quickly.

You can also take a dragon-boat ride on the lake, but it's a pretty slow ride and usually is jammed with tourists. In winter, visitors often ignore official warnings and use the frozen lake as a shortcut walkway through the palace grounds. Don't miss the trilevel opera stage favored by the Empress Dowager near the east gate (it's worth the extra 10 yuan to see it).

The most unique way to experience the Summer Palace is by staying the night at the adjacent Aman Summer Palace, which gives guests private access to the palace after hours through a private door. It is an unforgettable experience to see it without other tourists there.

Daily 6:30 am-6 pm. 60 yuan in summer, 50 yuan in winter. 40 yuan for audioguide, plus deposit.

Prince Kung's Mansion

17 Qianhai Xijie (Ping'ali metro station, then take Bus 118 or a taxi), Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-8328-8149 or 6601-6132

<http://www.pgm.org.cn>

Built in 1777 by an official of the Qianlong period, this compound became the home of the last emperor's father, Prince Kung (or Prince Gong). The estate is filled with beautiful rock gardens and lily ponds. Visitors can catch regular Peking opera performances in the theater with the 60-yuan package tour. It is a popular stop for Chinese tourists and can be overrun with them in the summer; foreign visitors don't seem to find the place as fascinating. This site can be very hard to find.

Daily 7:30 am-4:30 pm in summer, 8 am-4 pm in winter. 40 yuan, 60 yuan including opera performance and tea ceremony.

Lama Temple (Yonghegong Lamasery)

12 Yonghegong Dajie, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6404-4499

<http://www.yonghegong.cn>

Former imperial palaces such as this one, built in 1694, were converted to religious sites according to Chinese tradition. The architecture and ornamentation of these buildings show the influence of Han, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan styles, and there's a striking 59-ft/18-m statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha), carved from a single sandalwood tree. The temple was once an important center of Tibetan Lamaism, and some 200 monks still live, study and pray there.

Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. Admission 25 yuan, audio tour 40 yuan.

Huguang Guild Hall (Huguang Huiguan)

3 Hufang Lu, Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6351-8284

<http://www.huguangguildhall.com>

Refurbished in 1994 to approximate its Qing-era glory, the Huguang Huiguan is a renowned theater that originally served as a guesthouse for scholars from southern provinces taking the imperial exams. It later evolved into an entertainment center with lively restaurants and theater performances where famous female-impersonating Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang was a regular performer. Today, visitors can catch excerpts of operas in the 300-seat theater.

Daily 9 am-7:30 pm. Performance time daily 7:30-8:40 pm. 180 yuan-380 yuan for the performance.

Forbidden City (Gugong)

4 Jingshan Qianjie (walk through the gate on Tiananmen Square and pass through two courtyards to reach the ticket office, or enter from the east side near Wangfujing), Dongcheng District

Beijing, China

Phone: 10-8500-7421

<https://en.dpm.org.cn>

Twenty-four emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties lived in the Forbidden City, which got its name because it was off-limits to ordinary citizens. It's known officially as the Palace Museum, Gugong. It was built in the 14th century, but because of fires and other catastrophes, has been rebuilt several times. On the grounds are six palaces and 800 smaller buildings, reportedly containing 9,999 rooms and halls, and hundreds of gardens. The city's design and symmetry make it an architectural wonder.

You would need days to see all of it in detail, but you can see its main halls in a few hours. There are a couple of interesting museums on the grounds, including the Hall of Clocks, which contains an amazing collection of—you guessed it—clocks.

Be aware that many of the treasures that once filled the rooms were looted by the Japanese during World War II, or were taken to Taiwan by the Nationalists in 1949. Some of what you'll encounter is representational, and some of the items are reproductions. Also be aware that seeing the displays can be a challenge: Many of the rooms are dimly lit as they were when the last emperor lived there. Renovation continues throughout the complex but should not affect your ability to visit all the major attractions.

We recommend that you see the Forbidden City with an English-speaking guide who can explain the social and political significance of the architecture. You should be able to arrange a guide through your hotel.

Daily 8:30 am-5 pm. 60 yuan adults. Some exhibits require additional fees.

Dongyuemiao Temple

141 Wai Ave. (Chaoyangmen metro station), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Set amid the skyscrapers of Chaoyang, Dongyue dates from the early 1300s and is home to an amazing assortment of life-sized plaster figures depicting the 73 Chiefs of Departments and 18 Layers of Hell of Taoist tradition. It is best known to local expats as "that temple that nobody knows the name of." Predominantly a temple to the God of Taishan Mountain, offerings can be made to different deities to help with everything from having a baby to buying a new car or being promoted at work. Because of its role in folk culture and ceremony, the temple premises is the location of the Beijing Folk Arts Museum, where many important festivals (such as the Spring Festival and Dragon-Boat Festival) are held.

Tuesday-Sunday 8 am-4:30 pm. 10 yuan adults.

Confucius Temple (Kong Miao)

13 Guozijian Jie, Andingmennei (Yongegong-Lama Temple metro station), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

The Confucius Temple sees so few visitors, it seems like a well-kept secret. This structure is as much museum as it is temple. It was built during the time of Kublai Khan in honor of Confucius, whose ideas



have influenced China for more than 2,000 years. It also commemorates generations of scholars who passed grueling three-day exams—perhaps the world's first civil-service tests—to join the ruling elite and serve the imperial court. On the grounds are 198 tablets inscribed with the names of the successful candidates.

It also is the site of the former Imperial College, where the emperor went to pay his respects to Confucius and to lecture on the classics. Compared with the crowded Lama Temple, this is a wonderful, quiet place to visit, especially in spring and autumn, and should be combined with a visit to the Lama Temple to fully enjoy the neighborhood.

Daily 7:30 am-4:30 pm. 90 yuan.

Beijing Ancient Observatory (Guguanxiang Tai)

2 Dong Biaobei Hutong, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6524-2202

<http://eng.bjp.org.cn>

This open-air observatory, established by Kublai Khan, has a history spanning three dynasties. Chinese maritime maps and superb instruments from the Ming and Qing dynasties are displayed along with items made by Jesuit scholar-priests in the 17th century.

Wednesday-Friday 9:30 am-3:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-4:30 pm. 45 yuan adults.

Ancient Music Center (Zhihuasi)

5 Lumicang Hutong (east of Nanxiaoje), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

The center (in the Ming dynasty Temple, also known as the Temple of Wisdom Attained) gives performances of compositions using period instruments, created to help monks memorize Buddhist scriptures. The west half of the main courtyard features Beijing's only Ming dynasty octagonal wooden pedestals. Ask about regularly scheduled performances.

Daily 6 am-6 pm. 20 yuan.

Museums

National Art Museum of China (NAMOC)

1 Wusi Dajie, East District, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6401-1816

<http://www.namoc.org/en>

Founded in 1959, this renovated museum has permanent exhibits of works by Chinese artists and frequent shows by international artists in 14 huge exhibition halls.

Daily 9 am-5 pm, last entry at 4 pm. Free admission. Audio guides available for rent.

Chinese Military History Museum

9 Fuxingmenwai Dajie (Beijing metro, Military Museum exit), Haidian District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6686-6244

<http://eng.jb.mil.cn>

See 5,000 years' worth of war paraphernalia: AK-47s, flame throwers, tanks, ancient weaponry, uniforms and even U.S. U-2 spy plane wreckage. A military buff's paradise.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:30 am-5:30 pm. Free entry.

Capital Museum of China

16 Fuxingmenwai Dajie, Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6337-0491 for individuals, 6337-0458 for groups

<http://en.capitalmuseum.org.cn>

This modern museum is a wonderful exhibition space for a diverse collection of artifacts relating to Beijing's past and present. This eclecticism means it is also a good place to see visiting exhibitions, ranging from Italian Renaissance treasures to contemporary British art.

Open daily 9 am-5 pm. Free reservations can be made online or by phone.

Beijing Museum of Natural History (Ziran Buowuguan)

126 Tianqiao Nandajie, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6702-7702

<http://www.bmnh.org.cn/en>

The largest of its kind in China, this museum contains fossils or specimens of almost all plants and animals found in China, including such prehistoric ones as the woolly mammoth and *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Squeamish visitors and those traveling with children may want to skip the third floor, where exhibits on human anatomy have been created from dissected cadavers suspended in formaldehyde. If you're expecting the equivalent of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, however, you will be disappointed.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:30 am-5 pm. 30 yuan adults.

Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art & Archaeology

Peking University campus (enter via the West Gate), Haidian District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6275-1667

<http://www.sackler.org/arts/beijing>

Located on the campus of Peking University (Beida), this collection spans 280,000 years from the Paleolithic period to the Qing dynasty. On display are exquisite Shang dynasty bronzes and pottery from the Tang and Song dynasties. Very few people visit this museum, as it is occasionally difficult for



nonstudent foreigners to enter the Peking University campus; ask your hotel concierge to assist to make it easier. As always when buying tickets, take your passport, as identification will be required.

Daily 9 am-4:30 pm. Free admission. English-language tours are available.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Qianmen Street

Just south of Tiananmen Square
Beijing, China

Qianmen, which means "front gate," is named for the front gate of the old walled city, left standing after the walls themselves were demolished. It is the colloquial name for Zengyangmen. The city's north-south axis runs through its gate. In Ming times, establishments that were banned within city walls—including theaters, brothels, and certain shops and restaurants—found a niche there. Today it is a pedestrian walkway, redesigned and rebuilt as a Beijing history-themed shopping and dining area.

The area around Qianmen also served as the route for the emperor's yearly procession from the Forbidden City to the Temple of Heaven to pray for a good harvest. It was, in essence, the heart of old Beijing. The area has been redesigned and rebuilt as a Beijing history-themed shopping and dining area. The imposing Qianmen Gate is itself worth seeing.

Hutongs

Beijing's *hutongs* (alleyways) afford a glimpse of old China that is quickly disappearing. Traditional courtyard homes, known as *siheyuan*, were built according to principles of order and harmony dating from the second century BC. Their outside walls form the alleys. The *hutongs* that remain are most plentiful near the Forbidden City and the Second Ring Road at Andingmen. Subtle architectural details differentiate homes of the wealthy from those of commoners or merchants.

Visit the Houhai (Hou Lake), the area around one of the Back Lakes north of Beihai Park, where you can find such famous *hutongs* as Yichi Dajie (Yichi Street, Beijing's shortest) and Qianshi *hutong* (the city's narrowest), once the home of moneychangers. The Nanluoguxiang *hutong*, shorter than a mile-/kilometer-long, has been extensively, but sensitively, renovated and is now a thriving boutique, cafe and restaurant district, sometimes disparagingly called the "Disney Hutong." The alleys are fine for exploration, but the courtyards themselves are private. Remember to take along your hotel's card with its name written in Chinese in case you get lost and need directions back.

You can rent a pedicab from *hutong* tour companies, complete with an English-speaking guide. Many major hotels also arrange guided *hutong* tours.

Parks & Gardens

Although many of the more affluent parts of the city have become increasingly gentrified in recent years, Beijing is still by and large a gritty, crowded metropolis largely bereft of attractive landscaping in its neighborhoods and business districts. Still, the city boasts numerous large, beautiful parks—usually consisting of concrete walkways through areas of trees—that draw locals and visitors for strolling, tai chi, picnicking and other activities. (In some, you'll find older Chinese doing their daily exercises on colorful apparatuses that resemble children's playground equipment.)

Xiangshan (Fragrant Hills) Park

Xiangshan Lu (Beigongmen metro station, Exit A, then Bus 331 or 696 to Xiangshan station), Haidian District
Beijing, China

This park, 17 mi/28 km outside the city, is a favorite place for hiking, especially in autumn, when the changing leaves make for spectacular scenery. Once the emperor's hunting grounds, it has remnants of temples and pavilions to visit along the trail. If you have the energy, climb to the peak to watch the sunrise—or take the chair lift (60 yuan one way). Elderly Beijingers practice tai chi and sing on the peak at dawn. The park is also home to the beautiful Azure Clouds Temple (10 yuan admission).

Daily 6 am-6:30 pm in spring and fall; closes at 7 pm in summer, 6 pm in winter. 15 yuan.

Jingshan Park (Prospect or Coal Hill)

1 Wenjin St. (opposite the north gate of the Forbidden City; Dongsì metro station, Exit C, then Bus 101 to Gu Gong/Forbidden City station), Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Just north of the Forbidden City, this artificial hill was created from soil excavated to create a moat around the imperial palace. This is where Chong Zhen, the last emperor of the then-unraveling Ming dynasty, hanged himself from a tree as the Manchus were streaming into the city. Now a park, it was once the highest vantage point in Beijing. The Ten Thousand Springs Pavilion at the summit affords a lovely panoramic view of the Forbidden City (the world's largest palace complex), Tiananmen Square, and beyond, and is the perfect spot to watch the sunset. Nice flowers in season, and good for strolling.

Daily 6 am-9 pm. 2 yuan (park only).

Beijing Botanical Garden

Xiangshan Lu, Haidian District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6259-1283

<http://beijingbg.com/English>

Situated in western Beijing, the botanical garden offers a nice green retreat from the smog and chaos of city life. Attractions include a huge, modern greenhouse stocked with flowers of all shapes and sizes, quaint promenades and plenty of sleepy pavilions where you can rest and reflect. Wofosi (the Temple of the Reclining Buddha), which dates back to the Tang Dynasty, is also in the park.

Daily 7 am-5 pm. Admission ranges 5 yuan-50 yuan.

Beihai Park (Beihai Gongyuan)

1 Wenjin Jie (Ping'anli metro station, southeast exit; then walk eastward along Dianmen Xi Dajie to the north gate), Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Located northwest of the Forbidden City, this park has an 800-year history as the royal garden—and playground—of the Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. It was also the site of Kublai Khan's imperial palace and court, now destroyed. The white *dagoba* (of the White Dagoba Temple), better known as "the big white thing"—a Buddhist relic repository—is the only remnant from the Khan's palace. The park is grand and sprawling, with some beautiful landscaping, a lake and paddleboats for rent by the hour (10



yuan). Visit at 6 am to see hundreds of people practicing tai chi, or enjoy a meal fit for the emperor at the Fangshan Restaurant in the center of the park.

Daily 6 am-8 pm, buildings open until 4 pm. 5 yuan (park), 10 yuan (all access). 10 yuan for entrance to the White Dagoba.

Recreation

Find a sport and you're bound to find a local club, minor league or professional team competing to become the world's best. One of the huge spin-offs from hosting the Olympics is a keen interest from the youth as well as visionaries creating innovative venues. With the emergence of a class of young, upwardly mobile Beijingers and the influx of visitors from other countries, recreational facilities have blossomed throughout the city. Most major hotels catering to foreigners have good exercise equipment and swimming pools, and many have spas and wellness centers. However, the Chinese are learning through trial and error, so prices and amenities often change.

Ask at your hotel about aerobics classes, instruction in tai chi, ballroom dancing, yoga, Pilates and other organized activities that are showing up around town. There are also a number of modern fitness-center franchises, mostly in the Chaoyang District. Most of these places require memberships.

Beijing probably has China's largest outdoor community, with many lively recreational activities taking place around the bustling park surrounding the Temple of Heaven. There you'll see tai chi, martial arts studies, traditional dance and other Chinese sporting activities. These are mostly locals practicing on their own, but it can be interesting to watch and a great way to learn. Beijingers are also increasingly heading to the city's suburbs and surrounding areas to bike, hike or otherwise leave the urban environment behind for a little while. As such, recreational activities are becoming more available to visitors, as well.

Bicycling

Beijing used to be a bicycle-friendly city. Not long ago, the morning commute in Beijing was a sea of bicycles with a smattering of motor vehicles. That has changed, but you still find an array of cyclists, including some businesspeople who choose bicycles over private cars. In many cases bikes are faster, easier to park and certainly cheaper.

Most major streets have bike lanes—although motorists' interpretation of what is or is not a bike lane is quite liberal—and Beijing is built on an easy-to-navigate, north-south axis. Sure, winter's a bit chilly, but during the other three seasons, there is perhaps no better or more convenient way to see Beijing than by bike.

Because Beijing is exceptionally flat, a cheap, single-speed bicycle is all you need. (Mountain bikes are a favorite of thieves.) Many hotels rent bicycles for about 30 yuan-60 yuan a day. If yours does not, ask the concierge or front-desk staff to direct you to a company that does—there are many in the city. You may be asked to leave a deposit (about 300 yuan) or your passport. Be aware that because bike paths border roads, it's impossible to avoid exhaust fumes. Riding in the *hutongs*, the maze of small alleyways that run parallel to larger streets, is a safer and more scenic way to get around. If you have asthma or are prone to upper-respiratory infections, bicycling is probably not a good idea. Finding a bike rental shop is harder than it used to be, but they still exist.



Golf

Golf has become the latest sporting craze in China although the government has launched a recent initiative that has closed dozens of courses across the country in an effort to conserve water. Beijing by far has the largest number of golf courses. You can get plenty of information (and advice) about golf in the Beijing area from the Beijing Golfer's club, set up by a group of expat golfers (<http://www.beijing-golfers-club.org>). The China Golf Association keeps a handle on all domestic and international golf championships.

The receptionists and attendants at the golf courses may not speak English, so you may need someone who speaks Chinese to reserve tee times for you. Plan on greens fees that range 80 yuan-600 yuan Monday-Friday, 100 yuan-1,000 yuan Saturday and Sunday. You'll need to reserve a tee time on weekends.

Chaoyang Kosaido Golf Club (Guang Ji Tang Golf)

A-9 Nongzhan Nanlu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Near the Pacific Century Plaza, this nine-hole course is one of the most conveniently located in town. It has a good driving range to keep your swing in shape.

Daily 9 am-9 pm (closed in winter). Tee time prices vary Monday-Friday, 720 yuan Saturday and Sunday.

Beijing International Golf Club

Northwest of Ming Tombs Reservoir, Changping District
Beijing, China

Beijing's first golf club is located near the Ming Tombs River and Reservoir. For visitors, early booking is required.

Monday-Friday 8 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday subject to availability. For nonmembers, greens fees are 800 yuan Monday-Friday; 1,400 yuan Saturday and Sunday.

Hiking & Walking

Beijing is blessed with fabulous opportunities for hiking and walking, in many cases in historic places, or on and around monuments such as the Great Wall of China.

Some general commonsense rules for hiking and walking in remote areas apply. Be sure to carry plenty of water; the Beijing environs are exceptionally dry. Also, carry a small first-aid kit to deal with minor injuries, and a fully charged cell phone. If you are using a complex route, carry a GPS unit, know how to use it, and know the route that you plan to follow.

Even in rural areas, mobile phone coverage is very good, but that doesn't mean that you will be covered everywhere. If necessary, climb to higher ground to try to get an improved signal. Also, make sure you have someone to call in case of an emergency. You can try your hotel, but you may also want to try calling Beijing United Family Hospital. It may be able to assist in managing an emergency if one arises.



Spas and Health Clubs

Working out in Beijing used to mean doing tai chi in a park early in the morning. Now, the question isn't *can* you work out, but where, when and how. Physical fitness has become as much a badge of status for upwardly mobile Chinese as the car one drives and the name of one's employer.

If you are staying at a four- or five-star hotel, ask at the desk what the hotel's fitness facilities are. At the very least, it will have a relationship with a nearby fitness club. Also, if you're a member of a major chain, such as Bally, ask at your home club if your membership entitles you to any international reciprocal privileges.

Some fitness facilities will also charge a daily or short-term fee.

Tennis & Racquet Sports

China has a super league when it comes to table tennis. With a crop of A-listers such as Xu Xin, Zhang Jike, Wang Hao and Ma Long, reigning champions are keeping the city's love of the game alive. Because Beijingers enjoy the social aspects of fitness, there are countless fitness clubs that don't require membership where visitors can stop in to play table tennis, bowl or shoot some baskets.

Other Options

Tai chi evolved from an ancient Chinese practice known as *qigong* and is believed to integrate mind, body and spirit. Practitioners move through a series of continuous, rhythmic exercises, called forms, which resemble slow-moving ballet and stretching. Benefits of tai chi include reducing stress, promoting balance and flexibility, and even easing arthritis pain.

Tai chi is gaining popularity around the world, but the best way to learn it is straight from the source. Join the early birds at Ritan Park at 6 am daily, where locals may offer to give you lessons.

Tianyi Kung Fu Club

529 SDIC Creative Information Industry Park, South Tower, Juxianqiao Middle Road, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 135-8196-8758

<http://www.tianyikungfu.com>

The teacher at this club, Master Liu Hongchi, received the designation of eighth-degree martial artist in China. Only 38 people in the country have been so honored. The club offers lessons in kung fu, as well as in tai chi. Classes are taught in Chinese with English-language translation.

Check the website for class schedule.

Nightlife

The easing of government policies, growth of creativity in the nightlife scene and an increase in the number of foreigners living in Beijing have given rise to several thriving entertainment spots. Clubs and bars of every stripe line Sanlitun bar street in Chaoyang District, but the area around Houhai Lake (northwest of Beihai Park), with dozens of popular bars, is vying for Sanlitun's crown as Beijing's premier nightlife district. The city's luxury-hotel boom is also adding classy cocktail lounges across the city.



Karaoke bars are the nighttime activity of choice for many Chinese. You'll find them in many hotels, as well as on every corner in the tourist areas. (They're recognizable by the letters OK or KTV in their names.) Be warned: Some karaoke bars charge outrageous prices and have been known to rough up customers who refuse to pay their expensive bills; others are fronts for brothels. If you want to try a karaoke bar, go to one in a hotel. It will be expensive, but at least you'll know what you're getting into.

Beijing's clubgoers are a fickle bunch, and venues quickly fall in and out of favor. Also, the turnover rate is extremely high, as many venues in the older *hutong* areas are being demolished and forced to reopen elsewhere. The capital has also seen the arrival of the super-club—giant dance venues that attract international DJs such as Carl Cox, Paul Oakenfold and Paul van Dyk.

The hours at Beijing nightspots vary. Bars and live-music venues in the Sanlitun and Houhai areas generally close around 2 am. Most clubs and discos stay open all night, depending on their popularity.

Bars, Taverns & Pubs

Pass-by Bar

108 Nanluoguxiang, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Perfect for the granola-and-backpacker set—this place is all about Tibetan decor, travel books and backpacker bulletin boards. Decent pasta, reasonably priced beer and a diverse, down-to-earth crowd. Also has free Wi-Fi and a smoke-free section.

Daily 9 am-4 am.

Centro

Kerry Hotel Beijing, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6561-8833 ext. 42

<http://www.shangri-la.com/beijing/kerry/dining/bars-lounges/centro>

Located in the lobby of the Kerry Hotel Beijing, this bar is enormously popular among businesspeople and the martini-and-cigar set. It's a cross between a lounge and a jazz bar with both canned lounge music and a live jazz trio.

24 hours daily.

Cafe Sambal

43 Doufuchi Hutong, JiuGulou Dajie, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6400-4875

<http://www.cafesambal.com>

Operated by the owner of Bed Tapas & Bar, this small courtyard bar is fantastic in the summer, although it's a treat any time of year. It serves nouvelle Malaysian cuisine for the hungry—the thirsty should try a bucket of the house mojitos.

Daily 11:30 am-midnight.



Comedy Clubs

Beijing's comedy clubs are very different from the comedy Westerners are used to, and there's a bit of a language barrier, but the entertainment is lighthearted and some laughs will still be had. To see if any top English-language stand-up acts are in town, visit <http://www.comedyclubchina.com>.

Dance & Nightclubs

Vics Club

Workers Stadium (Gongti north gate, east side), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-5293-0333

<http://www.vics.com.cn>

This club in the Workers Stadium parking lot plays a very loud blend of booty-shaking hip-hop and R&B to a consistent crowd of youngsters, students and twentysomethings.

Nightly 9:30 pm-2 am.

Performing Arts

Beijing's arts offerings are impressive—and can be seen year-round. Many artists have begun traveling overseas, lending an increasingly cosmopolitan sophistication to the performing arts.

Check out the Official Beijing Theater Guide for a schedule of theatre, dance and opera in the city. Phone 8478-6068. <http://theatrebeijing.com>.

Dance

Beijingers enjoy watching dance performances so much that the capital celebrates an annual Beijing Dance Festival every July.

China Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble (Zhong Yang Gewu Tuan)

Performances are held at the Theater of the Beijing Exhibition Hall or the Nationalities Theater.

Ticket prices vary. Xicheng District. Phone 10-6403-3439.

Beijing Modern Dance Company

Fangjia Hutong No. 46, Block B, 3F, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Formed in 1995 by Jing Xin, a former People's Liberation Army officer, the troupe organizes annual modern dance festivals and allows visitors to watch its daily rehearsals.

Ticket prices vary. Call for schedule.



Music

China National Symphony Orchestra

No. 2 W. Chang'an Ave., Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6605-7006 (Beijing Concert Hall)

<http://en.chncpa.org/production/residentcompanies/ncpaorchestra>

China's national orchestra performs at the Beijing Concert Hall in the National Centre for the Performing Arts. Programs frequently feature guest artists. Check website for upcoming performances.

Beijing Symphony Orchestra

1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Liubukou (just off the western edge of Tiananmen Square)
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6605-7006 (Beijing Concert Hall)

<http://www.bjso.cn>

The orchestra is dedicated to developing and promoting modern and traditional Chinese music as well as standard symphonic works. Performs with domestic and international guest artists at the Beijing Concert Hall. Check website for upcoming performances.

Ticket prices vary.

Opera

Beijing opera, which got its start about 200 years ago during the Qing dynasty, is enjoying a revival today. In the early days of the opera, performances were in open-air markets and other public areas, so the actors developed a loud, piercing sound to be heard over the noise of the crowds. Garish costumes helped them stand out on dim stages.

Beijing opera is considered to be the best of many forms in China. A subset of Chinese opera, Beijing opera (also known as Peking opera) is unlike, for example, *Madame Butterfly*: It's a combination of song, dance, acrobatics and other crowd-pleasing stunts. The music is less important than the visual impact. In fact, most people chat (sometimes loudly) throughout the performance.

Most hotels in Beijing will arrange for tickets. Ticket prices vary; discounts are widely available, and prices often include Chinese tea and sweets served at tables near the stage.

Liyuan Theater

175 Yongan Road (in Qianmen Hotel), Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

Phone: 135-5252-7373

<http://www.liyuantheatre.cn>

The city's first teahouse-style theater offers Beijing opera for foreigners, with English subtitles displayed on screens that flank the stage. After the hour-long performance, children are welcome backstage to meet the costumed characters.

Shows nightly at 7:30. Tickets 200 yuan-380 yuan.



Ticket Brokers

At many hotels, the concierge or front-desk staff can assist you in obtaining tickets. Avoid buying tickets sold by scalpers outside the theaters, because they may not be tickets for that day's performance and in many cases are fake.

Tickets for most performing arts events can be purchased online at <http://www.t3.com.cn>.

Venues

True arts fans should check listings for two prominent venues: the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Tiananmen Square and the big building next to it, the Great Hall of the People. The two compete to attract top classical-music acts. Names such as Zubin Mehta and the Berlin Philharmonic grace both facilities' stages.

Tickets for events at most major venues in Beijing can be booked by phone at 400-610-3721, or online at <https://en.damai.cn>.

Other Options

The Legend of Kung Fu

The Red Theatre, 44 Xingfu Dajie (the theater was originally called Chongwen Worker's Cultural Palace Theater), Chongwen District
Beijing, China

Phone: 186-0002-9225 for tickets

<http://www.redtheatre.cn>

Nightly performances of kung fu fighting and its history in a modern theatrical setting, with English subtitles above the stage.

Nightly at 7:30; the show lasts about 90 minutes. Ticket prices 140 yuan-500 yuan.

Spectator Sports

For sports fans, two monthly English-language magazines, *The Beijinger* and *Time Out Beijing*, are the best sources of information about soccer games, basketball, rugby matches and other spectator sports.

Basketball

The Chinese Basketball League showcases the best basketball talents in the country and some foreign players, as well. Beijing's army team, the Bayi Rockets, plays regularly.

Soccer

Beijingers—and the Chinese in general—are crazy about soccer. Games are held in spring and summer at the Workers Stadium. Get tickets, if there are any left, at the official Guo'an store inside the east gate of the Workers Stadium. Ticket prices start at 60 yuan.



Shopping

You will find most of China's products in Beijing: carpets, silk, cloisonne and lacquered items, jade carvings, pearls and embroidery. The best, however, may be available only in Hong Kong or may be exported. Still, most shoppers will find plenty to buy.

Though shopping in Beijing can be rewarding, it can also be extremely frustrating. There's a wealth of items to buy, but finding them (especially at the right price) can be difficult. The pearl markets, for instance, offer beautiful jewelry, though you may be able to find similar-quality pearls at better prices elsewhere in China. Some great deals on such common items as clothing can be found at Beijing's open markets. Thus, a "bargain" may depend on where you're going in China and how much travel time you are willing to spend shopping. Designer clothing and other goods can be found in many shops and markets. But beware—there are many counterfeits of designer brands, as well.

Bargain vigorously when dealing with small and independent shops—it's expected. Haggling is typically done by calculator; the buyer and seller punch in offers and counter offers until a price is agreed upon, although many vendors in the Xiushui and Yaxiu markets speak excellent English. The general rule is to cut the initial asking price in half and start bargaining from there. Be firm and walk away if they don't agree. Most likely you'll be called back and sold the item.

However, Beijing shopping is becoming increasingly mall-focused, with several large, world-class retail developments such as China Central Place Seasons, The Place and the Village development in Sanlitun. There it's possible to find many Western brands, along with the standard shopping refreshments, such as Starbucks and Costa Coffee, although at Western prices. In malls and higher-end shops, prices are set and non-negotiable.

Remember that cash is king. A shop's acceptance of international credit cards (such as American Express or Visa) is meant to attract foreign shoppers, but prices may include credit-card service fees.

Shopping Hours: Stores generally open around 8 am and close around 6 pm, with larger department stores opening around 9 or 9:30 am and staying open as late as 10 pm. Open-air markets start at about 9 am and close at dusk.

Antique Stores

Be especially careful when buying antiques. There are excellent copies available—so good that they pass for the real thing. This is great, except that fakes are usually sold at the same high prices as the genuine articles. True antiques will be authenticated by the shop selling them, thanks to China's stringent antiquities-protection laws. These laws also provide that items beyond a certain age—usually those made before the reign of the Emperor Qianlong (1736-95)—cannot be taken out of the country and will be confiscated at customs. Make sure that anything you plan on legally taking out of China is unwrapped and available for inspection as you leave the country, and that you also have all proper documentation with you. This documentation may also be needed upon re-entry into the United States.

Panjiayuan Antiques Market (Panjiayuan Jiu Huo Shichang)

South of the Panjiayuan Bridge (in southeast Beijing), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 6775-2405



<http://www.panjiayuan.com/en.html>

For perhaps the most interesting antiques-shopping experience in Beijing, visit this open-air weekend market. You'll find everything from Tibetan rugs to old phonographs. There are also aisles of old books, Cultural Revolution paraphernalia, Mao photos and portraits, scroll paintings and porcelain. It's a must-visit on any shopping itinerary, and you'll need at least a half-day to see everything.

Saturday and Sunday from dawn until 3 pm. (The earlier you get there, the better.).

Liu Li Chang Cultural Street

Liulichang Street (Take subway line No. 2 and walk south about 1,500 ft/450 m from the southwest exit of Hepingmen subway metro), Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

A good place to buy antiques, but make sure they are authenticated. One of the landmarks on the street is Rong Bao Zhai, which sells both the implements of Chinese art (brushes, ink stones, water dishes) and the items created using them (paintings, calligraphy). You'll also find everything from furniture to Mao memorabilia to dragon kites. None of what it sells is cheap, but it's likely to be more authentic than what's sold at other stores on this street.

Shops are generally open daily until 6:30 or 7 pm, but hours vary.

Beijing Curio City (Beijing Guwan Cheng)

21 Dong San Huan Nan Lu, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

This four-story gift shop sells trinkets, jewelry (including jade and pearls), clocks, rugs, shard boxes (boxes topped with pieces of old porcelain), teapots, scrolls, statues and furniture.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Galleries

Red Gate Gallery

798 Art District, No. 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

Phone: 5762-3032

<http://www.redgategallery.com>

Housed inside the Dongbianmen Watchtower atop one of the last remaining segments of Beijing's city wall, Red Gate Gallery displays works by many of the country's top young artists. The gallery is considered a pioneer of Beijing's contemporary art scene.

Daily 9 am-5 pm. If visitors state their intent to visit the gallery, the watchtower fee will be waived.

China Art Archives and Warehouse (CAAW)

Caochangdi Cun, Jichang Fulu (opposite Nangao Police Station), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 8456-5152



<http://www.archivesandwarehouse.com>

Another great place to check out contemporary Chinese art in an impressively large setting, favored by overseas collectors and dealers.

Wednesday-Sunday 1-6 pm, other times by appointment.

Beijing Wan Fung Art Gallery

35-37 Guanyintang Art Ave., Wangsiying No. 2A, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 833-3861 or 6523-3319

<http://www.wanfung.com.cn/eng>

Housed in the former Imperial Archives, this gallery exhibits traditional paintings and sculptures by Chinese artists. It is one of several branches in China, with a base in Hong Kong. Staff members speak English.

Daily 10 am-6:30 pm.

Beijing Tokyo Art Project (BTAP)

8503 Ceramics Third St., 798 Art Zone E02, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu (Dashanzi Art District), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 5978-4838

<http://tokyo-gallery.com/en>

One of the signature galleries at the 798 Space, a series of converted factories that serve as Beijing's arts district. Features contemporary works by Chinese and Japanese artists. Check out the surrounding spaces while you're at it.

Daily except Monday 10 am-6 pm.

Markets

Yaxiu Market

58 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Similar to the Xiushui Market, but maybe a bit cheaper and selling items that are just as fake, these four floors of Yaxiu Market are where you can buy knockoffs and name brands under the same roof for cheap.

Daily 9:30 am-9 pm.

Hongqiao Market

16 Hongqiao Lu (near the Temple of Heaven), Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

Phone: 6711-7429

<http://www.hongqiao-pearl-market.com>

Also known as the Pearl Market, this market has it all—antiques, produce, seafood, clothing, porcelain, electronics and, of course, pearls. The cloisonne on the third floor is a good buy. The top floor is the place



for Cultural Revolution items and other interesting knickknacks. It's not actually an open market: It's in a long row of metal shelters. The strong fish smell comes from the seafood market in the basement.

Daily 9 am-7 pm.

Shopping Areas

Wangfujing Street/Xidan Street/Dongsi Street

Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Running north from the main street of Changan Dajie, just east of the Forbidden City, are Wangfujing, Xidan and Dongsi streets (Wangfujing is a pedestrian-only zone). These three streets contain the department stores, clothing shops, toy stores, drugstores and other local shops. There's also a small food street-market just off Wangfujing that targets tourists with overpriced street foods and souvenirs. Because of the incredible crowds, avoid going on a Sunday unless your aim is people-watching, not shopping.

Tea Street (Maliandao)

Maliandao Chayecheng, Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

Tea Street has a handful of shops specializing in teas from throughout China (ranging from a few yuan per pound to thousands of yuan for a can). There are also teapots and tea sets for sale.

Daily 8 am-6 pm.

Sun Dong An Plaza (Xindong 'an Shichang)

Wangfujing Lu (at Goldfish Lane, west of the Palace Hotel), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Beijing's first megamall opened in 1998, but don't look for upscale merchandise there. Shops sell arts and crafts, musical instruments and CDs. There's a cinema on the fifth floor; restaurants are on the third and fourth. Old Beijing-style shopping is in the basement.

Daily 9:30 am-10 pm.

Oriental Plaza (Dongfang Guangchang)

1 E. Chang'an Jie, Wangfujing Street, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

<http://www.orientalplaza.com/eng>

This is one of the largest of the Beijing malls, and it has foreign brands side by side with local favorites. Stretched across Dongchang'an Dajie from Wangfujing to Dongdan, it dominates this part of eastern Beijing. The west wing has a host of sassy brand-name stores. Oriental Plaza's cinema is one of the best in Beijing and shows original-language English movies, in case you get caught on a rare Beijing rainy day. The complex includes hotel, apartment and office space, as well.

Daily 9 am-8 pm (individual shop hours vary).



Guomao (China World Trade Center Shopping Mall)

1 Jianguomenwai Dajie (Guomao metro station), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

This ultramodern mall boasts high-end clothing boutiques (Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton), a food court in the basement and an ice-skating rink.

Daily 9:30 am-10 pm.

Specialty Stores

Yuanlong Embroidery and Silk Company

55 Tiantan Lu, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

You'll find mostly silk, but also carpets and porcelain, old and new. Watch demonstrations, pass through the in-store museum and make your way to the second floor for garments. Tailor shop on the premises.

Daily 9 am-6:30 pm.

Jianhua Leather and Fur Store

192 Wangfujing St., Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

The Russian-style fur hats are popular among non-Chinese residents and tourists from colder regions of China.

Daily 9 am-9 pm.

Jiangqing Zhai

Zhushikou Dong Dhajie West, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

This shop sells delicate porcelain from the famous, centuries-old factory in Jingdezhen in Jiangxi (an area in southern China).

Daily 9 am-8 pm.

Beijing Silk Store

50 Dazhalan Ji, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

Dating from 1840, this historical shop—located in an old-style European building—is still one of the best places in town to buy silk wear and bolts of silk.

Daily 8:30 am-7:30 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

Both the variety and quality of Beijing's restaurants may surprise you. The city had fewer than 700 restaurants when Mao Zedong died in 1976 (restaurants were considered bourgeois), but energetic entrepreneurs have boosted that number considerably. Today, there are thousands of restaurants serving the cuisines of the world. All the usual Western chains are there, and international restaurateurs have become well-established since the Beijing Olympics.

If your itinerary will take you only to Beijing, you can visit the different regions of China by sampling their representative foods—from fiery Sichuan cuisine to the milder Cantonese (dim sum). Do try a restaurant specializing in Peking duck.

To save money, or if you are adventurous, you may want to try street food in Beijing. Although most health organizations discourage this, visitors do it all the time—usually with mixed results. The night market at Donghuamen is usually safe and is an exotic, delicious dining experience. Wangfujing Snack Street offers a delicious snack break for shoppers in an alley filled with Chinese lanterns. Ghost Street, a 1 mi/2 km strip of 150 restaurants along Dongzhimennei Dajie, is an excellent way to sample Beijing's hot pots and other culinary offerings. Exercise good judgment when it comes to the small food stalls along the street, however. If no one's buying or if it looks at all unclean, don't take the risk.

Generally, lunch is served 11 am-1 pm. Restaurants then close and reopen for dinner 5:30-9 or 10 pm. A few places stay open without a break 11 am-10 pm, and there are many places that stay open late. The less-expensive restaurants almost never have English speakers on staff. Reservations usually are not required unless you have more than five people in your party or it's a holiday. Credit cards are becoming more widely accepted in tourist restaurants, but be sure to ask first.

Note: Do not tip at restaurants. It's not expected and may even be construed as offensive. A few restaurants add a 15% service charge, usually for larger groups, which is sufficient to cover any gratuity.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, not including drinks and tax: \$ = less than 100 yuan; \$\$ = 100 yuan-200 yuan; \$\$\$ = more than 200 yuan.

Local & Regional

South Silk Road

5-F APM Mall, Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

One of the see-and-be-seen places frequented by Beijing's bourgeois-bohemian set. This local restaurant chain was opened by contemporary (and famous) Chinese artist Fang Lijun. It serves southwestern Yunnan-style dishes with an urban twist in four locations around Beijing. Try the water-dipped fish (*zhanshuiyu*) and the famous rice wine (*mi jiu*). Funky, fresh food served in a minimalist, loft-style space.

Daily until 10:30 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. No credit cards.



Qianmen Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant

32 Qianmen Dajie, Chongwen District
Beijing, China

This is the original and most elegant of the Quanjude chain of restaurants, but it's also more expensive. The cheapest way to go is right next door, where the same kitchen does the same exquisite duck for about one-quarter of the price (served fast-food style or as takeout), although the atmosphere isn't as pleasant. Either way, don't overlook the asparagus.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

New Fei Teng Yu Xiang Restaurant

1 Gongtibeilu, 36 Xingfu Yicun Sixiang (off Chunxiu Lu), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 6415-3764

<http://www.ftyx.com>

This high-end chain of Sichuan restaurants specializes in the perennially popular fish filets in hot chili oil (*shui zhu hu*), a spicy concoction of fish, peppers and bean sprouts. Also try the spicy crab (*xiang la xie*) and spicy snails (*fu shou luo*). Expect long lines; it's famous for its boiled fish.

Daily for lunch and dinner (last order 10:30 pm). \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Kaorou Ji

14 Qianhai Dongyan, Xicheng District
Beijing, China

Phone: 6404-2554

<http://www.bjkaorouji.com>

Right in the middle of the Houhai nightlife district, this restaurant is a Beijing institution. It offers cuisine of the Chinese Muslim minority, specializing in barbecued lamb and steamed sesame buns.

Daily till 11 pm. \$-\$\$.

Fu Jia Lou

No. 23 Dongsishitiao (600 ft/200 m west of Poly Plaza), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

Get a taste of old Beijing at this traditional-style restaurant replete with robed waiters who yell out a greeting when you walk inside. Try the *zha jiang mian* noodles and the selection of old Beijing street foods.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards.



Fangshan Restaurant

1 Wenjin Jie, Xicheng District (inside Beihai Park)
Beijing, China

Phone: 6401-1879

<http://www.fangshanfan Zhuang.com.cn>

This exquisite restaurant inside historic Beihai Park serves the kind of imperial cuisine the royals used to eat. A tourist trap, but enjoyable nonetheless.

Daily for dinner (last order at 8 pm). \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Crescent Moon Muslim Restaurant

16 Dongsu Liutiao (320 ft/100m west of Chaoneixiaojie), Dongcheng District
Beijing, China

The primary dish at this Xinjiang restaurant is lamb, served in any number of styles—as roasted kebabs (*yang rou chuan*), roasted and stir-fried (*chao kao yang rou*) or with chopped noodles and vegetables (*chao mian pian*). The lamb tends to be spicy; those with sensitive palates should choose stir-fried, rather than roasted, dishes.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Crab Apple House (Haitang Ju)

32 Xiheyuan, Xuanwumen, Xuanwu District
Beijing, China

The centerpiece of this converted Ming dynasty courtyard is a 100-year-old tree set amidst the refined traditional settings. The menu offerings are classified as *si jia cai*, meaning that many of the varied regional dishes are unique to the restaurant. Try the *huang jiu* (yellow wine) and *yi tiao lu buo*—a delicious dish made from a single giant turnip.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Only Chinese credit cards are accepted.

Bellagio Cafe

4 Huizhong Lu (next to Kiss Disco), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 6489-4300

<http://www.bellagiocafe.com.cn>

This super hip dining spot (also known as Lu Gang Xiaozhen) specializes in Taiwanese cuisine and caters to a late-night hipster set. Nice decor and tasty food—try the Chongqing spicy chicken (*Chongqing laziji*) and the famous ice snaps (*bao bing*) for dessert. The menu has pictures, and the staff speaks some English. Take along your laptop: Bellagio outlets offer free Wi-Fi. There is a second location at 6 Gongtixilu (phone 6551-3533).

24 hours daily. \$. Most major credit cards.



Beijing Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant

No. 3 Tuanjiehu Beikou, Dongcheng (southeast corner of Changhong Qiao), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Regarded by many as having the best Peking duck in Beijing, Dadong is less romantic perhaps than other restaurants, but it makes up for this with a bustling atmosphere and a broader range of homestyle dishes to go with the excellent roast duck. The restaurant has two other locations across the city.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations are an absolute must, and even then expect to wait. \$\$.

Cuisines

American

Peter's Tex-Mex Grill

88-A International Club, 21 Jianguomenwai Dajie (next to the St. Regis Hotel), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Founder Peter is the adopted son of a Texas grandmother, and she certainly taught him everything he knows about cooking. The omelettes and burritos there do the Lone Star State proud. Offers Wi-Fi.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$. Most major credit cards.

Asian

Sorabol

2-F Landmark Towers, 8 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu (basement of the Lufthansa Center), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

There are three Sorabol Korean restaurants in Beijing. Filling standards include *kalbi* (short ribs), *bulgogi* (barbecued beef) and *mandu* (dumplings filled with ground pork, kimchi, spring onions and bean curd). Vegetable side dishes are meals in themselves.

Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$.

Serve the People (Wei Renmin Fuwu)

1 Sanlitun Xiwujie (behind the German Embassy), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Serves some of the best Southeast Asian food (especially Thai) in town. The artistically decorated dining room is a bit small, but it's conveniently located and a great place to dine before sampling the local nightlife. It has a nice, elevated sidewalk deck for spring and summer evenings.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.



Hatsune

Heqiao Dasha, 2-F C Ba, Guanghua Donglu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Consistently one of the most popular Japanese restaurants in Beijing, Hatsune serves up California-style fusion sushi in a sleek, modern environment—one of the few places in town that serves fresh avocados with its rolls. A second, equally good branch is located in Sanlitun Village.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Fusion

Green T. House

No. 6 Gongtixilu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6552-8310

<http://www.green-t-house.com>

Funky fusion food or pretentious schlock? You be the judge. The minimalist-inspired place serves "conceptual cuisine" amidst obtrusive chairs and artsy paraphernalia. A good taste of contemporary Beijing cultural kitsch.

Daily 11:30 am-3 pm and 6 pm-midnight. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Mediterranean

Aria

2-F China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6505-2266, ext. 36

<http://www.shangri-la.com/beijing/chinaworld/dining/restaurants/aria>

One of the most popular upscale dining venues with the business-lunch crowd. Swanky environment, Mediterranean cuisine and a large wine list.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Dress code is smart-casual. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Middle Eastern

1,001 Nights (Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye)

Sanlitun Gongti Beilu (across from the Zhaolong Hotel), Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Phone: 10-6532-4050

<http://www.1001nights.com.cn>

One of Beijing's best Middle Eastern restaurants is especially good for large groups. It serves excellent versions of all the standards: tabbouleh, pita bread and lamb kebabs. You can even rent a hookah to smoke tobacco while you watch the belly dancer. Daily till 2 am. \$\$-\$\$\$.



Vegetarian

Pure Lotus Vegetarian

Tongguang Building, 10 Nongzhanguan Nanlu, Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Fascinating restaurant run by Buddhist monks where all the dishes are veggie, even the ones that resemble meat. There is another location in the Holiday Inn Lido, Jiangtai Lu.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Continental

Morel's Restaurant and Cafe

No. 5 Red Block, Xin Zhong Street, First Floor, Dongcheng (across from the north gate of the Workers Gymnasium at the Chunxiu Lu intersection)
Beijing, China

Phone: 6416-8802

http://www.morelsgroup.com/canting_e/index.asp

A Beijing institution serving delicious Belgian dishes, including veal, steak tartare, juicy mussels and, of course, waffles. Terrific selection of Belgian beers.

Daily 11 am-1 am. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

China continues to evolve in ways that are bringing it into closer contact with other parts of the world. Nonetheless, the country remains a place where business travelers need to tread carefully.

Appointments—If you are going to China on business, establish local contacts before departing. Once in the country, remember that punctuality on the part of all parties is crucial for both business and social occasions. If you are late, it reflects badly on you and the perceived slight can put the entire business relationship into question.

Personal Introductions—Handshaking is the norm. Maintain a formal demeanor during introductions. Official titles are very important. When the person has no official title, use standard English titles unless you are fluent in Mandarin: Mr., Ms. (unmarried female) and Madam (married female—the title should accompany her maiden name). The Chinese typically have two or three names: The first is the family name, and that's the one that should be paired with the title. (Therefore, Wang Jianguo is Mr. Wang.)

Business cards are mandatory for all business interactions and bestow you with a form of legitimacy. Your business cards should have English on one side and the Chinese translation on the other—addresses in foreign countries need not be translated. Offer and receive business cards with two hands. Treat the business cards you receive with respect and leave them on the table in front of you for reference during the meeting. Spend some time reading it after receiving to show respect. At the end of a meeting, place



the cards in a special wallet or holder in your jacket pocket, handbag or briefcase, not in a wallet that you put in a pants pocket.

Negotiating—Business meetings begin with introductory speeches and a short interval of polite conversation, usually over tea or drinks. A first meeting is usually for familiarization. You may be asked personal questions—this is part of the process of establishing common ground or "friendship" prior to any business interaction. Hard-driving, get-to-the-point tactics usually backfire. Negotiations will typically be protracted and involved. Multiple meetings on the same issues are not unusual. Expect the unexpected, and do not be thrown by last-minute complexities or demands. If you have a deadline, do not reveal it. The host may signal the end of a meeting by offering more tea. The correct response is to decline the offer and say that you are ready to leave. If the host thanks you for coming, that also is a sign the meeting is over.

Business Entertaining—Evening banquets are often extravagant affairs with many courses and exotic foods. Expect several toasts throughout the evening, often with Chinese liquor (*baijiu*). If you do not drink, politely decline by toasting with your tea or another drink. The toasts should be taken seriously—alcohol consumption during business banquets can get out of hand easily, and many Chinese hosts feel they are obligated to get their guests very drunk. Be polite but firm if you don't wish to drink. Business is usually not discussed at large banquets, but your hosts may try to get some information out of you once you're liquored up. At other business meals, it is appropriate to discuss business if your host initiates the discussion.

Body Language—Observe a formal body posture. Refrain from touching, and keep gestures to a minimum. Do not talk with your hands in your pockets or use a finger to point at people—these gestures are considered rude. Use your open hand to point, but do so sparingly.

Conversation—Avoid politics, especially such sensitive issues as Taiwan, Tibet, the Communist Party or any demonstrations, especially the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Regardless of your acquaintances' feelings, they will most likely not be comfortable discussing such topics with you and certainly not in public. History, family and Chinese culture are good topics. Be careful if you compliment someone's possessions. An article of clothing or a home decoration you praise may be offered to you—don't accept.

Personal Safety

Beijing is an exceptionally safe city, especially for visitors. Violent crime is not a problem (and what violence does occur is rarely directed at visitors), but you still should be careful at night—use common sense.

Petty theft is increasingly common, especially in bus and train stations, subways and other crowded areas. Keep your passport and money in a safe place on your person or in a safe at your hotel. Although traveler's checks offer a degree of safety, they're seldom accepted outside hotels and banks and may present more inconvenience than protection.

Be very careful when crossing the street. Cars drive on the right, but have been known to take shortcuts through bike lanes, and pedestrians rarely have the right of way, even in crosswalks. When possible, bicyclists should ride in the *hutongs*, the small side streets that run parallel to the main streets, to avoid traffic and vehicle emissions.



If you rent or borrow a bicycle, leave it at one of the hundreds of guarded bike lots around the city. (Be sure to lock it and park it where you will remember how to find it—the guards don't give receipts to identify which bike belongs to whom, so anyone can ride off with an unlocked bike.) The cost is usually 0.30 yuan (about US\$0.04), paid to the attendant when you pick up your bike.

Visitors should avoid demonstrations and protests, though they are rare, especially those that appear political in nature.

Never, ever go with touts for anything—bars, taxis, nightclubs, whatever they are offering, you don't want it. Firmly, politely, repeatedly decline. You may even be approached to buy a cell phone, but these are surely fake. A common scheme is for Chinese youth to invite unsuspecting travelers to practice English over tea, or visit a gallery together. Always decline these invitations, as they inevitably end with an outrageous tab, sometimes as high as hundreds of dollars.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the biggest health threats to travelers to China are not tropical illnesses, but biting dogs and polluted air. While Beijing's number of "blue sky days" has increased post-Olympics, Beijing remains one of the world's most polluted cities and the largest producer of carbon monoxide.

No vaccines are required to enter China, but travelers venturing into rural areas beyond Beijing may want to consider getting vaccinations for hepatitis. Also, visitors should make sure they're up-to-date on tetanus and MMR vaccinations; long-term visitors should consider a typhoid vaccine. Proof of yellow fever vaccination is required if entering China within a week of visiting an infected country, an important note for visitors from some South American or African countries.

Don't drink the tap water. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Generally, at upscale restaurants in Beijing food handling and preparation in the kitchen is taken seriously, but if you decide to try street foods it's a good idea to avoid uncooked vegetables and fruits you haven't peeled yourself. When eating street food, choose items such as fried noodles and fried rice. Chinese cooking emphasizes high temperatures and fresh ingredients, but meat is often left unrefrigerated for long periods.

Year-round smog, especially during summer, can cause problems for asthma and allergy sufferers. People with respiratory ailments should take along ample supplies of medicines for the duration of their trip. Winters are extremely dry. Drink plenty of water to ensure proper hydration.

People requiring contraceptives should take an adequate supply with them. Domestically produced condoms are considered unreliable. Female travelers should pack their own feminine products as well.

Visitors can obtain information about English-speaking medical providers from the American Citizens' Services section of the U.S. Embassy. Monday-Friday 9 am-noon and 2-4 pm. Phone 6532-3831. In case of emergency, dial 8531-4000. <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>.

The 24-hour Beijing International SOS Clinic near Santilun handles all types of medical concerns. Staffed with professional physicians, there are ambulances and evacuation services in case of emergencies, in addition to its walk-in practice, which is open Monday-Friday 8 am-8 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8 am-6



pm. English-speaking. Suite 105, Wing 1, Kunsha Building, No.16 Xinyuanli, Chaoyang District. Phone 6462-9112 or 6462-9100 (24-hour emergency number). <http://www.internationalsos.com>.

People planning long stays or traveling beyond Beijing may wish to consider joining a medical-evacuation plan. Contact SOS Assistance directly for short-term coverage plans and rates. Phone 6500-3388, ext. 433.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Beijing is challenging for travelers with physical limitations. Street blocks are long and in poor repair, and few sidewalks have curb cuts for wheelchair access. Traffic lights are short, and only a few have beepers to alert the visually impaired. Tourist sites can be hard to reach, too—ancient Chinese structures tend to have lots of stairs, and there's little accommodation for handicapped visitors.

But this shouldn't deter travelers of limited mobility. While not ideal for the disabled, navigating Beijing is far from impossible. Most subway stations have elevators to ground level, and you will find ramps at the most famous attractions, including the Great Wall at Badaling and the Forbidden City. The Great Wall at Mutianyu has cable cars and is recommended for people with mobility issues. Attractions are making strong efforts, with many incorporating priority entrances so disabled travelers avoid long line-ups.

Several tour operators offer disabled travel tours to Beijing. China Highlights, a travel company, designs custom tours and arranges transfers and transportation. Toll-free 800-268-2918 in U.S. and Canada. <http://www.chinahighlights.com/beijing/article-disabled-travelers.htm>.

Discover Beijing Tours has been organizing wheelchair vacations for mobility challenged visitors to Beijing for years. Tell them your interests and they will customize trips. http://www.discoverbeijingtours.com/Theme_Tour/Beijing-Wheelchair-Accessible-Travel.html

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do spend some time in the park. If you get there early enough, you can watch the pensioners doing their tai chi exercises and experience a great sense of calm.

Don't complain about the pollution or the traffic; it won't make the skies less smoggy or the streets less congested. It is ok to wear the paper masks that many locals wear especially when walking outside.

Do be very careful when crossing the streets. Pedestrians rarely have the right of way, even in the crosswalk; cars take short cuts through bikes lanes; and traffic signals are often viewed as mere suggestions.

Do sample the local Yanjing beer; it's excellent, especially with *jiaozi* dumplings, a plain but fantastic meal.

Don't take offense at the number of people who spit on the street. Many Chinese believe "better out than in" when it comes to phlegm.



Do visit the Dashanzi art district, also called 798. A lot of Chinese contemporary art is made right there and available for sale.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passport, visa and proof of onward passage are needed by Canadian and U.S. citizens. There is an airport departure tax (called a "construction tax") of 50 yuan for domestic flights and 90 yuan for international flights (including flights to Hong Kong) built into the fares. Do not pay a departure tax at your hotel or the airport. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 15,594,400.

Languages: Mandarin, also known as Putonghua. Beyond the major hotels you'll find few people, including taxi drivers, who speak English well, or any English at all. It's wise to have your destination written in Chinese characters. If you're leaving from a hotel, often the hotel staff can tell your driver your destination in Chinese.

Predominant Religions: Officially atheist, but Buddhists, Taoists, Lamaists, Christians and Muslims practice.

Time Zone: 8 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts, 50 cycles. There is no standard electrical outlet, although the outlet for three-prong plugs is the most common in hotels. Hotels usually have prong adapters but no voltage transformers, except for the ones built into the outlets for electric shavers and hair dryers. Occasionally, there are only two-pronged outlets, which means Americans may want to carry a converter just in case the hotel does not have one.

Telephone Codes: 86, country code; 10, city code;

Money

Taxes

China has all kinds of taxes depending on the industry. A value added tax (VAT) is levied on all goods and sales. The VAT is 17% on most goods, sales and some services and 11% on transportation. There's also a consumption tax on alcohol and tobacco which strongly varies with a range from as low as 1% up to 50% depending on the type of consumption.

Tipping

Hotel porters expect 10 yuan for carrying your bags to a hotel room or taxi. Chinese tour guides have also become accustomed to receiving a gratuity at the end of a trip. However, tipping elsewhere is not expected and may even be construed as offensive. Some high-end restaurants add a 15% service charge, which is sufficient to cover any gratuity. Do not tip beyond that. In China taxi drivers do not expect a tip nor will they ask for one.



Weather

Beijing is renowned for its pleasant springs (65-75 F/18-24 C) and brisk falls (50s F/10-15 C). Summers are hot, with temperatures ranging 85-95 F/30-35 C. Persistent smog can hamper views on particularly hot days. Winters can be extremely cold and dry, especially when Siberian winds blow in from the north; expect frequent temperatures below freezing.

Beijing's rainy season is June-July. Be prepared for dust and sand storms at almost any time, but especially in early spring. September-October—except for the first week of October, which is a national, week-long holiday—is the best time to visit Beijing, hands-down, as blue skies, crisp air and fewer crowds permeate the city. Early spring is another good time to visit, when the winds blow over the city and the weather is still cool.

What to Wear

Chinese urban fashions are becoming increasingly aligned to those of Western cities, and you might be surprised by the skirt length (or lack thereof) of local female teenage fashions. Still, modest dress is recommended for Western travelers, already the focus of extra attention. Except in business settings, dress is relatively casual in Beijing and is becoming more so every year. For business, men wear suits and ties, and women wear dresses or suits. Women commonly wear boots in winter, even for business.

Transportation

Because the city is so large and spread out, walking around Beijing requires time and stamina. Within some areas, walking is a viable option, but be aware that city blocks are quite long. Also note that cars rarely yield to pedestrians, even when walkers have the right of way.

Uber has been abolished in China, but local versions such as Didi Chuxing are commonly used by locals interested in ride sharing apps.

Car

Visitors to China are permitted to drive only if they pass a Chinese driving test, but they usually don't. A Chinese driver's license is required to get behind the wheel, and the process is so cumbersome that no one (except those staying a long time) bothers with a rental car.

We do not recommend driving in Beijing. Despite strict driving regulations which could lead to jail time, drivers still tend to ignore the traffic laws. Even residents with licenses shun intercity car travel because roads and facilities are inadequate (although this situation is also improving), and drivers in Beijing tend toward oblivious at best, insane at worst. Use of a handheld mobile phone is prohibited while driving.

Travelers can hire a car with a driver by the day or half-day at most major hotels (but not the airport). The cost of a hotel rental car with driver is 200 yuan-700 yuan per day.

The minimum driving age in China is 18 years of age. Some age restrictions may apply with certain rental companies. Drivers must hold a valid mainland People's Republic of China driver's license. Foreign driver's licenses, even when accompanied by an International Driving Permit (IDP), will not be accepted.



Public Transportation

The city bus system is best for those who like mingling among local Beijingers and are not in a rush to reach their destination. While the network is extensive, maps at stops are only in Chinese and drivers don't speak English. If you use the bus, it's best to do so only for direct trips when you're sure of the bus route number. Ask hotel staff for assistance.

The Beijing Tourist Communication Map and the Beijing Touring Map, as well as others, show the routes of the train and bus systems and their stops. For a map of Beijing's subway lines, check <https://explorebj.com/subway>.

Taxi

Taxis are plentiful in Beijing. You can hail one easily on the street, at a hotel or at other tourist spots. Requesting a taxi by phone is possible but usually unnecessary. Taxi drivers generally don't speak English, so take along the name of your destination written in Chinese and a map in English and Chinese so you can point to your destination.

Taxis operate 24 hours a day. Taxi fares are set by law, according to the size, age and condition of the car. Prices are posted on a red sticker on passenger doors. Rates rise at night. Carry small bills—10-yuan notes are good—because drivers often cannot or will not make change. Tipping is not necessary.

Beijing taxis are in the process of readjusting meters to accommodate a price hike—drivers are entitled to 1 yuan more than the metered fare. Drivers are also entitled to 10 yuan each way to the airport; they are not entitled to a return fare or additional fees. If there is any doubt, each fare generates a printed receipt—pay only the fare on the receipt, plus any of the fees mentioned above if they apply.

If the journey is more than 9 mi/15 km, the charge increases about 1 yuan per km. There is a 2-yuan fuel surcharge if the journey is more than 1.9 mi/3 km. If you must be on the road during rush hours (7-9 am and 4-7 pm), allow plenty of time to get through traffic. Gridlock is increasingly common, and traveling across town can take as long as an hour. To make a complaint concerning taxis, contact the Beijing Bureau of Communications (phone 6835-1150), which has an English-language recording that gives instructions for submitting your complaint.

Although we've generally found Beijing taxi drivers to be honest, some travelers are victimized by age-old cabbie scams—skewing the meter or driving around to increase the fare. Use basic precautions: Select a taxi from a taxi stand when possible, make sure the driver starts the meter *after* you get in and check the meter to see if it starts with the proper amount (10 yuan). Be aware that some drivers act as if they aren't familiar with an area so that they can run up the meter or avoid taking you to a nearby location, although some drivers legitimately don't know where some hotels and attractions are. If you have a problem with a driver, wait until you reach your hotel to handle it: Hotel staff will usually take your side. See World Taximeter for estimated cab rates in Beijing based on distance. <http://www.worldtaximeter.com/beijing>.

Train

Beijing has two main train stations: Beijing Station (Beijing Zhan) and Beijing West Station (Beijing Xi Zhan). Trains from the northeast and coastal areas (including Shanghai) arrive at Beijing Station, which is near the center of the city, south of Changanjieis, right above a subway stop. Trains from the west and south (including the express train from Hong Kong) arrive at Beijing West Station, the huge station west of Fuxingmen. Take a taxi from this station to the city center.

Be absolutely sure which train station your train departs from—Beijing West is officially the main station, but many people still consider the main station to be the older one southeast of Tiananmen Square. If you do not speak Mandarin, get someone who does to call for schedule information. You also may need help at the station because most signs are in Chinese.

Tickets are sold at the train stations and at ticket agencies around town. There is a 24-hour foreigner ticket office at Beijing West Train Station, and travelers can book a ticket by calling the ticket center hotline at 9510-5105. In addition, hotel desks and travel agents can book train tickets for a small surcharge. Some train tickets in Beijing can be reserved up to 10 days in advance, some only four days in advance. And certain trains, such as Z-class express trains running from Beijing to Shanghai and Xian, can be booked up to 20 days in advance. Be aware that train tickets, especially in sleeper cars, sell out quickly. Showing up at the train station without a reservation is not recommended. You can also book online at http://english.ctrip.com/trains/#ctm_ref=nb_tn_top.

Jeju Island, South Korea

Overview

Introduction

Large Jeju Island 60 mi/100 km off the coast of the mainland and 300 mi/485 km south of Seoul has a distinctive history, dress, architecture, language and tradition. Jeju is an extremely popular tourist destination for Koreans, especially honeymooners. Millions of won have been pumped into building deluxe hotels and modernizing infrastructure. Although development has somewhat ended the island's isolation, it hasn't eroded its charms—it is still a great place to visit. Jeju seems a world away from the mainland, even though it's relatively easy to reach—only an hour's flight south of Seoul or a several-hour ferry ride from Busan, Mokpo or Wando.



If you have a choice of when to go, visit in late spring, when Jeju is covered with beautiful yellow *yuchaehwa* flowers. The island's primary attractions are beaches, fishing, casinos, scuba diving, a weavers' village (Hallim), hot springs and three stunning coastal waterfalls, particularly the Jeongbang Falls at Seogwipo, which plunge almost directly into the sea.

In friendly and festive Jeju, the largest city on the island, there's a Folkcraft and Natural History Museum and an interesting market. About 4 mi/6 km from the city is Moksuk-won, a natural sculpture garden of stone and wood. On the south side of the island, Jeju Folk Village Museum, a collection of traditional houses with musical performances and displays, is well worth a visit.

Also on the island is the tallest mountain in South Korea, Hallasan, which is topped with snow in the winter. There are hiking trails on this extinct volcano, and it has an impressive crater lake. Be sure also to

visit some caves: According to legend, three gods emerged 2,500 years ago from the Samseonghyeol (literally "three clans' holes") to create the Jeju Island people.

On a drive around the island, note the black-lava statues of old men, called *harubang*: Their origin is unknown and the subject of much debate among anthropologists. You can also watch as divers (traditionally women) hunt for clams, pearls and abalone. A dying breed, these incredible women dive into the ocean's depths for long periods of time without using any scuba or snorkeling gear.

Other attractions include saltwater baths (in Sinyang, Hyeopje and Jungmun), the Bijarim nutmeg forest, tangerine groves, the Sanbonggul Buddhist Grotto, the Jungmun beach-resort area and Manjang Cave (the world's longest lava tube). Plan at least two to three days to explore the island.

Kyoto, Japan

Overview

Introduction

If you can visit only one city in Japan, Kyoto is the one. This ancient city, 30 mi/50 km northeast of Osaka, was the capital of Japan for more than 1,000 years and still is considered the country's spiritual capital. Three thousand shrines and temples dot the city, including three shrines and 14 temples on the UNESCO World Heritage list. That list is far from inclusive and many excellent places that might be the star attractions of other cities crowd the streets of Kyoto. It is the birthplace of Japanese Zen and has five huge Zen monastery complexes where serious students still sit in meditation; it is home to the headquarters of three other large religious sects in Japan, too.



Kyoto is also the nation's capital of traditional arts. Whether your interest be in pottery, textiles, dance, the tea ceremony or any of the other innumerable arts, Kyoto has excellent galleries, museums, shops and tea houses. Japanese people from the countryside and foreign students flock there to learn under the great masters. Much of what is considered Japanese haute cuisine was developed there too, as an offshoot of the tea ceremony.

Kyoto is Japan's heartland of history. With 1,300 years of tumultuous existence, the city's past intrudes upon the present day as in few other Japanese cities. In Gion, you can spot a geisha (or geiko, as they are called in Kyoto), one of the last hundred or so in Japan, slipping down a side-street to entertain rich guests with witty conversation, dance or music. A shopping arcade may suddenly fill with discordant clanging music as a shrine festival passes among the shoppers, or you may hear the long chant as Zen monks pass through the neighborhood, calling for alms.



Kyoto is an understated city that might disappoint visitors at first; its charm lies in small details, pocket gardens, tiny traditional restaurants and refined artwork. If you have a week in Japan, spend three days in Tokyo and three days in Kyoto. Don't make day trips elsewhere; you'll just waste money and time on the train.

Highlights

Sights—City-wide views from Kiyomizu Temple; the red gates of Fushimi Inari; Zen meditation in Nanzen-ji Temple; the expansive gardens of the Imperial Palace Park.

Memorable Meals—Walking and snacking in the Nishiki Food Market; exquisite *kaiseki* dishes at Gion Karyo; hearty udon noodles at Omen; rich and succulent eel at Unagi-ya Hirokawa.

Late Night—Looking for geisha in Gion; a candlelit tea ceremony at Joukeian.

Walks—The short hike up Mount Daimonji; the cherry-tree-lined path of Philosopher's Walk.

Especially for Kids—Arashiyama Monkey Park; Shinkyogoku Shopping Arcade.

History

After Japan's capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto in 794, the imperial court gradually weakened. Following a long power struggle, the strongest warlord seized power from the Kyoto court and assumed the title of shogun. From this point on, the emperors were marginalized and the country was ruled by a succession of shoguns. Civil war left the country exhausted, and Kublai Khan's Mongols twice tried to take advantage of this weakness. Two invasions were cut short when the fleets were destroyed by typhoons (miraculous occurrences attributed to the *kamikaze*, or divine protective winds).

Until the 16th century, large areas of Japan remained in the hands of feuding warlords. However, the first Tokugawa shogun completed the unification of the country and established his administrative base in Edo (present-day Tokyo), while the emperor's court remained in Kyoto. The shogun's descendants controlled Japan from 1600 to 1868 (usually known as the Edo Period) and during this period, Kyoto's political influence decreased further. However, the relative peace of the Edo Period was a boon for merchants and artisans, and Kyoto flourished.

Potpourri

Shinto has 88,000 gods, more than any other religion in the world. During the month of November, the gods take a break from their busy schedule and get together for a conference at the Izumo Taisha Shrine in Shimane Prefecture.

The Byodin Temple in Uji, near Kyoto, features on the back of Japan's 10-yen coin.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Kyoto is dotted with so many shrines and temples, it's impossible to see them all in one visit. These temples are the main attractions in Japan's first capital, though there are also several excellent museums and quite a few gorgeous parks and gardens outside of the shrines (though the best gardens will be found on the grounds of various temples within the city).

Fans of Arthur Golden's novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* might like to stroll around the Gion neighborhood, where the story was set. It's also possible to be dressed and made up as a geisha in studios catering (mostly) to Japanese women. Contact the tourist office for details. <http://www.kyoto.travel>.

Recreation

In spring and fall, the Japanese go en masse to marvel at the color and fanfare of the changing of the seasons. Kyoto is a popular destination for doing so. Hire a bicycle and pedal your way through centuries of tradition and culture. Put on your walking shoes and stroll through one of the many gardens populating the city. Don't forget that any time of year is great time to indulge in one of Japan's greatest pastimes, bathing in an outdoor hot spring.

Nightlife

At night, stroll through Pontocho, the traditional nighttime entertainment spot. This narrow little street is stacked full of bars and restaurants. You might even see a geisha (or a *maiko*—a young apprentice) scurrying to a theatrical performance or an assignation at a local bar.

Across the river, the more spacious Gion is also a geisha district, but the bars there are more exclusive than those in Pontocho, and you may not get in without an introduction. The area's traditional atmosphere is the best in the city after dark.

Kiyamachi-dori Street, which runs parallel to Pontocho, is cheaper and more accessible, with larger, less exclusive restaurants and bars.

Performing Arts

The performing arts are strong in Kyoto, and it's possible to see plenty of Western music and theater performed—but the main draw in the city is the traditional Japanese theater, music and dance. Be sure to see at least one performance while in the city.

There are several famed geisha dances that take place in Kyoto; they occur once each year, usually for a month's duration. Some of the most famous include the Gion Odori, the Kamogawa Odori, the Kyo Odori and the Miyako Odori.

Shopping

The shopping in Kyoto is unexpectedly fantastic—and unexpectedly located. The best shopping is largely considered to be in the modern Kyoto train station. Whether or not you arrive in the city by train, you can't



help but notice the station. Many people opposed its construction, especially traditionalists concerned about its impact on such a historic city. By the time you get to the top of the 11-story escalator (you can get off at each level or just keep going up and up), you'll realize they've built a mountainous modern mall in the middle of Japan's spiritual heart. There are plenty of shops and restaurants, and the tourist-information booth there is very helpful.

For more traditional crafts and souvenirs, look to the specialty shops located along Teramachi Street and in the Gion district, as well as among the temples in Higashiyama.

Dining

Dining Overview

Kyoto is somewhat different from its neighbors when it comes to food: It is inland and surrounded by mountains, thus limiting the amount of fresh seafood and produce it could easily bring to market. To solve this problem, Kyotoites developed many kinds of pickled vegetables and even began to pickle their sushi to keep it a few days longer. Saltwater eel (unagi) and freshwater eel (conger eel, hamo) are both traditional dishes because the hardy fish can be transported in boxes of water without dying and thus make it to market.

Freshwater fish such as sweetfish (ayu) are grilled and eaten head to tail, bones and all. This isn't necessary; even some Japanese dislike eating fish heads, but the bones are soft. You are likely to enjoy sushi or sashimi in Kyoto thanks to modern transportation methods, but the Japanese will tell you that it is much better in a port town.

Tofu also plays a huge part in Kyoto cuisine. The soy bean curd in Japan, even in its firmest forms, generally tends to be softer than Chinese counterparts that are stir-fried. Instead, people in Kyoto boil soft blocks of tofu in broth and lift it out carefully so as not to break it. Yuba, the skin that forms on a vat of cooking tofu, is another local specialty. It is much better than it sounds, trust us. This is usually eaten as a tiny side, dipped in soy sauce or wasabi.

Despite the prevalence of tofu, Japan is not an easy country for strict vegetarians to visit, as most of the soup stocks and dipping sauces are made with fish extracts. Your vegetarian salads may come with pork on top, despite the assurances of the servers, which can be frustrating. However, restaurants that serve *shojin-ryori*—traditional vegetarian temple food—are often the highlight of vegetarians' visits. Macrobiotic restaurants have their own cult following and can usually cater to vegetarians. Veganism, at present, is not really understood in Japan. If you are desperate for a meal, omnipresent Indian and Chinese restaurants usually do a better job of purely vegetarian or vegan dishes.

Less-expensive restaurants and those in department stores often have window displays of the foods they serve—the plastic food in the displays is amazingly realistic. Sometimes this display takes the place of a menu: One waiter took us outside to the window so we could point out our choices.

If you cannot understand a printed menu, you can (discreetly) look at the dishes on the other tables and (discreetly) point out to the waiter what looks good to you. Generally, Japanese food is made from fresh ingredients and is not highly seasoned (though soy sauce is used throughout).



The appearance of a meal is an important aspect of the art of Japanese food preparation, so take a moment to appreciate the visual presentation before you dig in. This is particularly true with *kaiseki ryori*, Japan's haute cuisine. Derived from the tea ceremony, *kaiseki* consists of many tiny courses, all beautifully presented and seasonal.

Try a Japanese breakfast at least once. Even if you don't prefer cooked rice, fish and miso soup for breakfast, it's an adventure, and the presentation will brighten your day. Expect to eat a lot of eggs if you order the "American" or "Western" breakfast.

Desserts aren't a necessary accompaniment to a Japanese meal and tend to be small, such as a few pieces of sliced fruit, or eaten separately. *Kaki-gori* (shaved ice) is popular in the summer: try it with green tea syrup, condensed milk, balls of mochi rice and sweet red azuki beans. Azuki and mochi make up the base for most Japanese sweets, and care must be taken with both. Mochi is very sticky and some people, particularly the young and elderly, choke on it each year. Azuki is generally disliked by foreign visitors for its beanlike texture.

Western food is widely available—especially Italian (spaghetti and pizza are almost as widespread as they are in the West). French food tends to be formal and pricey. Lower down the food chain, there are fast-food and burger chains—both homegrown and imported—on virtually every corner. Kyoto also has Spanish restaurants and German-style beer gardens, but Mexican food is rare and Greek food nonexistent. However, there are plenty of Asian options, including Thai and Vietnamese—but don't expect your meals there to be seasoned like they would be back home; the Japanese are not fans of spicy foods.

Green tea is the preferred beverage with many meals, but you can find alternatives such as soft drinks. Don't expect to find decaffeinated coffee, however. The Japanese drink the real stuff—and really strong. You should sample some sake while in Japan—the famous rice wine is more akin to a liquor than a wine and can be an acquired taste, but it's an essential part of the Japanese experience.

Security

Etiquette

Status and rank have played a very important role in Japanese society from the days of the shoguns, and they still do today. Even the Japanese language is stratified, and different forms are used with people of different rank. Thus, much of the country's business and social etiquette revolves around determining the rank of an individual and behaving accordingly. Negotiating Japanese traditions and customs is both fascinating and challenging, but foreigners are not expected to understand all of these niceties and are usually forgiven for their trespasses. Kyotoites in particular are renowned throughout Japan for being particularly polite and sticklers for manners, but again, this doesn't apply to foreign guests.

Appointments—An intermediary can be a great asset when doing business in Japan, but it is important to use people of high rank. Establish meetings well in advance of your visit. Note that although the Japanese work long hours (48 hours a week is standard), the standard office hours are Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm. Punctuality is of extreme importance; in fact, it's better to just show up ten minutes early.

Personal Introductions—The traditional introduction is a bow. However, you may also be greeted with a handshake or a bow and a handshake. Follow the lead of your Japanese counterpart. If your



acquaintance bows, bow to the same depth to indicate your equal rank. As you bow, keep your hands flat against your sides (if you're a man) or on the tops of your thighs (if you're a woman) and lower your eyes.

Use your host's last name and append the word *san*, meaning "Mr." or "Ms." Example: If you are meeting Mr. Fukawa, you should address him as "Fukawa-san." It is appropriate to ask about a person's family. Remain formal in your demeanor after the initial introductions. It may take a very long time before any personal relationship develops. Even if you develop a first-name relationship, you should continue to address your associate by his last name in the presence of others.

Business cards are very important, and there is an entire set of etiquette rules built around their use. Have your card printed in English on one side, Japanese on the other. Present the card Japanese side up. The formal way to both give and accept a card is with both hands. Spend time reading the card. Do not immediately put it away into your shirt or jacket, and never place it in a wallet that you then place in your pants pocket. It is suggested that you purchase a special card holder for the business cards of your Japanese associates. Never write on any of the cards you receive. A business card is considered a representation of self, and crushing the card or mistreating it is considered an insult.

Negotiating—Do not be surprised if early in your negotiation you are asked many personal questions. This is the way that the Japanese "size" you up and determine your own rank. Do not display any negative emotions or do anything to inadvertently embarrass your host. The concept of the group is important to Japanese business. Individual achievement and glory must be secondary to the success of the group. Thus, many people may be involved in your negotiations, and the higher-ranking members will look for a consensus, which may slow down the decision-making process considerably. Be patient.

The Japanese do not like to respond negatively to a guest. As a result, noncommittal answers—such as "perhaps"—often mean no. Avoid negatively phrased questions, which can lead to confusion. If you use attorneys, you should use Japanese counsel to supplement your own.

Business Entertaining—The Japanese entertain in the evening and often until late at night. Typically, the host will treat. An invitation to lunch or dinner is important in Japan and is an indication of trust. It is customary for the host to order for the guest. When dining, do not fill or refill your own glass, only others' glasses. They will refill yours—make sure to lift it from the table with both hands as someone fills it as a sign of thanks.

Body Language—Personal space is surprisingly wide. Gesturing is kept to an absolute minimum. There is very little, if any, conversational touching. Eye contact is often very weak. Smiling is a norm but is also used to cover displeasure. Familiarize yourself with differences between Japanese gestures and your own. For example, the typical American gesture for "come here" with the palm up and curled fingers is considered offensive in Japan. Their gesture for "come here" is made with the palm down.

Gift Giving—Gift giving tends to be formalized and even ceremonial. Consumables such as good-quality spirits make excellent gifts. Have the gift wrapped, but avoid white paper as white is associated with funerals. Gifts will not always be immediately opened, and you should follow your host's lead. Present your gift with both hands. If the gift is for an individual, give the gift in private. If it's for a group, make sure the entire group is assembled. Indicate that your gift is a small one, regardless of what it is. This indicates that your relationship is more important than the gift. Some Japanese believe the numbers 4 and 9 mean bad luck, so avoid gifts that convey those numbers.



Conversation—All aspects of Japanese culture are good topics for conversation, if they are spoken of in a favorable context. Avoid talking about World War II and the current U.S. presence in Okinawa. Japan's relationship with China, the culture of whaling, the ongoing troubles at the Fukushima nuclear power plants and the role of the emperor remain sensitive topics. Kyotoites particularly shy away from discussing topics that might offend some listeners and you are unlikely to get a real opinion out of them until much later in your relationship. Jokes do not translate well and may not be understood or, worse, misunderstood. This is particularly true of sarcasm, which is rarely used in Japanese.

Other Information—Keep in mind that where you stay will be interpreted as a reflection of your company's stature and success. Staying in a cheap hotel can have serious business consequences when dealing with the status-conscious Japanese, especially if your competitors are in upscale accommodations.

Personal Safety

Travel within Japan is generally safe, both in terms of crime and accidents. Japanese people rarely get aggressive, and personal violence is very rare.

Most places are safe, even at night, although common sense should be used when visiting the entertainment districts of major cities—avoid hostess bars, as they are often unscrupulous, gang-related clip joints. All firearms are banned in Japan (except for very few licensed hunters). Situations involving prostitution and illegal drugs (penalties for possession are severe) are invariably connected with organized crime groups and best left well alone.

Women in particular should be wary of gropers on trains, although Japanese women are the main target and groping attempts involving foreigners are quite rare. Japan is very much a male-dominated society, and unfortunately, such incidents are still common, with very little support offered for victims of this crime. Avoid using trains in major cities during rush hour to minimize the risk. Many train companies now provide female-only carriages. Look for the signs on the platform. They are usually marked in Japanese and English.

If you come across a troupe of monkeys, do not make eye contact. The monkeys view this behavior as threatening, and might attack; they can be quite vicious.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Medical practices differ somewhat from what you may be used to at home, but sanitary conditions are good. Proof of sufficient funds may be required before you are treated in Japanese hospitals or clinics. Water is safe to drink. Travelers with coronary problems should be aware that Japan is a mountainous country, and in order to see many of Japan's most impressive sights, you must climb stairs or hillsides and do a fair amount of walking, despite excellent public transportation. Be sure to take along a comfortable pair of walking shoes.



Note: A surprising number of over-the-counter cold medicines (such as Vicks Inhalers and Sudafed) contain small amounts of amphetamines or amphetamine-like drugs, which makes them illegal in Japan. Expect them to be confiscated by customs if your bag is searched on arrival. Alternative medications are available at Japanese pharmacies.

For more information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do remember that you will have to remove your shoes often—when visiting some restaurants, a home, a traditional inn (*ryokan*) and many of Japan's attractions. And don't, under *any* circumstances, walk into a temple wearing shoes.

Do use *hashi* (chopsticks) for Japanese food. Use Western utensils—and *only* Western utensils—for Western food. Stabbing your french fries with chopsticks may be fun, but it'll just make you look silly.

Don't forget that the moist towelette you get in restaurants should be used to wipe off your hands *before* you eat.

Do buy a colorful handkerchief (they're sold everywhere). You use it to wipe your hands after washing in the restroom—towels are often not provided. (An increasing number of establishments have installed electric hand dryers.)

Do try to learn some basic phrases, including "thank you" (*arigato*), "good morning" (*ohayo gozaimasu*), "good day" (*konnichi wa*), "good evening" (*konban wa*) and "goodbye" (*sayonara*). The most powerful of all, "excuse me" (*sumimasen*), can be used to apologize, excuse oneself, or to get someone's attention. Restaurant guests shout it at the servers when they are ready to order. If you can manage "delicious" (*oishii*), you'll be loved everywhere you go.

Don't expect to find escalators in every subway or train station, although they are becoming more common. Be sure to stand on the right side of the escalator and walk on the left when in Kyoto.

Do expect to be crowded or jostled unapologetically in public, especially on trains. The Japanese sense of personal space is different than that of Westerners, and crowding and jostling are considered perfectly acceptable behaviors.

Don't be surprised—or alarmed—if someone stops and asks if you need help. This is a frequent occurrence with visitors.

Don't expect shrines to be solemn and orderly. Prayer, chatting and photography occur simultaneously. And every shrine seems to have a busy gift shop.

Don't expect to use a debit card or credit card. Debit is scarcely used and credit cards are only used for big purchases. Outside large hotels and department stores, they aren't likely to be accepted.



Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports and proof of onward passage for stays of less than 90 days. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

Population: 1,420,719.

Languages: Japanese.

Predominant Religions: Shinto, Buddhist.

Time Zone: 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+9 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 100 volts AC, 50 cycles. Outlets require the type of plug used in the U.S. Appliances designed for use in North America usually can be used with no adapter; however, the difference in cycles means that they'll run about 15% slower. Many of the larger hotels have a choice of electrical outlets or can supply adapters.

Telephone Codes: 81, country code; 075, Kyoto city code;

Money

Taxes

There is a standard 10% goods and service tax applied to all transactions. Some high-end restaurants may also add on a service charge of 10%-15%.

Tipping

There is no need to tip in Japan. In some cases a service charge may have already been added, making a tip further redundant. If someone has been especially helpful, a small gift, rather than money, would be appreciated. Don't be discouraged if they refuse it, even twice; they're just being courteous. Offer it a third time.

Weather

The temperature varies widely over the country on any given day—annual average temperatures range from 43 F/6 C to 72 F/22 C, depending on where you are. In general, the best times to visit are in October and April, when the foliage is changing and the temperatures are mild during the day and cool at night. June and July are the rainiest months, and June, July and August are hotter and more humid.

Winter months can become quite cold—parts of Japan are on the same latitude as Siberia—and the areas that aren't terribly cold most likely will be drizzly and dreary.

What to Wear

Japan can be scorching hot and uncomfortably humid during the summer, which lasts from mid-June to late August. If frequenting shopping centers, restaurants or bars, be sure to take a light sweater or jacket,



as the air-conditioning is usually very cool. Shorts are not common on men in Japan, but that shouldn't stop you from wearing them.

Those there on business should wear appropriate business attire, such as suits and ties for men and a conservative suit, dress or skirt for women.

Winter in Kyoto is quite cold, with a few weeks of snow every year, so a decent coat, a warm scarf and gloves will suffice. Spring and fall are both reasonably comfortable, and items such as jeans and a warm jacket will suffice.

Transportation

Kyoto has two Japan Rail lines passing through it, north-south and east-west subway lines and three private train lines (Keihan, Hankyu, Kintetsu) that connect the city to the suburbs and Osaka. All are fast, clean and run from 5 am until 1 am or so. Much of the city can be seen exclusively with a combination of trains and walking.

The bus routes are extensive, but they are considerably less pleasant. Cramped, crowded and slow when traffic is bad, the bus system pales in comparison to the trains, but for some of the farther parts of the city, there are no other options. At ¥230 per ride, they are cheap, at least. Daily bus passes (¥500) are available, but be careful, because in peak seasons (April, August, New Year's) when you'll be spending an inordinate amount of time waiting in line for the bus and then waiting in traffic.

If you are traveling in a party of three or four, taxis, which start at about ¥600 for the first couple miles/kilometers, are almost as cheap as taking the bus. Ubiquitous as taxis are, the drivers don't always speak much English. Keep the business card of your hotel or the name of the place you'd like to go, written in Japanese, and the process will go much more easily. Simply raising your arm as a taxi approaches will suffice to hail one.

Cycling is an excellent way to see Kyoto, as drivers are used to a large number of cyclists and are generally courteous. Stick to the side streets and bear in mind that it is permitted to ride down one-way streets the wrong way on a bike, but you must stay on the road, rather than riding on the sidewalk. Public-use bikes can be rented from many parking areas across the city.

Unless you are a confident driver and have experience driving on the left, renting a car is ill-advised. Compared to traveling by train, the experience is more expensive, generally slower and more stressful.

If it fits your schedule, ride on the bullet train between Kyoto and Tokyo—it really is fun. In Kyoto Station, proceed to the Shinkansen ticket counter and tell the station attendants where you'd like to go. There are vending machines too, but they are rather confusing, even with experience, so it is easier to wait in line (most of the vending machines are easy—the shinkansen ones are different). There are a few options for the speed of shinkansen. The fastest, Nozomi (2:17), is also the most expensive; the next fastest, Hikari, is ¥300 cheaper and just 11 minutes slower. Kodama is the slowest shinkansen service with the most stops at 3:48 to Tokyo. You don't save much, but if you really enjoy whistling along at high speed, the extra hour is quite pleasant. You'll get two tickets and a receipt, all the same shape. The two tickets are your boarding pass and express ticket. The former is for the distance and the latter is for the class of travel. Feed both of them into the ticket slot in the gate. Don't worry if you make a mistake: There will be an attendant standing nearby to help.

Mt. Fuji, Japan

Overview

Introduction

An almost perfectly conical volcano, Mount Fuji is a familiar symbol of Japan, located 70 mi/115 km southwest of Tokyo. It is 12,388 ft/3,774 m high and beautifully snow-capped in winter. Ascending the mountain in summer does not require any special mountain-climbing skills or equipment, though it does require good shoes, warm clothing and a reasonable level of fitness. Five trails lead to the summit; each has 10 rest stations along the way.



The vast majority of climbers take a bus halfway to the top and begin hiking from the fifth station (the climb from there to the summit takes five to six hours). Starting from the bottom is tricky because lower sections of the trails are signposted only in Japanese. Very basic dormitory accommodation is provided in shelters; take as much food and water as you can carry to avoid prices bordering on extortion (US\$3 for a pint/half-liter of water). Though the hike is quite strenuous, we found it to be a fascinating encounter with this country, and, if you are lucky with the weather, the view is spectacular.

The best views are usually at sunrise or sunset (clouds often cloak Fuji's peak during the day in summer). Most people hike up at night (take a flashlight and warm clothes) or overnight at one of the stations. Basic huts (meals provided) should be booked in advance through the Japan National Tourist Organization. Daytime hikers should avoid the trek on Sunday, when Japanese nature-lovers clog the trails (don't be surprised by the mountains of litter along the way). Friday and Saturday nights are also extremely congested, so try stick to a weekday if possible. The season for climbing is July-August.

Inexperienced hikers should also be warned that Fuji is easy to climb, but seriously high. Instances of altitude sickness occur and many hapless travelers end up wearing garbage bags as jackets when the balmy evening at the first stage drops to near freezing at the summit. Take a fleece and raincoat, no matter how good the weather is upon setting out.

Other scenic areas close to Mount Fuji include the Fuji Five Lakes (beautiful scenery); the Izu Peninsula (hot-spring resorts, beaches and picturesque fishing villages); Hakone (small mountains with hot-spring resorts, forest hiking, the Open Air Sculpture Museum, a large lake and a good view of Mount Fuji if you would prefer to just see it rather than climb it); and the Seven Isles of Izu (tiny volcanic islands with beaches and good snorkeling).

Kobe, Japan

Overview

Introduction

Kobe is an important Japanese port and is considered one of the country's most attractive cities because of its abundance of new buildings after the devastating 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, the early influence of Western architecture and the sandwich effect of the lush Rokko range to the north and the shimmering Inland Sea to the south. The city is relatively small, so it is wonderful to explore by casually wandering the streets, especially the pleasant Western-style neighborhood Kitano and colorful Chinatown. The cable car up Rokko Mountain, which operates from a building near the Shin-Kobe train station, is particularly nice around sunset.



Kobe was one of the first ports to open to foreign traders, so it has long had a small enclave of Western-style homes in the Kitano district up against the mountains. Although more of a novelty for Japanese visitors, the area is nevertheless pleasant for strolling and full of trendy cafes and boutiques.

In addition to the good Chinese food on offer in Kobe's Nankin-machi, Kobe is also famous for Kobe beef, one of the most expensive meats in the world. You may think you have eaten a "Kobe beef burger" back home, but that was meat fraud. Kobe beef comes from Tajima bullocks that have an unsaturated higher fat content and more marbling than Western breeds, which is why it melts on your tongue. A tiny portion of the 3,000 or so head produced a year are available for export, but even if you paid a fortune for a Kobe beef steak in the U.S., it was likely a Tajima cow cross-bred several times with American cattle to reduce the fattiness and increase flavor for the local palate. To try a steak without completely breaking the budget, visit Kobe Plaisir (<http://www.kobe-plaisir.jp>) where 5-ounce sirloin steaks will only set you back \$110.

Port Information

Location

Smaller cruise ships dock at the terminal at Naka Pier, which is located in the middle of the waterfront area, within walking distance of downtown. Visitors are greeted by brass bands and traditional Japanese drums.

Larger ships dock at Kobe Port Terminal, which is outside of the city center, but the terminal has a tourist information center and is linked to Naka Pier by Kobe Port Liner.

Tokyo, Japan

Overview

Introduction

Tokyo, Japan, presents a different view at every turn. It's one of the world's main economic centers and its most populous agglomeration. The business of Tokyo *is* business, but you can still find harmony and small-scale gardens on back streets. Around the corner from neon and concrete, you may find the bonsai-lined courtyard of a traditional inn.

Tokyo was nearly destroyed by bombs and fires during World War II, and by earthquakes at other times, but it has always rebuilt itself. As a result, there is little left of Old Japan in the city, but there's plenty of New Japan to take its place.



The streets are a confusing maze, so a map is essential. The transit system is excellent, however, and there are *kobans* (police boxes) throughout the metropolis, as well as a populace generally willing to answer questions.

Most visitors to Tokyo are there on business, but tourism has grown exponentially. And despite its reputation, Tokyo doesn't have to be fearsomely expensive. With some planning, it's possible to visit Tokyo on a reasonable budget.

Highlights

Sights—The serene Meiji Shrine; the Buddhist Asakusa Kannon Temple (also known as Sensoji Temple) and its bustling surrounding market streets; the views of the city from atop Tokyo SkyTree; Tsukiji Fish Market; a sumo tournament; the peaceful serenity of a Japanese landscaped garden such as Rikugien Garden; a performance of Kabuki, traditional Japanese drama, at the Kabukiza Theatre.

Museums—Learning about the city's history and people at the Edo-Tokyo Museum; viewing bonsai and learning about their care and upkeep at The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum; exploring the world's largest collection of Japanese art and historical artifacts at the Tokyo National Museum; the Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art, for its collection of Edo-era *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints; the Mori Art Museum for its challenging modern art and great cityscape views.

Memorable Meals—A breakfast of fresh sushi at the Tsukiji Fish Market; the novelty of conveyor-belt food at Heirokezushi or another *kaiten* sushi bar; superb Japanese beef and stunning views at New York Grill and Bar, high up in the Park Hyatt Hotel; a *kaiseki* feast in the old-fashioned atmosphere of Waentei-Kikko in Asakusa; skewered chicken and other dishes at a lively yakitori restaurant.



Late Night—Dancing at one of Roppongi's high-energy discos; listening to electrifying performances at Liquid Room; enjoying a nightcap while gazing down over the lights of the city from the New York Bar or Peter: The Bar; joining locals in an *izakaya*, a Japanese-style pub; window-shopping or strolling along the Ginza, especially during the Christmas season.

Recreation—A stroll through Shinjuku Gyoen Garden; a walk along the moat of the Imperial Palace when the cherry blossoms are in bloom (late March); riding the ferry up the Sumida River from the waterside Hama Rikyu Gardens to the historic Asakusa district; a traditional hot-spring bath at Oedo Onsen in Odaiba; hiking to Mount Takao with its rewarding views of Tokyo.

Especially for Kids—A ride on the Ferris wheel in Odaiba; Joypolis Sega, a wonderland of high-tech electronic games; shopping in Harajuku; greeting the pandas at Ueno Zoo; spending a day at one-of-a-kind Tokyo DisneySea; running loose in Yoyogi or Shinjuku park.

Geography

Tokyo is located on the east coast of Japan's volcanic main island, Honshu, at the northwest corner of Tokyo Bay. It's part of a huge urban corridor that sweeps from Chiba City (close to Narita Airport) in the east and Saitama in the north to Yokohama in the south, connected by clean, efficient train and subway systems and an amazing network of elevated expressways. Tokyo Prefecture sprawls from the banks of the Edogawa River in the east to the mountains of Tanzawa to the west, and even includes a chain of islands stretching far to the south. The city itself is made up of 23 central wards, or *ku*, surrounded by many smaller cities and towns, known as *shi*.

For most visitors, it's the central wards west of the river, inside the Yamanote train line that loops around central Tokyo, that hold the most interest: Chiyoda-ku, defined by the feudal-era moat that once encircled Edo Castle in the heart of the city, is where you'll find the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Station. To the northeast is Taito-ku, known as the *shitamachi* (old town) part of Tokyo and home of Ueno Park, Ueno Zoo, the Tokyo National Museum and Asakusa Kannon Temple.

To the south and west, Minato-ku includes the Roppongi entertainment district, fashionable Aoyama with its many designer shops, the Shiodome development and the area around Shinagawa Station with its many hotels and office high-rises. Chuo-ku is the other central ward, and is home to Ginza, Tokyo's original high-end shopping area. To the west is Shinjuku-ku, home of the metropolitan government and many of the tallest skyscrapers. Shibuya-ku, in the southwest, includes the Meiji Shrine and the sophisticated shopping districts of Harajuku, Aoyama and Omotesando.

Note: Finding a specific address in Tokyo can be incredibly frustrating. Few streets have names, and buildings are numbered somewhat arbitrarily, often according to when they were built, not their relative location on the street. Addresses have the name of an area along with three sets of numbers that zero in on specific neighborhoods but are difficult to decipher. Asking for help is routine even for locals, and the police boxes on street corners have very useful maps. Throughout our report, we've included the ward (denoted by the suffix *-ku*), followed by the closest subway or train station in parentheses, wherever possible.



History

Tokyo's history is a story of continual reinvention. Located at the mouth of the Sumida River, the city was originally a marshy fishing village called Edo ("river mouth"). It became important in the early 1600s when the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu seized power and declared himself shogun (military governor), establishing a dynasty that lasted some 260 years. While the Japanese emperor remained cloistered in Kyoto, the shogunate made Edo his political and military base and required Japan's other feudal lords to reside there for six months every other year.

By the 1700s, Edo had become one of the world's largest cities. Thus, when the Tokugawa clan was overthrown in 1867, it only made sense for the restored emperor to move the capital from Kyoto to Edo as a means of reinforcing his authority. Edo was renamed Tokyo ("Eastern Capital").

Although Japan had been isolated from the outside world under the old military dictatorship of the shogunate, the new emperor embraced Western influences, which ultimately made the country a modern, industrialized nation and Tokyo a major world center. In 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake unleashed a series of fires that left half of the city in ashes, but it was quickly rebuilt. In the 1930s, Japan became swept up in a quest to dominate Asia that led into World War II. Before the conflict ended, Allied air raids had destroyed much of the city. In the initial years after the war, Tokyo was occupied by Allied forces and reduced to a city of tawdry entertainment and prosperous black markets.

By the early 1950s, Tokyo had reinvented itself again, using some of the profits accumulated from serving as a base of operations for U.N. forces during the Korean War. In 1964, Tokyo played host to the summer Olympic games and demonstrated to the world that it was joining the economic elite. In the following decades, with Tokyo taking the lead, Japan became an economic powerhouse. Although recession in the 1990s slowed its expansion into the new millennium, the city remains defined by its commitment to growth.

Construction projects continue to alter the cityscape, especially in preparation for the 2020 Olympic summer games in Tokyo. New hotels have been built, existing ones are undergoing renovation and more are planned for the future. Roads are being constructed—not easy in a city this congested—that will lead from the center of town to the Olympic Village around Tokyo Bay. Among projects currently underway is a new national stadium to replace the one built for the 1964 Olympics and a huge renovation of Shibuya Station and its environs, including a 754-ft/230-m skyscraper with a rooftop sky deck. Shibuya's redevelopment is so massive, it isn't expected to be completed until 2027.

Port Information

Location

Tokyo lacks a terminal big enough to accommodate large passenger cruise ships, but that will be remedied in 2019 when a new international ship terminal opens in Koto ward, south of the Rainbow Bridge.

Until then, the Harumi Passenger Ship Terminal requires liners to pass under Rainbow Bridge, which is too low for large ships to clear. Passengers who do dock there will find an observation deck, a cafe selling snacks, and buses that will take them to Tokyo Station and Ginza (the trip to Ginza takes about 30 minutes). Because the 2020 Olympic Village will be built around present Harumi terminal, it will close permanently when the Koto ward terminal opens.



Large passenger ships dock in Yokohama, about 18 mi/29 km south of Tokyo, at state-of-the-art Osanbashi Pier, located beside Yamashita Park. It has a grassy rooftop open 24 hours, souvenir shops and a restaurant with views of the busy port. Outside the terminal is Nihon Odori Station, where the Minato Mirai Line whisks passengers to Shibuya in about 30 minutes.

Potpourri

Most central city wards prohibit smoking on sidewalks and outdoor public spaces except in designated smoking areas and levy fines of approximately ¥2,000 against people caught smoking in the street or dropping their butts—volunteers patrol major stations and business areas.

It is estimated that about 20% of Tokyoites suffer from allergies related to cedar and cypress forests. The result? Trains full of white-mask-wearing commuters and a very happy pharmaceutical industry.

The Japanese are famous for being polite and kind—but not on the trains. Expect to see people rushing on to get seats, and don't expect many people to give up their seats for the elderly or pregnant—even if they are sitting in one of the many priority seats.

The Japanese love vending machines. There are millions of them throughout the country. Most hold canned coffee, green tea, soft drinks and snacks. Some sell alcoholic beverages and cigarettes.

Turn on Japanese TV and you might see a few Hollywood stars making fools of themselves during the commercial breaks. Whether it be Tommy Lee Jones as a karaoke bar manager advertising canned coffee, or Brad Pitt and Cameron Diaz plugging cell phones, celebrities will do these commercials because they are unlikely to be seen outside of Japan.

Tokyo Tower, the iconic 1092-ft/333-m-tall orange-red tower that opened in 1958 and is modeled after the Eiffel Tower in Paris, is partially composed of metal recycled from U.S. tanks destroyed in the Korean War.

Slurping is part and parcel of noodle consumption in Japan, be it the Chinese street vendor noodles locally known as ramen, or the white or brown buckwheat-based noodles called *udon* and *soba*. The louder you slurp, the better the noodles taste—or so it is said. The same does not apply to spaghetti dishes.

Mount Fuji may be iconic, but it's visible from Tokyo only 79 days of the year.

See & Do

Sightseeing

Tokyo's veneration of old traditions shows in the respect for and popularity of its many Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples that serve as an escape from the city's hectic pace. Two of the most popular are the Asakusa Kannon Temple and the Meiji Shrine. In contrast, Tokyo SkyTree, Tokyo Midtown and Roppongi Hills are three of the modern landmarks, offering views of the city (and sometimes Mount Fuji) that you can't get anywhere else.

Tokyo has many museums showcasing Japan's art, history and culture, but if you can manage to visit only one museum, make sure to see either the Edo-Tokyo Museum or the Tokyo National Museum. *Note:*



Most museums are closed on Monday unless a national holiday falls on that day, in which case they remain open but close on Tuesday instead. Some private museums, on the other hand, are closed on all national holidays.

Take some time to explore the distinctions between various areas of the city. Neighborhoods in Tokyo are really like small towns. Each offers different atmospheres and attractions, so choose a few and grab a subway map: Asakusa (temples), Roppongi (jam-packed nightlife), Harajuku (Meiji Shrine and trendy shopping), Ginza (art galleries, department stores and international designer shops) and Ueno (beautiful park, museums and temples) are among your options.

Although green spaces are at a premium in the densely residential parts of the city, Tokyo has several parks and gardens worth visiting, many of them having once served as expansive temple grounds or as residences for wealthy feudal lords. These include the East Garden next to the Imperial Palace; Hama Rikyu Gardens, right by the Sumida River; the walled Rikugien Garden, in Bunkyo-ku, with its bonsai pines and miniature landscapes; Ueno Park, home to shrines and cherry blossoms; Yoyogi Park, along with the adjoining Meiji Shrine grounds forming the largest green space in the inner city; and Shinjuku Gyoen, with its traditional Japanese and European landscaping, as well as a greenhouse and a teahouse where women in kimonos serve traditional green tea and sweets to visitors.

Tokyo has little in the way of wildlife, but there is always the zoo in Ueno Park, plus several very good aquariums in Ikebukuro and Edogawa ward. The city's theme parks provide an alternative form of amusement. The biggest one is, of course, Tokyo Disneyland and adjacent DisneySea. The top theme park in Japan, it's also one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world. Joypolis Sega provides an electronic escape with its virtual-reality video games.

Historic Sites

Asakusa Kannon Temple

2-3-1 Asakusa (Asakusa station on the Ginza and Asakusa lines), Taito-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3842-0181

<http://www.senso-ji.jp>

Anyone interested in the spiritual side of life should visit this temple dedicated to Kannon, the Buddhist deity of mercy and compassion. Tokyo's oldest temple (dating from 628) is also known as Sensoji Temple. It is one of the most popular sights in Tokyo and is always crowded with a festive atmosphere, particularly along the shop-lined pedestrian street (called Nakamise) leading to its main hall. The smoke from its incense cauldron is said to be beneficial to your health (especially the part of the body onto which it is wafted—you will see many people doing this before going to pray). The three-day Sanja Festival is held at the temple around mid-May. During that time, more than a million visitors gather to watch as *mikoshi* (portable shrines, often gilded and highly decorative) are carried around to the sound of Japanese drumming.

Daily 6:30 am-5 pm (from 6 am April-September). Free.

Imperial Palace

1-1 Kokyo Gaien (Nijubashimae or Otemachi stations on the Chiyoda line), Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3213-1111

<http://sankan.kunaicho.go.jp>

The former site of Edo Castle and now the residence of the Emperor of Japan, the palace is mostly out of sight behind a moat, high walls and trees. The East Garden is lovely, and the 3-mile/5-km circuit around the moat is popular with joggers. The public is only allowed across the impressive Nijubashi Bridge and inside the main gates on two days of the year: the emperor's birthday (23 December) and 2 January. There are free guided tours (in Japanese, but there are English-language audioguides) of the Imperial grounds Tuesday-Saturday, which require advance reservations (either by phone, in person or at <http://sankan.kunaicho.go.jp>) at least one day before. The East Garden, which contains remnants of Edo Castle and a traditional Japanese garden, is open Tuesday-Thursday, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-5 pm in summer; till 4:30 pm spring and autumn; and till 4 pm in winter (entry allowed until 30 minutes before closing).

Free.

Meiji Shrine

1-1 Yoyogi, Kamizono-cho (JR Harajuku or Meiji-Jingumae stations on the Chiyoda line), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3379-5511

<http://www.meijijingu.or.jp>

This is Tokyo's most impressive Shinto shrine, dedicated to Emperor Meiji, who ruled Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his wife, Empress Shoken. It was destroyed during World War II, but unlike most shrines around the country, it was rebuilt using traditional materials rather than concrete. The shrine is surrounded by a lovely park of thick woodland, with a highly recommended Iris Garden that blooms magnificently late June-early July (additional ¥500 fee). A small museum displaying treasures that belonged to the Emperor and Empress is also on the grounds (additional ¥500 fee). Several million people visit the shrine during the first days of the New Year, and festivals are held there in May and November.

The shrine tends to be busier with Shinto rituals on Saturday, Sunday and holidays—the best times to get a glimpse of weddings or other ceremonies.

Daily hours for the shrine vary each month but roughly follow a sunrise-sunset schedule (around 6:30 am-4 pm in winter and 5 am-6 pm in summer). The Treasure Museum is open 9 am-4:30 pm, while the Iris Garden is open daily 9 am-4:30 pm March-October, 9 am-4 pm November-February, and Monday-Friday 8 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8 am-6 pm in June. Free.

Roppongi Hills

6-10 Roppongi (Roppongi station on the Hibiya and Oedo lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-6406-6000

<http://www.roppongihills.com>



Dominating the skyline of central Tokyo like a modern-day Godzilla, the massive 54-floor central tower in the Roppongi Hills complex has become the fulcrum of the city. This minicity comprises offices, apartments, a hotel, the city's highest art museum (with an observation deck), art gallery, cinema multiplex and TV station, not to mention numerous restaurants and shops. At the apex of the tower is an open-air viewing platform, the Sky Deck, 886 ft/270 m above sea level. Like it or loathe it, this is the face of modern Tokyo.

Sengakuji Temple

2-11-1 Takanawa (Sengakuji station on the Toei Asakusa line), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3441-5560

<http://www.sengakuji.or.jp>

This is a peaceful refuge with a violent history. It's the burial place of 47 samurai who, after avenging their master's death, committed ritual suicide and were laid to rest next to his grave. The story has been immortalized in a famous Bunraku puppet play by Chikamatsu (later adapted for Kabuki) and is also the frequent subject of films and TV dramas. There's a small museum with videos and personal artifacts belonging to the samurai, a room containing carved statues of the samurai and a cemetery with their tombstones. There's also a scale model of Mount Fuji: You can "hike" the short trail to the top.

The temple is open daily 7 am-6 pm (until 5 pm October-March). The museum is open daily 9 am-4:30 pm (until 4 pm October-March). Admission to the temple is free. Admission to the museum is ¥500 adults.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office Building

2-8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku (Tochomae station on the Oedo line or Nishi-Shinjuku on the Marunouchi line), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5320-7890 for the observatory guidance desk

<http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/OFFICES/observat.htm>

For one of the best views of the city, head to the impressive, Kenzo Tange-designed City Hall in west Shinjuku, comprised of three buildings. There are observatories on the 45th floors of both its north and south towers, at a height of 663 ft/202 m. Panoramic photos below the windows are labeled—in Japanese and English—so you know what you're looking at. Mount Fuji, to the west-southwest, is usually obscured by haze, but its silhouette is often visible at sunset in winter.

The south observation room is open daily 9:30 am-5 pm (except on days when the north tower is closed, in which case it remains open to 11 pm), while the north tower times are 9:30 am-11 pm (last entrance 10:30 pm). Both observatories are closed 29-31 December, 2-3 January and for regular maintenance checks. The south tower observation room also closes on the first and third Tuesday of each month. The north tower is closed on the second and fourth Monday every month. Free.

Tokyo Tower

4-2-8 Shiba-Koen (Kamiyacho station on the Hibiya line, Akebanebashi station on the Oedo line, or Onarimon station on the Mita line), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3433-5111

<http://www.tokyotower.co.jp>



Although Tokyo Tower has lost some of its appeal since the opening of the free Tokyo Metropolitan Government observatory in Shinjuku and Tokyo SkyTree, it still affords a good view of the city center from its top deck and remains a much-loved local icon. It was erected in 1958 as a replica of the Eiffel Tower, and at 1,092 ft/333 m, is actually 42 ft/13 m taller. Its structure also contains several tourist attractions, including a wax museum, as well as the ubiquitous souvenir shops and restaurants.

Daily 9 am-11 pm for the main observatory (last entry at 10:30 pm). Admission to the middle level main observatory, at 478 ft/145 m, is ¥900 adults. Admission to the uppermost level, a special observatory at 820 ft/250 m, is an additional ¥700 adults.

Museums

Bonsai Village and Museum

96 Bonsai-cho, Kita-ku (Omiya-Koen station on the Tobu-Noda line)
Omiya, Japan

Phone: 331-0805

<http://www.scvb.or.jp>

Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo, is home to the Omiya Bonsai Village, with bonsai nurseries and Japan's only public bonsai museum. Bonsai are miniature trees that have been carefully pruned, tweaked and stunted for years until they come to resemble gnarled, full-grown trees in the wild. Some are more than 100 years old. The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum is a must for bonsai fans, with excellent displays that describe the history of bonsai, the care of bonsai and a display of about 50 bonsai both inside the museum and out. Friday-Wednesday 9 am-4:30 pm (to 4 pm November-February). Admission ¥300 adults. 2-24-3 Toro-cho (Toro Station on the JR Utsunomiya Line), Kita-ku Saitama City. Phone 048-780-2091. <http://www.bonsai-art-museum.jp>.

Bonsai Village, close to Omiya City, consists of about 10 bonsai nurseries showing several different styles of bonsai, including miniature landscapes and forests on a single tray. Although exporting bonsai is not practical, real bonsai enthusiasts will want to make a stop here as well as the museum.

The shops are generally open Friday-Wednesday 8:30 am-5 pm but opening hours vary by garden. Free.

Edo-Tokyo Museum

1-4-1 Yokoami (near Ryogoku station on the JR Sobu and Oedo lines), Sumida-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3626-9974

<http://www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp>

Ignore the ugly, oversized exterior—this is one of the city's best historical museums and the only one imparting the history of Tokyo from the 17th century through the 21st century. There are wonderful reproductions and scale models, making this a good bet for the whole family. Volunteer guides are on hand for free personal tours in English.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5:30 pm (till 7:30 pm Saturday). Last admission 30 minutes before closing. ¥600 adults.



Fukagawa Edo Museum

1-3-28 Shirakawa (near Kiyosumi-Shirakawa station on the Oedo and Hanzomon lines), Koto-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3630-8625

<http://www.kcf.or.jp/fukagawa/english.html>

This museum is highly recommended for travelers with children for its 11 life-size reconstructions of 19th-century Edo (old Tokyo), including shops, houses and even a canal, brought to life with audiovisual effects.

Daily 9:30 am-5 pm, last entry at 4:30 pm (closed second and fourth Monday of the month). ¥400 adults.

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

4-7-25 Kita-Shinagawa (a 15-minute walk from Shinagawa station on the JR Yamanote line), Shinagawa-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3445-0651

<http://www.haramuseum.or.jp>

The first Japanese museum to specialize in contemporary art, it is housed in a noteworthy art-deco building. Special international exhibitions are staged most of the year, but the museum's own collection is exhibited in one show annually. It includes works from Asia, Europe and the Americas, focusing on post-1950s developments in art.

Tuesday-Sunday 11 am-5 pm (Wednesday till 8 pm). Last admission 30 minutes before closing. Closed between exhibitions. ¥1,100 adults. Additional charge for special exhibits.

Japan Open-Air Folk House Museum (Nihon Minka-En)

7-1-1 Masugata (take the express train from Shinjuku station to Mukogaoka Yuen station on the Odakyu Odawara line—about 20 minutes), Tama-ku
Kawasaki, Japan

Phone: 044-922-2181

http://www.nihonminkaen.jp/minka_e.php

A collection of more than 25 beautifully restored historical buildings that were relocated from all over Japan. It's a nice day trip to the green hills just outside Tokyo.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5 pm (November-February 9:30 am-4:30 pm). Last entrance 30 minutes before closing. Closed over the New Year and the day after a Japanese holiday. ¥500 adults.

Mori Art Museum (MAT)

6-10-1 Roppongi (Roppongi Hills Mori Tower 52-53F; Roppongi station on the Oedo and Hibiya lines or Azabu-Juban on the Namboku and Oedo lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5777-8600

<http://www.mori.art.museum>



Occupying the 52nd and 53rd floors of the main tower in the Roppongi Hills complex, the Mori Art Museum houses an eclectic range of special innovative exhibitions—and offers an awesome panoramic view of the city.

Wednesday-Sunday 10 am-10 pm, Tuesday 10 am-5 pm (hours may vary with individual shows). Closed between exhibitions. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. Admission ¥1,600-¥1,800 adults.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MoT)

4-1-1 Miyoshi (a nine-minute walk from Kiyosumi-Shirakawa station on the Hanzomon line), Koto-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5245-4111

<http://www.mot-art-museum.jp>

Permanent displays of post-World War II Japanese and international art, plus special exhibitions, in a building that is itself a work of architectural art. The museum is currently closed for renovations, with a reopening planned for 2018.

¥500 adults (supplementary charge for special exhibits).

National Museum of Modern Art

3 Kitanomaru Koen (near Takebashi station on the Tozai Line), Chiyoda-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5777-8600

<http://www.momat.go.jp>

This museum offers Japan's largest collection of Japanese art created since the start of the Meiji era (1868). The nearby Crafts Gallery, housed in a handsome 1910 redbrick building, displays changing exhibitions of modern Japanese handicrafts.

Sunday and Tuesday-Thursday 10 am-5 pm; Friday and Saturday 10 am-8 pm. ¥500 adults.

National Museum of Western Art

7-7 Ueno-koen (in Ueno Park near Ueno station on the JR Yamanote line, or the Ginza and Hibiya lines), Taito-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3828-5131

<http://www.nmwa.go.jp>

This museum holds a fantastic array of Western art, from Renaissance paintings to post-impressionism, and also includes a large collection of Rodin sculptures.

Sunday and Tuesday-Thursday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Friday and Saturday 9:30 am-9 pm. ¥500 adults for permanent collection. Fee varies for special exhibitions.

Shitamachi Museum

2-1 Ueno-Koen (near Ueno station on the JR Yamanote line, or the Ginza and Hibiya lines), Taito-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3823-7451



<http://www.taitocity.net/taito/shitamachi>

This small museum contains life-size shops, a tenement and everyday objects once found in the old downtown (*shitamachi*) of Tokyo, all donated by local townspeople. Volunteers offer tours in English.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-4:30 pm. Last admission 30 minutes before closing. ¥300 adults.

The Kite Museum

1-12-10 Nihombashi (near Nihombashi station on the Tozai, Ginza and Toei-Asakusa lines), Chuo-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3271-2465

http://www.tako.gr.jp/eng/museums_e/tokyo_e.html

Hidden amid the offices that surround the Tokyo Stock Exchange, the three small rooms that make up this tiny museum are bursting with about 3,000 kites collected from all over Japan and other parts of Asia.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-5 pm. ¥200 adults.

Tokyo National Museum

13-9 Ueno-Koen (in Ueno Park; Ueno station on the JR Yamanote line, or the Ginza and Hibiya lines), Taito-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5405-8686

<http://www.tnm.jp>

The nation's oldest museum displays the world's largest collection of Japanese art, as well as other Asian art mostly from China, with more than 100,000 treasured artifacts and artworks housed in five buildings. The Yoshio Taniguchi-designed Gallery of Horyuji Treasures contains artifacts from the first Buddhist temple built in Japan, the seventh-century Horyuji Temple, in Nara. This is one of Japan's top museums.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5 pm (April-September till 6 pm on Saturday, Sunday and national holidays; April-December till 8 pm on Friday during special exhibition periods). Last admission 30 minutes before closing. Generally ¥620 adults, but special exhibitions cost more.

Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art

1-10-10 Jingumae (near Harajuku station on the JR Yamanote Line, or Meiji-Jingumae station on the Chiyoda Line), Shibuya-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3403-0880

<http://www.ukiyoe-ota-muse.jp>

Hidden away on the back streets of Harajuku, this museum holds Tokyo's best collection of Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, with changing monthly exhibitions culled from the museum's 12,000 prints. The collection includes many prints by masters such as Utamaro, Hiroshige and Hokusai, who had a strong influence on European impressionists such as van Gogh. The building is modern, but in traditional style, you have to remove your shoes upon entering.

Tuesday-Sunday 10:30 am-5:30 pm. Last admission 30 minutes before closing. Closed from the 27th to the end of each month. Admission ranges ¥700-¥1,000, depending on show.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Asakusa

Asakusa station on the Ginza or Asakusa lines, Taito-ku
Tokyo, Japan

During the Edo period, Asakusa was an outlying village that flourished from the bazaar and entertainment district that developed around the famous Asakusa Kannon Temple. It retains some of that feeling, as it's still a haven for merchants, artists and craftspeople—take a stroll down its narrow, crowded streets and you'll be as close as you can get to the atmosphere of Old Tokyo. Its backstreets are a hodgepodge of small shops, game parlors, bars, bathhouses and workshops for artisans, including those who weave straw into tatami matting.

The focal point of the neighborhood is the Asakusa Kannon Temple (also known as Sensoji). You enter through a massive red gateway, called Kaminarimon, or Thunder Gate. The walkway between the temple and the gate, called Nakamise Dori, is lined with more than 100 permanent souvenir stalls offering everything from hairpins to rice crackers, reflecting the Japanese tradition of bringing home trinkets for family and friends after a trip. Beside the temple is the Amuse Museum, which displays kimono, patchwork clothing from Japan's snowy north, antiques and other items from life in old Japan. Across the river is another unmistakable landmark: Asahi Super Dry Hall, headquarters of Asahi, Japan's largest brewery. It's a black granite building, designed by Philippe Starck and topped with a golden sculpture that resembles a flame.

Across the street from Kaminarimon is the Asakusa Culture Tourist Information Center (2-18-9 Kaminarimon), with sightseeing brochures and an eight-floor viewing area that provides a photo op of the temple. An unusual way of exploring the area is to take a rickshaw tour. You will see the rickshaw pullers dressed in traditional *happi* coats outside the Kaminarimon entrance to Asakusa Kannon. Some of the rickshaw men speak basic English. Be aware that it is not inexpensive (around ¥9,000 per hour for one person, ¥15,000 for two, depending on the company), and it can be a chilly ride in winter, although blankets are typically provided. From the pier by the bridge, you can take boat rides down the Sumida River—the view along the banks may be gritty, but the Hama Rikyu Gardens are definitely worth a visit.

Harajuku/Omotesando

Harajuku station on the JR Yamanote line; Meijijingumae station, Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

The broad avenue through this neighborhood had already been dubbed the Champs Elysees of Tokyo, even before the major French (and other) fashion-design houses began building luxurious showrooms along its tree-lined length. The glitzy strip called Omotesando Dori was built as an impressive approach to the Meiji Shrine. The landmark building of this thoroughfare is the impressive Omotesando Hills development (designed by Tadao Ando), replacing the much-loved but terminally decrepit prewar *dojunkai* apartments. Another popular destination for visitors is Oriental Bazaar, Tokyo's largest store for Japanese souvenirs. The backstreets of Harajuku, on the other hand, are lined with hip hair salons and trendy youth-fashion boutiques. The narrow shopping street called Takeshita-dori (a block away from Omotesando) is a mecca for teenagers, most from out of town, who flock there to load up on cheap clothing and accessories.



For more traditional culture, visit the Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Art Museum to view Edo-era woodblock prints and Meiji Shrine for its broad expanse of forests and austere decorated shrines dedicated to Emperor and Empress Meiji. Yoyogi Park, surrounding the shrine on the other side of the JR tracks, is a favorite gathering place for students, skateboarders and street performers—a great area for people-watching. On Sunday, teenagers in cosplay (costume play) frequent Jingu Bridge, above the railway track. Their eclectic and somewhat extreme style is based upon popular fictional characters, and clothing styles from different eras. At the other end of Omotesando is Aoyama, a trendier version of Harajuku, with upscale restaurants and bars and name-brand boutiques selling Japanese and international designer clothing.

Odaiba

Odaiba, Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

This huge area of reclaimed land jutting into Tokyo Bay is one of the city's subcenters and playgrounds. Its attractions include a large exhibition hall, Tokyo Big Site; a maritime museum; a science and technology museum; the futuristic Fuji TV building; two major hotels; shopping malls, including Decks, site of the Joypolis amusement center; a multiplex cinema; the Oedo Onsen hot-spring theme park; numerous restaurants; a huge Ferris wheel; a replica of the Statue of Liberty; Zepp Tokyo, one of Tokyo's most famous concert halls; Megaweb, a Toyota showcase and amusement hall; and an artificial beach. (Warning: The water is too polluted for anything except wading up to your knees.) Half the fun of a visit is getting there on the unmanned, fully automated monorail that runs over the Rainbow Bridge, so named for its nightly, multicolored illumination powered by solar energy. It's worth lining up ahead of time for seats right at the front. Odaiba is hugely popular with couples and families. Yurikamome Line from Shinbashi to Odaiba Kaihin-koen, Daiba or Telecom Center stations, or take the JR Rinkai Line.

Roppongi

Roppongi Station (on the Hibiya and Oedo lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

It's not a zoo, but Tokyo's most well-known nightlife district has plenty of wildlife. Packed with restaurants, as well as nightclubs and establishments of lesser repute, Roppongi after dark is just plain raucous, and it keeps right on rocking through the night. Defined by the Tokyo Tower at one end and the Tokyo Midtown high-rise development at the other, with several foreign embassies in between, the area is a magnet for expats, overseas travelers and Japanese revelers who enjoy spending time with foreigners. Roppongi caters to Americans in particular by offering familiar tastes, in the form of a Hard Rock Cafe, McDonald's and late-night doughnut shops. In addition, the Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown entertainment, shopping and business complexes have become a destination for trendy Tokyoites and out-of-town visitors, while the area's three museums (Suntory Museum of Art, Mori Art Museum and The National Art Center, Tokyo) have injected high-brow culture and sophistication.

Ueno

Ueno station (on the JR Yamanote line, or the Ginza and Hibiya lines), Taito-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Home to a beautiful park that's a massively popular place for viewing the cherry blossoms in the spring, Ueno also boasts a variety of superb museums (most notably the Tokyo National Museum), a concert hall and a zoo. The Toshogu Shrine was founded in memory of the first Tokugawa shogun, who unified Japan and founded the city that became Tokyo. It's one of the few original Edo-period structures that survived the various disasters that have befallen the city. Across the street from Ueno Station, you'll find the



backstreets of Ameyoko, a former hive of black-market activity where myriad *pachinko* game parlors crowd in beside lively market stalls, small shops catering to a youthful crowd and inexpensive eateries.

Parks & Gardens

Hama Rikyu Gardens

1 Hama-Rikyu Teien (Shiodome station on the Oedo or Yurikamome lines or Tsukiji-shijo on the Oedo line), Chuo-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3541-0200

http://www.tokyo-park.or.jp/english/park/detail_04.html#hamarikyu

During the Edo Period, a portion of this large park on the bay's edge was used by the shogun as a duck-hunting preserve. Once a remote stretch of wetlands, it is now shielded from the open water by concrete flood barriers and overlooked by the looming high-rise buildings of Shiodome; but even so, it is a pleasant place to visit, especially if combined with a ferry ride up the Sumida River to Asakusa. The focus of the garden is a traditional teahouse set in the center of a saltwater pond that rises and falls with the tide. Visitors reach the teahouse by crossing a bridge that supports wisteria trellises.

Daily 9 am-5 pm, last entrance 4:30 pm. ¥300 adults.

Rikugien Garden

6-16-3 Hon-Komagome (Komagome station on the JR Yamanote line or Sengoku station on the Toei Mita line), Bunkyo-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3941-2222

http://www.tokyo-park.or.jp/english/park/detail_08.html#rikugien

Gardeners painstakingly tend to the plants and grass with traditional secateurs in this beautifully manicured, traditional Japanese garden, created in 1702 by a feudal lord. It features a teahouse and man-made inclines, as well as ponds teeming with carp and turtles.

Daily 9 am-5 pm (last entrance 4:30 pm). ¥300 adults.

Shinjuku Gyoen Garden

11 Naito-cho (Shinjuku-Gyoenmae station on the Marunouchi line or Sendagaya on the JR Chuo line), Shinjuku-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3350-0151

<http://www.env.go.jp/garden/shinjukugyoen>

This grassy, tree-covered park, sprawling across 144 acres/58 hectares, makes a very pleasant place to relax for a few hours. Featuring a mix of Japanese and Western gardening styles, it has a French formal garden, an English landscape garden and a traditional Japanese garden, along with ponds, a teahouse, a moon-viewing pavilion, a greenhouse with tropical plants and a botanical garden. It's a lovely place to view the cherry blossoms in early spring (usually at the end of March or beginning of April).

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-4:30 pm. Last admission 30 minutes before closing. Daily during cherry blossom season (late March and April) and Chrysanthemum Exhibition (early- to mid-November). ¥200.

Ueno Park

Ueno-Koen (Ueno station on the JR Yamanote line, or the Ginza and Hibiya lines), Taito-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3828-5171 for the zoo

<http://www.tokyo-zoo.net>

This wonderful park contains a handful of museums, including the Tokyo National Museum and the Ueno Zoo. It also has several temples and shrines. Explore the wooden Kiyomizu Kannon temple; stroll out to Bentendo, a shrine dedicated to Benten/Benzaiten (one of the traditional seven deities of good fortune), nestled on an island in the middle of a beautiful, lotus-filled lake; and search out the ancient Toshogu Shrine, dedicated to the first Tokugawa shogun and approached via an atmospheric alley of massive stone lanterns. Ueno is a prime spot to see cherry trees when they're in bloom. The zoo is old (established in 1882 as Japan's first zoo) and cramped; it is home to two pandas from China.

The park is open 24 hours. The zoo is open daily except Monday 9:30 am-5 pm (last entrance 4 pm). Admission to the park is free. Admission to the zoo is ¥600 adults.

Amusement Parks

Joypolis Sega

1-6-1 Daiba (Odaiba Kaihinkoen station on the Yurikamome line or Tokyo Teleport station on the Rinkai line), Minato-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5500-1801

<http://tokyo-joypolis.com>

The amusement park of the future is great for both adults and children. It has a huge selection of the latest video games and arcade games. The virtual rides are amazing. There are plenty of bars and restaurants outside, overlooking Tokyo Bay.

Daily 10 am-11 pm (last admission 10:15 pm). Admission ¥800 adults. You'll pay an additional ¥500-¥800 for each ride or game. Or you can purchase a *nori-hodai* passport, which includes park admission and entrance to all rides and games: All-day pass ¥3,900 adults, night pass (after 5 pm) ¥2,900 adults. Children's tickets receive a ¥100 discount.

Tokyo Disney Resort

1-1 Maihama (Maihama station on the JR Keiyo and Musashino lines or bus from Tokyo Station)
Chiba, Japan

Phone: 045-330-5211

<http://www.tokyodisneyresort.co.jp>

Tokyo Disney Resort contains two amusement parks, Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo DisneySea, as well as hotels, restaurants and an extensive shopping mall. It's a very popular destination for Japanese tourists, as well as visitors from other Asian countries, and for good reason: It has many of the same attractions as the Disney parks in the U.S. and Europe, but it's a lot closer. However, we don't recommend that Western visitors go to Tokyo Disneyland (unless you really need to buy the T-shirt or appease the kids), because there's not much there that you won't find in Disney parks in the U.S. and



Europe at lower prices. English is spoken by some of the park staff, but many of the audio narrations are only in Japanese.

The adjoining DisneySea, however, is unique to Tokyo and offers more rides and fun, with nautical-themed areas such as Lost River Delta and Arabian Coast. More romantic than it sounds, it's become a popular place to take a date.

Opening times vary from month to month, with typically longer operating hours in summer, daily 8 or 9 am-10 pm. Check exact schedules and attraction availability online. A one-day pass that offers unlimited admission to rides at either park is ¥7,400 adults.

Recreation

In and around Tokyo you can find almost every type of recreation—tennis, swimming, horseback riding, skiing, even hang gliding. Expect all recreational facilities and sites to be unbelievably crowded, especially on weekends and national holidays, and many are shockingly expensive.

Bicycling

Given Tokyo's congested roads, it's much more pleasant to bicycle on the riverside than contend with traffic. Except for major thoroughfares, most Tokyo streets are narrow and don't have sidewalks, which means cyclists must work around cars, telephone poles, parked vehicles and pedestrians. The city's major rivers have bike paths alongside: There is good cycling for miles/kilometers down the Tamagawa and Arakawa rivers, and the routes of the Sumidagawa and Megurogawa also have quiet streets nearby. Some hotels have rental bikes available, either for free or a small fee. If it doesn't offer bikes, the hotel concierge should have recommendations for nearby rentals. Note that rental bikes generally require a deposit and identification such as a passport. For a rundown on rental bikes throughout Tokyo, see the website <http://www.rentabike.jp>.

Bird Watching

Tokyo does provide some opportunities for bird-watching thanks to its collection of parks. Although you are unlikely to see many rarities, you might find a few of Japan's more common species that are indigenous to Asia. Egrets are frequent visitors to the Arakawa and Edogawa areas in the east of the city. Other places to observe birds are Shinobazu Pond beside Ueno Park, which has many cormorants and other waterfowl wintering there October-March, and Kasai Rinkai Park, on Tokyo Bay next to Tokyo Disneyland. Day trips to Kamakura, Hakone or Nikko offer the opportunity to combine bird-watching with sightseeing.

Golf

There are a number of golf courses a few hours out from the central city, some of which offer impressive views of Mount Fuji. Unfortunately, all these courses have hefty greens fees attached, especially if you want to play during the weekend. Inside Tokyo, space limitations mean the choices are very limited. A highly recommended option near the city is the Lakewood Golf Course in Kanagawa Prefecture, 169 Kuroiwa, Oiso-machi, Naka-gun (Ninomiya station on the JR Tokaido line or Hadano station on the Odakyu line), Kanagawa. Phone 090-8475-4512. For more information on this course as well as other courses in and around Tokyo, visit <http://www.golf-in-japan.com>.

Hiking & Walking

You can go hiking in beautiful mountains as close as 60 minutes from Tokyo by train. It's a major pastime for locals. Mount Takao in Hachioji, an hour away from the central city, is a gentle hiking option that can be made even easier by taking the mountain's cable car more than halfway up. There are a number of trails leading up to the 2,000-ft-/599-m-high summit, each offering a mix of different wildlife and lush vegetation and scenic lookouts. Also on Mount Takao is Yakuoin Temple, dedicated to a deity thought to cure illness. Takao is at its prettiest during the fall when the changing leaves give it a fiery glow, but that's also when it's most crowded.

The best and easiest place to walk or jog in Tokyo proper is around the Imperial Palace, on the 3-mile/5 km promenade. You'll find many joggers there early in the morning and also in the evenings after work. Other options include the jogging course around Shinjuku Chuo (Central) Park, located in the hotel district on the west side of Shinjuku station, and Sumida Park, which stretches along the Sumida River in Asakusa.

Mount Fuji

The official season for climbing Mount Fuji runs through July and August. Buses to the base camp (known as the Fifth Station) depart and arrive from outside Shinjuku station. Or you can take the JR Chuo line from Shinjuku station to Otsuki station, and then the Fujikyu line to Kawaguchiko station (total trip time is less than three hours), then take a bus from there to Fifth Station. Some people climb at night in order to view the sunrise from the summit. Be warned, though, that at an altitude of 12,388 ft/3,776 m, it is extremely cold at the top, even in midsummer. Weather conditions can change rapidly, so dress appropriately. You can buy food and drinks at stations along the way but it's better to pack your own as prices go up with the elevation. Expect huge crowds.

Jogging

The most popular course is the circuit around the moat of the Imperial Palace, a distance of 3.1 mi/5 km. You'll find many joggers there early in the morning and evenings. Other options include the jogging course around Shinjuku Chuo (Central) Park, located in the hotel district on the west side of Shinjuku station, and Yoyogi Park, with a loop around NHK and the former Olympic swimming pool and gymnasium.

Spas and Health Clubs

Each of Tokyo's wards has a selection of health clubs and other sports facilities. The government-run amenities are cheap but are specifically for residents of the ward in which they are located. Some private health clubs offer one-day passes, such as Gold's Gym (<http://www.goldsgym.jp>), which has many locations around Tokyo. The Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium (see Swimming, below) also has two training rooms, one with treadmills and bikes and the other with free weights. The ¥600 admission for two and a half hours includes use of the swimming pool. In addition, most large hotels have pools and gyms. Fees can sometimes be exorbitant.

Swimming

Most of the larger hotels have their own pools, but even hotel guests usually have to pay to use them, and many allow nonguests to frequent them for a higher fee. There are also public pools in some parts of town. Outdoor swimming pools are generally open only in July and August, even at hotels.



Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium Pool

1-17-1 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku (near Sendagaya station on the JR Chuo or Sobu lines)
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5474-2114

<http://www.tef.or.jp/tmg>

A popular option if you don't mind crowds and bossy, officious lifeguards. It has both 82-ft/25-m and 164-ft/50-m indoor pools. Be sure to follow the rules, such as to always wear a swimming cap and to not wear jewelry.

Monday-Friday 9 am-11 pm, Saturday 9 am-10 pm, Sunday and holidays 9 am-9 pm. Closed irregularly two to three times a month (check website). Admission ¥600 for two and a half hours includes admission to pools, training rooms with free weights, treadmills and exercise bikes.

Nightlife

If you're thinking about a night out on the town, keep in mind that some of the smaller clubs and bars may not welcome outsiders unless they're introduced by their regular customers, though this happens far less frequently than it used to. There are plenty of other bars and Japanese-style drinking establishments that welcome foreign visitors, particularly in cosmopolitan nightlife areas such as Roppongi.

Tokyo nightclubs are definitely for the young, and the action doesn't get under way until after 10 pm. Otherwise, a hotel bar may be more to your liking. Usual hours for bars and clubs are 6 pm-midnight, although in Roppongi and Shinjuku, the action often continues throughout the night, especially on Friday and Saturday. With more than 300 bars, lounges, dance clubs and other establishments, Shinjuku Ni-chome is Japan's largest gay nightlife district. Some are welcoming to outsiders and a few admit members of the opposite sex, but many are private clubs.

Also on the nightlife landscape are hostess bars and karaoke rooms. Unless you're desperate to try a hostess bar, where a pretty woman (who may not speak English) entices you into buying very expensive drinks for her, it's best to steer clear. There are a number of karaoke bars that cater to foreigners, most of which consist of private rooms where you can belt out tunes with close friends. Some places are even themed.

Bars, Taverns & Pubs

Beer Hall Ginza Lion

7-9-20 Ginza (Ginza station on the Ginza, Hibiya and Marunouchi lines), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 050-5788-0502

<http://www.ginzalion.jp>

This classic, old-style beer hall has managed to survive with its remarkable 1930s interior intact. The look is Bavarian, but the ambience (and the Sapporo beer) is entirely Japanese. English menu.

Monday-Saturday 11:30 am-11 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-10:30 pm. Most major credit cards.

New York Bar

3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku (Park Hyatt Hotel; Hatsudai station on the Keio Line or Tochomae station on the Oedo Line), Shinjuku-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5323-3458

<http://restaurants.tokyo.park.hyatt.co.jp/nyb.html>

New York Bar has sky-high views over Shinjuku, with prices to match. American jazz nightly, accompanied by cognac, brandy, cocktails and California wines. English menu.

Sunday-Wednesday 5 pm-midnight, Thursday-Saturday 5 pm-1 am. Cover charge ¥2,500 starting at 8 pm Monday-Saturday, from 7 pm Sunday.

Live Music

Tokyo has no shortage of good clubs and is a stop on many international artists' tours. For up-to-date listings and to find out what's hot, pick up a copy of *Metropolis* (<http://metropolis.co.jp>) or check the weekly listings in *The Japan Times*.

Blue Note Tokyo

6-3-16 Minami-Aoyama (Omotesando station on the Ginza, Chiyoda and Hanzomon lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5485-0088

<http://www.bluenote.co.jp>

The Blue Note Tokyo is the hot spot for world-class jazz, nu-jazz, blues and roots-music acts.

Opening days vary. Check the online schedule or call before going. Music charge varies (usually ¥7,000-¥11,000); no table charge, but you can only stay for one set.

Cotton Club

2-7-3 Marunouchi (Tokyo Building; near Tokyo station on the JR and Marunouchi lines, but there are many other stations within a five-minute walk), Chiyoda-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3215-1555

<http://www.cottonclubjapan.co.jp>

This live-music venue is sleek, intimate and only for those with a generous budget. Show times vary, but there are usually two shows (and two seatings) most nights of the week.

Doors generally open an hour before show time. Cover varies with the artist, but usually ranges ¥7,000-¥11,000.

Performing Arts

Japan's unique performing arts date back centuries and reached their creative peak during the Edo period when the country was almost totally cut off from outside influences. Many of the performers are members of families who have been involved in their respective arts for generations. Performances are given year-



round. As ticket information isn't always available in English, the easiest method is to ask someone at your hotel to make the arrangements for you.

The Noh Theatre is perhaps the least accessible: both the music and the dance movements can be slow and often dirgelike, although the masks and costumes are beautiful. Strongly rooted in the animistic beliefs that preceded Buddhism, the plays mostly explore the world of the gods and spirits.

Kabuki is Japan's most popular traditional melodramatic theater, known for its ornate costumes, brilliant makeup and all-male casts. The music may be truly foreign to Western ears, but the stories (many of which were adapted from the Bunraku puppet theater) transcend cultural boundaries. Performances can run as long as five hours, with intermissions. Reservations are usually necessary, except for one-act tickets at Kabukiza Theater.

Bunraku is Japan's 300-year-old puppet drama. Unlike any other puppetry in the world, as many as three people are needed to operate each puppet—and these black-clad puppeteers remain visible during the performance, though they are so skilled in making puppets lifelike, it's easy to forget the puppeteers are even there.

Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku all are performed in Japanese (audio headsets are often available to provide simultaneous English translation, especially for Kabuki). But, even if no translation is offered, we suggest you go anyway—it's a vivid way to experience the living culture of old Japan.

To see contemporary dance performances, ballet and opera in Tokyo, visit the New National Theatre Tokyo.

Theater

National Noh Theatre

4-18-1 Sendagaya (near Sendagaya station on the JR Sobu and Chuo lines or Kokuritsu Kyogijo on the Oedo line), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3230-3000 for tickets

<http://www.ntj.jac.go.jp>

This offshoot of the National Theater was completed in 1983, specifically to house and promote the art of Noh.

Performances offered on an irregular basis, but there are usually about four to five every month. Tickets vary by performance, but start at ¥3,000–¥6,000 for most performances.

National Theatre of Japan

4-1 Hayabusacho (near Nagatacho station on the Yurakucho, Hanzomon and Namboku lines or Hanzomon station on the Hanzomon line), Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3230-3000 for tickets

<http://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/english/index.html>



This theater has several performance halls for Kabuki and Bunraku, as well as other traditional Japanese performing arts such as traditional Japanese dance and court music. The schedule is irregular, so call or check online for up-to-date performance schedules.

Tickets run ¥1,800-¥13,000 for Kabuki, with English audioguides available for ¥700.

Takarazuka Theater

1-1-3 Yurakucho (Yurakucho station on the JR Yamanote line, or Hibiya station on the Chiyoda, Mita and Hibiya lines), Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5251-2001

<http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english>

Takarazuka is a nontraditional stage extravaganza of song, dance and drama, with all parts played by women. The troupes have quite a fan base, so expect queues outside. Ticket reservations are recommended.

Call for performance schedule. Tickets run ¥3,500-¥12,000.

Other Options

Garcon Pub

2-6 Nishi-Shinjuku (Sumitomo Building; Tochomae station on the Oedo line), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3344-6591

<http://www.garconpub.com>

This is a club with a variety of performers, including men dressed as women. Role changes are a traditional part of Japanese theater. (The women's parts in Noh and Kabuki are performed by men, and the men's parts in the *Takarazuka* revue are performed by women.) It might throw you at first, but it's great fun when you get into the swing of things. There are two separate shows each evening, each lasting about 50 minutes.

Monday-Saturday doors open at 6 pm; show times 7:30 and 10 pm. Reservations required. Entrance ¥2,000; you must order one drink and one dish; drinks and food from ¥600; 20% service charge added.

Spectator Sports

The most popular spectator sports are baseball and soccer, the latter of which has been booming in recent years. Sumo, although in decline for the past decade or so, still retains a strong following and receives extensive media coverage.

Baseball

There are several city baseball teams. The season runs March-September with finals extending into October, and tickets are available at the box office on game days. It's best to book in advance to guarantee you get the type of seat you want (especially for Giants tickets, which are very hard to come by). Check listings in *The Japan Times* or ask at your hotel's front desk for schedules. Tickets typically



run ¥1,600-¥6,000, depending on the section and the team. For more information on baseball stadiums, schedules and tickets, visit <http://www.japanballtickets.com>.

Seibu Lions

Kami-Yamaguchi 2135 (Kyujomae station on the Seibu Sayama Line), Tokorozawa-shi
Saitama City, Japan

Phone: 42-925-1141

<http://www.seibulions.jp>

One of the most successful teams in Japanese baseball history, the Seibu Lions play at Seibu Dome, in Tokorozawa, just out of town in Saitama prefecture.

Yakult Swallows

3-1 Kasumigaoka-machi (Sendagaya or Shinanomachi stations on the JR Chuo line, Kokuritsu-Kyogijo station on the Oedo line or the closest Gaenmae station on the Ginza line), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5770-5131

<http://www.yakult-swallows.co.jp>

The Yakult Swallows play at Jingu Stadium.

You can typically just show up before a game and buy tickets at the stadium, but do book ahead if the opponents are the cross-city Giants.

Yomiuri Giants

1-3-61 Koraku (Suidobashi station on the JR Chuo, JR Soba or Toei Mita lines, Kasuga on the Oedo line or Korakuen station on the Marunouchi or Namboku lines), Bunkyo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5805-2111

<http://www.giants.jp>

The Yomiuri Giants, the most popular and richest team in Japan, have won more pennants and Japan Series titles than any other team. They play at the Tokyo Dome.

Soccer

Tokyo has two local teams playing in the J-League, FC Tokyo in Division 1 and Tokyo Verdy in Division 2, which share the Ajinomoto Stadium in the western suburbs of Tokyo. There are another five teams in the J-1 top flight within 30-45 minutes of the city center—Urawa Reds, Omiya Ardija and Kashiwa Reysol just to the north, and Yokohama F. Marinos and Kawasaki Frontale to the south. The regular J-League season runs March-December.

Ajinomoto Stadium is located at 376-3 Nishimachi (Tobitakyu station on the Keio Line), Chofu-shi (phone 042-440-0555) For general information on Japanese soccer, visit <http://www.j-league.or.jp/eng/>.

Wrestling/ Sumo

Sumo wrestling is an ancient sport—almost 1,500 years old. There are six tournaments per year—each lasting two weeks—three of which are held in Tokyo at the Kokugikan Hall (during January, May and



September). All bouts are shown on TV (with English-language commentary on the subchannel), but it is much more exciting when seen live. The popularity of sumo has dipped in recent years, so it has become easier to book tickets or even get them same-day at the venue. Check with your hotel's concierge. Unreserved tickets start from ¥2,200, but these are almost impossible to get on Saturday and Sunday matches. Reserved seats start at ¥3,800. Book ahead if possible. Ryogoku Kokugikan, 1-3-28 Yokoami (Ryogoku station on the JR Sobu line), Sumida-ku, Tokyo. Phone 3-3623-5111 for Kokugikan Hall. <http://www.sumo.or.jp/eng/index.html>.

Shopping

Shopping in Japan, like many other activities, has been elevated to an art form. And in Tokyo, you're going to need a lot of cash to express yourself creatively.

The Japanese have a long tradition of handcrafted wares, and they take pride in the quality and the craftsmanship of these items. Some delightful souvenirs include kimono, lacquerware, flower-arranging items from vases to scissors, calligraphy supplies, karate gear, good-luck charms, green tea, kites, woodblock prints, boxes and other items made from Japanese paper, chopsticks, pottery and handsomely printed books. One of the best areas in Tokyo to find high-quality traditional Japanese wares is in the Ginza area, especially down its side streets, while Asakusa is good hunting grounds for inexpensive traditional souvenirs.

All the major department stores carry a wide selection of traditional wares, too. These stores are a treat. Typically, they will have two basement levels dedicated to foods of every kind (with lots of samples), from pastries to liquor to fish to Japanese delicacies. If you ever make it out of the basement, there are floors loaded with shoes, accessories, and men's and women's fashions. Most of them have exhibition floors featuring anything from Japanese swords to Picassos. And there's usually a bargain floor. Above it all you may find a rooftop beer garden (open only in midsummer), and often an amusement arcade, Shinto shrine and pet shop. The arrangement differs from store to store, but most have similar diversions.

Electronics and cameras are not necessarily less expensive in Japan. Before traveling, check the price at your local discount stores for any product you are interested in. You may find there is little price advantage in Japan, even at tax-free prices. However, often you can find the latest, Japan-only items that have not yet been introduced in foreign markets. Most prices at the discount stores are fixed at about 30% off showroom prices, and—though bargaining is not a way of life in Japan—you may get the price reduced a little if you're insistent, especially in Akihabara. Shinjuku has the largest number of camera stores in Tokyo, and most manufacturers have showrooms within walking distance of Shinjuku station. The biggest is Yodobashi, with locations in both Nishi Shinjuku and Akihabara and offering a wide range of electronic goods and other items in addition to cameras. Bic Camera, next to Yurakucho Station, also sells cameras, camcorders, computers and household goods on its eight floors.

Free showrooms for various types of electronic goods are dotted around the city: Panasonic, with excellent displays and even a house of the future, is in Ariake (Odaiba, Minato-ku). One of the most centrally located is Sony, in Ginza, with several floors. It's stocked with trendy gadgets and exhibits (and it's also a popular date spot).

The main area for electronics, especially computers and peripherals, is Akihabara Electric Town (two stations north of Tokyo on the JR Yamanote Line). Although prices are no better than at the large discount stores in other parts of town, the range of products on display is staggering, with stalls and megastores selling virtually every electronic gadget under the sun, from rice cookers to computers.



If you have any thought of picking up great antique bargains, forget it—relatively few of these bargains exist. For years, Japanese residents have been traveling abroad to buy back antiques that streamed out of the country after it opened in 1868, and they're finding that prices are often better overseas. But if you're still interested, check out the Oedo Antique Market, Japan's largest outdoor antique market, at Tokyo International Forum. There are also a number of flea markets, which are gaining in popularity in Japan. These often take place on Sunday in the precincts of some Shinto shrines. Ask your hotel's concierge if there are any going on during your stay.

You'll notice that comic books, called *manga*, are hugely popular with Japanese of all ages. Some *manga* are as thick as phone books. Separate adult editions are sold for men and women, and some can be pretty racy. The Akihabara district is a good area to search for *manga* and anime (animated films often based on *manga*) merchandise and paraphernalia.

Antique Stores

Antique Mall Ginza

1-13-1 Ginza (Kyobashi station on the Ginza-Itchome on the Yurakucho line), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3535-2115

<http://www.antiques-jp.com>

Three floors full of small dealers selling everything from antique furniture to kimono to lacquerware. Some dealers can speak English.

Thursday-Tuesday 11 am-7 pm.

Art Plaza Magatani

5-10-13 Toranomon (near Kamiyacho station on the Hibiya line), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3433-6321

<http://artplz-magatani.com>

If your interests include Japanese curiosities, try Art Plaza Magatani for vintage tableware, armoires and other antiques.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 10 am-4 pm.

Department Stores

Isetan

3-14-1 Shinjuku-Sanchome (Shinjuku Sanchome station on the Marunouchi, Fukutoshin and Shinjuku lines, not far from JR Shinjuku station), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3352-1111

<http://isetan.mistore.jp>

This store, which opened in 1886 selling kimono, specializes in the latest fashions by both Japanese and international designers, and has a good gift area that sells reasonably priced souvenirs.



Daily 10 am-8 pm (restaurants 11 am-10 pm).

Mitsukoshi

1-4-1 Nihonbashi-Muromachi (Mitsukoshimae station on the Ginza and Hanzomon lines), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3241-3311

<http://www.mitsukoshi.co.jp>

Billed as the oldest department store in Japan, Mitsukoshi opened in 1673 as a kimono shop and became a department store in 1904. Housed in a stately 1935 building, it carries many European brands but is also still known for its kimono. There is a smaller branch in Ginza, right on the main Ginza crossing

Daily 10 am-7:30 pm (restaurants 11 am-10 pm).

Takashimaya

2-4-1 Nihombashi (near Nihombashi station on the Ginza, Tozai and Asakusa lines), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3211-4111

http://www.takashimaya.co.jp/tokyo/store_information/index.html

The headquarters of this famous department store chain, founded as a kimono store in Kyoto and ensconced in this lovely building since 1933, specializes in women's clothing—a mix of Western and Asian styles. Several European brands. Nice restaurants.

Daily 10:30 am-7:30 pm (restaurants 11 am-9:30 pm).

Takashimaya Times Square

5-24-2 Sendagaya (near the south exit of Shinjuku JR station), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 5361-1111

http://www.takashimaya.co.jp/shinjuku/store_information/index.html

This is the most popular branch of the department store, with different departments geared to different ages of shoppers. The basement-level food floor is one of the best in the city and a great place to taste free samples of different Japanese foods. In the same complex you will also find a branch of Tokyu Hands, for hobbyists and do-it-yourselfers, a Kinokuniya bookstore and movie theaters.

Daily 10 am-8 pm (restaurants daily 11 am-11 pm).

Markets

If your interests lie in the direction of Japanese curiosities and antiques, go to one of several Sunday flea markets held on shrine grounds and other locations. Your concierge should have more information.

Tsukiji Fish Market

5-2-1 Tsukiji (Tsukiji station on the Hibiya line or Tsukijishijo station on the Oedo line), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3542-1111



<http://www.tsukiji-market.or.jp>

An enormous fish market that's not to be missed. Although the market's tuna auctions are popular in myth, in reality it takes effort for outsiders to see them, as only 120 visitors are allowed on a first-come, first-served basis, and lines can start forming as early as 3 am for auctions that start at 5:30 am; and then you have to wait for the actual market to open at 9 am.

Stroll through the stalls of the market to peer at the amazing array of seafood and watch the fish being carved up into fillets. Knives and all kinds of seafood are for sale in the stalls area just outside the main fish market. Later, have the very freshest sushi for breakfast—you can choose among the many places you'll pass on the way to Tsukiji station. Note that Tsukiji Market has reopened in Toyosu, Koto-ku; check the website for a moving schedule.

9 am-11 am. Closed Sunday, public holidays and most Wednesdays (check schedule on website).

Shopping Areas

Akihabara

Tokyo, Japan

<http://e-akihabara.jp>

Once known as Electric Town but now popularly called Akiba, this area rose to prominence because of its concentration of consumer appliance and electronics stores. As more discount camera and electronics stores opened in other parts of the city—notably Shinjuku—Akihabara morphed into the city's ground zero for computers and gaming. Yodobashi Camera department store sells millions of other things besides cameras. There are still several duty-free appliance stores, which attract international shoppers. But for locals, Akihabara has become a mecca for *manga*, anime and other computer-generated, alternate-reality stores, with associated *otaku* (geek) merchandise.

Ginza

The main avenue running through Ginza, Chuo Dori, is Tokyo's version of New York's Fifth Avenue. Some of its stores are attractions unto themselves, showcasing items such as typical wedding-kimono ensembles and scheduling everything from fashion shows to tea ceremonies. Many major European-fashion and luxury-goods houses have major outlets on the main street, which is home to three department stores: Mitsukoshi, Wako and Matsuya. The small side streets and shops away from the main roads are distinctive. Even if you hate crowds and are bored by retail districts, this area is worth a look, especially in the evening when the neon and shop illuminations are at their peak. Anyone interested in state-of-the-art consumer electronics should drop in to see the displays of cutting-edge gadgetry in the Sony Building. On Sunday and many national holidays the Chuo Dori area is restricted to pedestrians only.

Specialty Stores

Japan Sword

3-8-1 Toranomom (Toranomom station on the Ginza line or Kamiyacho station on the Hibiya line), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3434-4321

<http://www.japansword.co.jp>



This is the place to go if you want to buy a modern samurai sword (*katana*) or an antique, but you'll pay dearly for it. Be aware that buying a sword and taking it home as a souvenir is costly and time-consuming. Because swords are considered dangerous weapons, they require a permit and registration with the police to export, which takes about two weeks. Furthermore, a traditional-style *katana* is high maintenance. If neglected, it can corrode and lose its value. Even the oil from your finger touching the blade could result in permanent damage. So think carefully before buying, or buy a replica sword souvenir that you can take home with you. The store also carries accessories such as sword guards, as well as antique samurai helmets and armor.

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-6 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm.

Kuroeya

Second Floor, Kuroeya Kokubu Building, 1-2-6 Nihonbashi (Nihonbashi station on the Ginza, Asakusa and Tozai lines), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3272-0948

<http://www.kuroeya.com>

Kuroeya has specialized in Japanese lacquerware (*makie*) since 1689. High-quality items include cups, bowls and chopsticks, trays, coasters, boxes and decorative pieces. Check to see whether the piece you're considering is genuine lacquered wood, which is preferred over the more common lacquered plastic.

Monday-Friday 9 am-6 pm.

Mikimoto

4-5-5 Ginza (Ginza station on the Ginza, Hibiya and Marunouchi lines), Chuo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3535-4611

<http://www.mikimoto.com/en/stores/direct/honten/index.html>

The oldest and most famous pearl shop in Japan, founded by the man who produced the first cultured pearl. High quality, high prices and a variety of styles, from casual to formal.

Daily 11 am-7 pm.

Oriental Bazaar

5-9-13 Jingumae (Meiji-Jingumae station on the Chiyoda line; Harajuku station on the JR Yamanote line; Omotesando station on the Hanzomon, Ginza and Chiyoda lines), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 03-3400-3933

<http://www.orientalbazaar.co.jp>

This is the most famous and most comprehensive souvenir shop in Tokyo, with goods ranging from standard souvenir offerings to reasonably priced kimono and *yukata* (casual, cotton kimono worn as sleepwear and outdoors in the warmer months). It also stocks a good selection of Japanese ceramics, as well as antiques and furniture. It offers overseas shipping. Daily except Thursday 10 am-7 pm.



Origami Kaikan

1-7-14 Yushima (near Ochanomizu station on the Marunouchi and JR Chuo lines), Bunkyo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3811-4025

<http://www.origamikaikan.co.jp>

The Japanese have a long tradition of making paper by hand, and this is the place to tour a papermaking workshop, learn the art of origami or purchase some samples. You'll find amazing blends of patterns and colors in addition to wall hangings, mobiles, wind curtains, lamps and other decorative items.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm.

Sagemonoya

28-20-704 Yotsuya (near Yotsuya-Sanchome station on the Marunouchi Line), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3352-6286

<http://www.netsuke.com>

Its specialty is *netsuke*, the small figures or abstract shapes with one or two holes to attach purses and bags to belts. *Netsuke* first appeared in the 1400s and come in many forms, types and materials. Today, they're highly prized collectors' items (and make beautiful pendants).

Wednesday-Saturday 1:30-6 pm.

Sakuraya

1-3-4 Kudan-Kita (across from the Hotel Grand Palace; Kudanshita station on the Shinjuku, Hanzomon and Tozai lines), Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3262-1969

<http://www.sakuraya.org>

Sakuraya specializes in *iaito*, or practice swords. *Iaito* are just as beautiful as real swords. The only difference is the blade: It's made from weighted aluminum and has a blunt edge.

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

Staying well-fed in Japan can be an expensive endeavor, but it doesn't have to be: If menu prices shock you, you can stop at a noodle shop for a tasty and filling meal of *udon* (white wheat noodles), *soba* (gray-brown buckwheat noodles) or *ramen* (Chinese noodles). *Yakitori* (grilled morsels of skewered chicken with sweet sauce or salt) is another inexpensive option, though there are also many classier *yakitori* restaurants serving premium breeds of chicken, as well as vegetables and occasionally beef grilled over charcoal. Another option we highly recommend is to take advantage of the many expensive and famous restaurants that have more reasonably priced lunch menus, often featuring some of the same wonderful



dishes they charge more for in the evenings. Upscale eateries often advertise their gourmet food through such lunchtime specials.

No food is more closely associated with Japan than sushi, making it a must during your visit. Japanese food presentation is one of the most visually impressive in the world, and a plate of impeccably prepared sushi is no exception. You will need to know the difference between sushi and sashimi: Sushi is prepared with cooked short-grain rice (the word "sushi" actually refers to the rice), and sashimi is unadorned slices of raw fish, typically served with a side of shredded ginger. Freshness is paramount for both dishes. According to locals, the quality of a sushi shop can be gauged by how crowded it is, so stay away from places that are nearly empty. You won't find fresher fish than that sold at the sushi shops around the Tsukiji fish market. They're a good value too, although few stay open after lunch, and they're closed on days when the market is closed.

The formal Japanese cuisine known as *kaiseki* developed from the meals served with the traditional tea ceremony. There is also a vegetarian tradition, *Shojin-ryori*, which had its origins in Japan's traditional Buddhist roots. Both cuisines feature artistic arrangements of many small dishes made from fresh seasonal ingredients. Fugu, or blowfish, can be fatally poisonous if not prepared properly (chefs must have special licenses). Usually eaten raw or cooked in hotpots, it might be bland in taste, but many Japanese say it has a slight numbing sensation caused by residual toxins in the meat. Other traditional dishes are sukiyaki (thinly sliced beef cooked tableside in broth with vegetables), shabu-shabu (thinly sliced beef cooked tableside and dipped in assorted sauces) and tempura (deep-fried fish and vegetables in batter).

A traditional Japanese breakfast consists of white rice and miso soup, served with side dishes such as raw eggs, pickled vegetables, seaweed, fermented soybeans and often some fish. However, most Japanese businesspeople are too busy for more than a quick bowl of noodles or a roll and coffee at breakfast kiosks around train stations (and even on larger train platforms). Major hotels usually have a choice of either Japanese or Western-style breakfasts, often served as all-you-can-eat buffets.

It is not impossible to pay ¥1,000 for a cup of coffee at a ritzy Ginza coffee shop or in some of the major hotels. However, there are many Japanese coffee shop chains that offer much more reasonably priced cups of coffee, including Doutour, Excelsior Caffe and Pronto, all with coffee that costs less than ¥300 along with snacks such as sandwiches. There are also international coffee chains such as Starbucks and Segafredo.

Traditional coffee shops (*kisaten*) occupy the middle ground, some of them offering poor, overpriced coffee but providing comfortable settings where you can linger as long as you like—and (more importantly for some) smoke. Many of these old-school coffee shops still offer the traditional breakfast, known as a Morning Set. This meal will comprise a hard-boiled egg, sometimes with some ham or bacon; a "salad" of grated cabbage with Thousand Island dressing; a thick slab of air-light white bread, lightly toasted and served with a pat of butter; and a cup of well-stewed coffee (ask for "American" if you want a cup of the same coffee diluted with hot water).

Tokyo also has its fair share of beer gardens—nighttime open-air restaurants open during the summer months (some of the department stores in Tokyo have rooftop beer gardens). Many charge a set fee for all-you-can-eat meals, though a few allow guests to order a la carte. If you're on a budget, *happoshu* is similar to beer but is a little less expensive because it contains less malt, so it's taxed in a slightly lower bracket.



You'll be happy to discover that the language barrier that makes Tokyo so perplexing at times is not such a big problem in restaurants—many have plastic displays of menu items for you to point at, and English-language menus are increasingly common.

Restaurants are generally open 11 am or 11:30-2:30 pm and 5:30-10:30 pm, except on weekends, when some remain open all day. Few open early in the morning, so your best bet is to eat breakfast at your hotel, at a coffee shop chain, or eat sushi in the Tsukiji fish market.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drink or tax (moderate and expensive restaurants also add a 10% to 15% service charge): \$ = less than ¥3,000; \$\$ = ¥3,000-¥6,000; \$\$\$ = ¥6,001-¥12,000; and \$\$\$\$ = more than ¥12,000.

Local & Regional

Fukuzushi

5-7-8 Roppongi (near Roppongi station on the Hibiya and Oedo lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3402-4116

<http://www.roppongifukuzushi.com>

Elegant but never snooty, Fukuzushi has become a Roppongi institution, both for the quality of its sushi and its relaxed atmosphere. Located behind Hard Rock Cafe, it is a haven of calm that maintains the old traditions. English menu.

Daily 11:30 am-2 pm and 5:30-11 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Hantei

2-12-15 Nezu (near Nezu station on the Chiyoda line), Bunkyo-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3828-1440

<http://www.hantei.co.jp>

Hantei occupies a wonderful, old two-story wooden house in a back street in the historic Nezu district, just north of Ueno. Its specialty is *kushi-age*—morsels of fish, meat and vegetables, coated in bread crumbs and deep-fried. There's an English menu, but there's really no need to order—after the first six items the waitstaff will keep asking if you want more and will carry on serving you until you tell them to stop.

Daily except Monday for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Heirokezushi

5-8-5 Jingumae (near Omotesando station on the Ginza, Chiyoda and Hanzomon lines), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 03-3498-3968

<https://www.heiroku.jp>

Sit at a counter encircling the chefs and pick sushi plates from those going around on a conveyor belt. Heirokezushi is one of the oldest and biggest chains of *kaiten* (conveyor-belt) sushi counters. This branch is very popular (ask at your hotel for the one nearest you).



Daily 11 am-9:30 pm. \$. No credit cards.

Ohmatsuya

5-6-13 Ginza, Nishi-Gobangai Building 7F (Ginza station on the Ginza, Hibiya and Marunouchi lines), Chuo-ku Tokyo, Japan

Located in the heart of glitzy Ginza, this restaurant's decor conjures up the feel of a rural farmhouse (in a very refined way, though). Every table at Ohmatsuya has its own little charcoal grill, over which the kimono-clad waitresses help you cook morsels of meat, chicken, seafood, seasonal vegetables and mushrooms. There are lots of other side dishes that go perfectly with a small cup of delicious sake. English menu.

Monday-Saturday for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Sushiko

6-3-8 Ginza (near Ginza station on the Ginza, Hibiya and Marunouchi lines), Chuo-ku Tokyo, Japan

This sushi restaurant has a rather intimidating appearance and is extremely expensive, but it has been attracting sophisticated sushi lovers for more than 100 years. Servers are very comfortable with a non-Japanese clientele, although there is no English menu. The set sushi menu is highly recommended. Private rooms are available.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tonki

1-1-2 Shimo-Meguro (Meguro station on the JR Yamanote Line, or the Namboku and Toei Mita lines), Meguro-ku Tokyo, Japan

Great *tonkatsu* (big, juicy pork cutlets, lightly breaded and fried) is the house specialty, served with side orders of soup, rice, cabbage and pickled vegetables. This place is so popular, you may have to wait in line a few minutes—but it's worth it.

Daily except Tuesday for dinner. Closed the third Monday of each month. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tsunahachi

3-31-8 Shinjuku (Shinjuku station on the JR Yamanote, Marunouchi, Oedo, and Shinjuku lines), Shinjuku-ku Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3352-1012

<http://www.tunahachi.co.jp>

The best tempura is also usually the most expensive, but this restaurant manages to keep quality high while maintaining affordable prices. The main branch is an atmospheric old wooden building, close to Shinjuku JR station, but Tsunahachi has numerous branches throughout the city. Call for the nearest location or ask your hotel's concierge. English menus available.

Daily 11 am-10:30 pm. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

American

New York Grill and Bar

3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku (Park Hyatt Hotel; Tochomae station on the Oedo line, or a 13-minute walk from JR Shinjuku station), Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5323-3458

<http://tokyo.park.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/entertainment/restaurants/index.jsp>

This favorite restaurant is on the top (52nd) floor of the Park Hyatt Hotel in Shinjuku. The view from every window is spectacular, especially at night. As the name suggests, the restaurant offers a selection of food that you'd find in a top New York restaurant—from grilled steaks to lobster dishes—along with an extensive wine list that focuses on California. The menu changes frequently, but it's the view that makes the restaurant special (and famous, ever since the Park Hyatt appeared in the film *Lost in Translation*). High ceilings and an art-deco-inspired design add drama to your meal. English menu.

Daily 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Roti

6-6-9 Roppongi (first floor, Piramide Building; Roppongi station on the Hibiya and Oedo lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5785-3671

<https://bistrovino.jp>

Simple ingredients prepared and presented with style make this casual American brasserie near Roppongi Hills popular with expats. The rotisserie chicken and New York cheesecake get rave reviews. The bar also stocks American microbrews and California wines. Popular for weekend brunch. Smoke-free indoor and outdoor seating. English menu.

Daily for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for brunch also. Reservations available online. \$-\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tableaux

11-6 Sarugaku-cho (Sunroser Daikanyama Building B1; Daikanyama station on the Tokyu Toyoko Line), Shibuya-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-5489-2201

<http://www.tableaux.jp>

Modern American cuisine with international influences, an over-the-top 19th-century parlor setting and superb service make this a hugely popular success despite its out-of-the-way location in hip Daikanyama. Enjoy jazz and cigars in the corner bar, which is the perfect place to relax before or after your meal. Mostly smoke-free tables and English menus available.

Daily 6 pm-midnight. Reservations recommended. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Asian

Dhaba India

2-7-9 Yaesu (Tokyo station on the JR Yamanote and Marunouchi lines or Kyobashi station on the Ginza line), Chuo-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3272-7160

<http://www.dhabaindia.com>

It's not hard to find either Indian or the local version of curry in Tokyo. But Dhaba India, near Tokyo Station, is one of the few places in the city to offer the spicy fare from Kerala, Madras and the southern subcontinent. The curries are coconut-rich and authentically spicy; the *thali* meals are served with real basmati; and the *masala dosa* are fabulous. English menu.

Monday-Friday 11:15 am-3 pm and 5-11 pm, Saturday and Sunday noon-3 pm and 5-10 pm. \$. Most major credit cards. Cash only at lunch.

Heichinrou

2-11-1 Nagatacho (Sanno Park Tower 27F; Tameike-Sanno station on the Ginza line), Chiyoda-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3593-7322

<http://www.heichin.com/en/index.html>

Excellent, beautifully prepared (and expensive) nouveau Cantonese cuisine in a splendid contemporary setting, halfway up Tokyo's Sanno Park Tower. The chefs, most of whom are from Hong Kong or Guangdong, are particularly strong with seafood. Luxurious dining with great night views. The restaurant also has a branch in Hibiya.

Monday-Friday 11 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10 pm; Saturday 11:30 am-3 pm and 5-10 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Italian

Sabatini Aoyama

2-13-5 Kita-Aoyama (Suncrest Building; Gaenmae station on the Ginza Line), Minato-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 3-3402-3812

<http://www.sabatini.co.jp>

Italian atmosphere in a contemporary setting and great food are the trademarks of Tokyo's longest-running Italian restaurant, open since 1981. It also has a separate, casual pizzeria next door. English menu.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.



Vegetarian

Nataraj

2-22-19 Minami-Aoyama (near Gaienmae station on the Ginza line), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 5474-0510

<http://www.nataraj.co.jp>

You can find vegetarian fare in most of Tokyo's Indian restaurants, but Nataraj is the only one that is entirely meat-free, with most of the organic vegetables grown on the restaurant's own farm. The spices are toned down a bit, but everything is delectable, especially the *paneer makhnwala* (soft curd cheese in a gentle tomato-rich sauce). There are a few other branches, including one in Ginza. English menu.

Daily 11:30 am-3 pm and 6-11 pm. \$. Most major credit cards.

Continental

Cicada

5-7-28 Minami-Aoyama (Omotesando Station on the Ginza, Chiyoda and Hanzomon lines), Minato-ku
Tokyo, Japan

Phone: 6434-1255

<https://www.tysonson.jp/cicada>

Comfortably casual but stylish enough that you'll want to dress up a bit for it, this restaurant serves excellent Mediterranean food with strong Moroccan and Lebanese accents. The *tajines* are great, as is the Maghreb-style flatbread (the first serving is complimentary), and the bar boasts one of the best sherry lists in Tokyo. The staff speaks English (an English menu is also available), and the entire facility is smoke-free. A favorite with the expat community.

Daily 11:30 am-11 pm. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

Japanese people expect visitors from overseas to be polite and respectful (and not too loud), but still to be themselves. However, there are a few basic customs that should be followed.

Most Japanese have studied English, but not conversational English. They are generally shy, however, and many are perfectionists, so if you ask them if they speak English they usually will say no. If you need some help in English you may have the best luck asking a student or writing it down.

When you approach someone, preface your question by saying "Excuse me" (the Japanese translation is "sumimasen," pronounced *Soo-MEE-mah-sen*), because directness may be perceived as rude or intimidating. Knowing a few simple Japanese terms and phrases can greatly enhance your interaction with the locals. A simple "thank you" ("arigato", pronounced *ah-ree-GAH-tow*) will go a long way toward making a good impression in any situation.



Although handshakes are becoming more common, especially with foreigners, the Japanese prefer bowing from the waist to shaking hands. This is not an obsequious gesture, but rather a greeting that acknowledges respect. There are many subtleties to bowing, but the Japanese don't expect a short-term visitor to get it exactly right. For a foreigner, a short bow of the head is all that's expected.

When addressing someone, do so by the last name followed by the honorific *-san*. If speaking in English, it is also acceptable to use Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss. Addressing someone by their first name should be done only with friends or very close associates, and even in this situation it is polite to add a *-san* at the end.

Black ties are worn at funerals. White ties are for traditional weddings. Ties are easy to buy in Japan and are even sold at kiosks in railway stations.

Business cards are exchanged often when people meet in nonsocial settings. Visitors to Japan should carry plenty of business cards to reciprocate on the many occasions when people you meet pass theirs to you. This is a pleasant option for leisure travelers and essential if you are doing business in Japan. Your business card shows your company position—it validates you. There is much to the Japanese card-giving ritual but, most importantly, always treat the other person's business card with importance and respect. Present your card right-side up to the recipient and accept the other person's card with two hands. Examine it for a few moments after it is received and, if you're seated, place it on the table in front of you. Never write on the card while the card-giver is present, and don't put the card away until after the meeting is over.

Always remove your shoes when entering a Japanese home. Some restaurants, temples, inns and other establishments request that visitors remove shoes but usually slippers are offered. Never wear shoes or slippers on tatami. If you're giving a gift to a business associate, do so at the end of the meeting. If you're giving a gift to someone at home, do so when you first arrive. Gifts should be properly wrapped at the establishment where they are purchased, a commonly offered service at most stores.

There are some bad-luck customs that should be noted: Never give four of anything (the number signifies death); never give white carnations, which are used only for funerals (it's best to avoid flowers altogether—candy, especially if it is from your own country, is a better choice); and when eating with chopsticks, never use them to pass food between two people (the only occasion chopsticks are used this way is when a family removes the charred bones of a loved one from a crematorium).

If you're in Tokyo on business and need to entertain local contacts, your best bets are the hotel bars. You might consider purchasing a bottle in the hotel bar. The price includes all setups and snacks, and having your name on a bottle shows that you understand local customs.

Personal Safety

Tokyo has a long reputation for being the safest big city in the world. That still holds true, but crime has been on the increase in recent years, particularly pickpocketing in high tourist-traffic areas like Tsukiji and Roppongi. Nonetheless, commonsense precautions are more than adequate to ensure your safety in Tokyo.

Some places that require a little extra caution are the Okubo red-light district and the Sanya district on the eastern side of the city (well off the tourist trail, this is an area of cheap hostels mostly patronized by day laborers).



Physical violence and muggings are still very rare in Tokyo, and there are few areas where it is unsafe to walk at night. But stay alert at all times in parts of Shinjuku and Ikebukuro, especially in the red-light districts. Late night around the Roppongi clubs can also occasionally turn nasty. Recently, some foreigners have been the victims of sedatives and prescription drugs added secretly to drinks, only to awaken later and find out their credit cards have been used to pay for expensive drinks or stolen.

Be aware that many major parks in Tokyo are home to a large homeless population, and it is best not to wander alone there at night unless there are two or more in your group. Women should also be aware that Tokyo has a reputation for groping (*chikan* in Japanese) on crowded trains and subways. Thankfully, the authorities have started paying more attention to the problem. During rush hour (Monday to Friday before 9:30 am), most trains have a "women-only" passenger car. This is typically the first carriage and is marked by pink signs on the platform floor (where the boarding point is indicated) and on the train. If you're a man traveling at peak times be sure to check for these signs to avoid embarrassment.

As the tragic 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake reminded the world, Japan is a volcanic, earthquake-prone country. For that reason, Japan maintains strict building codes, most hotels are built to withstand even violent tremors and all rooms have bedside flashlights. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with emergency exits on your hotel floor. If you do feel an earthquake, stay inside away from windows and position yourself under a doorway or heavy table. If you're outside, try to avoid tall buildings where falling debris can be a danger. All neighborhoods in Tokyo have emergency refuges, often schoolyards, parks and other public sites.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Health standards in Tokyo are equal to or surpass those found in other highly industrialized countries. Food and water are safe, though pregnant women should avoid raw fish and Japan's hot baths. No vaccinations are needed for travel to or from Japan, although for those staying for extended periods in Okinawa, a Japanese encephalitis shot may be recommended by some doctors.

Emergency health care is readily available. Your best bet when you need medical attention is to contact your hotel's front desk. All of the major hotels in Tokyo have emergency medical and dental services with English-speaking doctors and dentists on call; some have in-house doctors as well. Hospitals are modern and well-equipped, and many have staff that speak at least some English and some have clinic hours for those wishing to see a doctor. For English-language assistance, call the Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center daily 9 am-8 pm. In addition to answering questions about specific medical institutions and health insurance, it also provides telephone translation services for patients having difficulty communicating with hospital staff. Phone 5285-8181.
<http://www.himawari.metro.tokyo.jp/qq/qq13enmnt.asp>.

You also can get medical attention in English at the American Clinic Tokyo, located next to the American Embassy at 1-7-4 Akasaka, open Monday-Friday 9 am-noon and 3-6 pm (phone 6441-0969; <http://americanclinetokyo.com>); or Tokyo Midtown Medical Center in Roppongi, a Johns Hopkins affiliate, open Monday-Friday 9 am-7 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon (phone 5413-7911; <http://www.tokyomidtown-mc.jp>).

Prescription drugs are often dispensed by hospitals and require a prescription in Japanese. If you visit a smaller doctor's office, you will need to find a separate pharmacy, although most pharmacies are situated



near doctors' offices and tend to work closely with the nearby doctor. Many of the drugs that call for a prescription elsewhere are sold over the counter in Japan; conversely, some over-the-counter cold medicines are not legal in Japan.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Although the situation has vastly improved, Tokyo is still not an easy city to negotiate in a wheelchair. Expect to find many steps in train and subway stations. Although elevators are available at most, they are sometimes difficult to locate. Some stations have powered seat lifts instead of elevators. Train and subway stations have attendants who will assist people in wheelchairs, but this is not always the case during busy times of the day. Generally, if a person makes their presence known at a station, the staff will accompany them to the train, and arrange for a ramp and attendants at the destination station. Subway, train and bus compartments have seats especially for the disabled and elderly.

Most sidewalks and subway and train stations have ridged guides on the ground for the blind. Many curb crossings are wheelchair-friendly. On the other hand, side streets are very narrow and often lack pedestrian walk spaces. Only the newer public buildings are equipped with elevators. Most public toilets have modified facilities. Most upper-priced hotels have one or more rooms designed to accommodate wheelchairs (they're referred to as "universal" rooms) but inexpensive accommodations may not even have elevators.

Accessible Japan: Travel Guide for Wheelchair Users is a website with information on wheelchair accessibility at specific hotels and popular tourist destinations in the capital and the rest of Japan (<http://www.tesco-premium.co.jp/aj/index.htm>). Another website, Accessible Tokyo, is a volunteer organization associated with the Japanese Red Cross that collects information on the accessibility of hotels, department stores, museums, parks and other facilities in Tokyo along with other useful information. <http://accessible.jp.org/tokyo/en/index.html>.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Don't bow back to shop clerks or waiters in restaurants. You are the customer, so if you bow to them they have to bow back even lower (and so on). A smile, a nod of the head and *arigato* (thanks) is more than adequate.

Do try those tasty-looking snacks sold from street stalls, whether it's a steaming bowl of ramen noodles, balls of batter containing chunks of cooked octopus (*tako-yaki*) or stews of long-simmered vegetables, fish cakes and eggs (*oden*): They may look and taste unfamiliar, but in terms of hygiene, it is absolutely safe to buy from these vendors. Although there are not many on the street nowadays, they are popular features of Tokyo's many festivals.

Don't expect all sake to be served hot (or even lukewarm). The finest grades of sake—known as *ginjo* or *dai-ginjo*—are always kept in refrigerators, served well-chilled and usually poured into large, single-serving glasses. This is the gourmet version of Japan's traditional tippie, and it's rarely exported.



Do carry a handkerchief with you at all times—public restrooms invariably have neither soap nor towels. If you need a restroom, it is best to visit a department store where you will likely find not only soap but also a "washlet" toilet that will clean with a variety of controllable water jets as you sit. Do try a washlet; you'll most likely find one in your hotel room.

Don't bother to run for the subway or the innercity trains (as Tokyoites do). Unless it's the last one of the night, the next one will arrive in five minutes or less.

Do visit a department store at opening time: You will find the entire staff bowing to you as you enter (remember, just smile—and don't bow back).

Don't try to open or close the door of your taxi; the white-gloved driver does that for you using a lever—without ever having to leave his seat.

Do attend one of Tokyo's many festivals, often held at temples or shrines. In summer, the most popular and widely attended summer festivities are firework displays, held along the Arakawa and Sumida rivers and Tokyo Bay. The Sumida River Fireworks, launched from boats between Asakusa and Ryogoku, has been attracting crowds for more than 250 years. Displays are usually at the end of July or beginning of August.

Don't eat or drink on the subway or train (unless it's a long-distance train). Although you occasionally see younger Japanese having their lunch on the go, it is generally considered bad manners to do so. It's even considered impolite to eat or drink while walking down a sidewalk, though younger Japanese tend to also ignore this nicety.

Do stand on the left on an escalator in Tokyo so that people behind you can pass on the right.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need passports but not visas for visits shorter than 90 days. Visas are required if you're staying longer than 90 days, unless an extension is granted. Proof of onward passage also is required. With the exception of diplomats, children younger than 16, and some other circumstances, every foreigner entering Japan is fingerprinted and photographed. Foreigners are also required to present their passports for photocopying when checking into accommodations in Japan. The departure tax at Narita Airport is included in your ticket price. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

U.S. citizens traveling to Japan are recommended to register their trip through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (<https://step.state.gov>), so that they can receive important safety and security announcements related to Japan.

Population: 9,059,903.

Languages: Japanese. Basic English is spoken by many people in Tokyo and is considered a language necessary for international business. Most people in the hotel and travel industry will have some command of English. Very few taxi drivers or people working in restaurants and stores will understand it. Many signs in the Tokyo area also list the Roman spelling (*romaji*) of Japanese place names as a courtesy to visitors. On trains and subways, English announcements are widespread.



Predominant Religions: Shinto, Buddhist, Christian.

Time Zone: 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+9 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 100 volts AC, 50 cycles. Outlets require the type of plug used in the U.S. Appliances designed for use in North America usually can be used with no adapter, though if it's a three-pronged computer you'll need an inexpensive adapter; however, the difference in cycles means that they'll run a bit slower, but it's usually not noticeable. Many of the larger hotels have a choice of electrical outlets or can supply adapters.

Telephone Codes: 81, country code; 3,city code (dial 03 within Japan);

Money

Taxes

There is a consumption tax of 10% on all purchases, which is included in all listed prices of goods sold in stores. Technically, nonresident foreigners are exempt from the tax for purchases of goods exceeding ¥5,000, but if you're not dealing with a shop that has a rebate counter for foreign tourists or you don't have your passport with you, you'll pay the tax. Department stores, as well as reputable electronics stores, are the best places for duty-free shopping. Restaurants and hotels also levy the consumption tax, but it isn't always included in their menus or tariff sheets. In addition, hotels in Tokyo also levy a room tax of ¥100-¥200 per night per person on rooms that cost ¥10,000 and up.

Tipping

Tipping is one of the few bargains in Japan: It isn't practiced. However, the more expensive restaurants and hotels will tack on a 10%-15% service charge. Taxi drivers don't charge extra for handling baggage and never expect tips.

Weather

The temperate climate brings dry and mild to cold winters, warm and humid summers, and pleasant springs and autumns. Rainfall is common March-October, especially during the rainy season from mid-June to mid-July. The best times to visit are the end of March and April, for the blooming cherry blossoms and pleasant weather, and October and November for changing leaves and similarly enjoyable weather. It can get hot and muggy in August. Winter sometimes brings snow, but temperatures usually only drop below freezing for a few days. Average temperatures: January 42 F/5 C; April 61 F/16 C; July 78 F/26 C; October 68 F/20 C.

What to Wear

In general, the Japanese are easygoing about dress in restaurants and at public events. Very few places have a dress code. If you (as a foreigner) were to show up in jeans for a reception or other important event, you'd probably just be considered eccentric, and your attire would be politely ignored.

When visiting a shrine or temple, it's best to dress in a respectful manner—T-shirts are OK, but don't go in shorts. And in winter, take along warm socks because shoes are removed when visiting many places, and central heating is not common. Hotels may provide slippers, but they're generally tailored for smaller people, so you may be more comfortable if you take your own.



Japanese businesspeople tend to be more conservative than their Western counterparts, but in recent years there has been movement toward more casual clothing. The Ministry of the Environment's "Cool Biz" and "Super Cool Biz" campaigns, which have been running since 2005, have in part spurred this change. The campaign promotes businessmen wearing more casual, cooler attire, doffing the ties and keeping the office air-conditioner temperature higher than normal (to reduce energy consumption). A dark gray or dark blue suit is normal business attire for men. Businesswomen will want to wear suits or nicely tailored outfits (sandals and sleeveless tops are not considered proper office attire), but are not always expected to do so. Outside of business, expect to see Japanese in very stylish fashions. In any case, foreigners are given much leeway.

Communication

Telephone

With the proliferation of mobile phones, there has been a huge cutback in the number of telephones in public areas; however, they are still somewhat common. If you are looking for a public phone, the best place is the subway or railway station, a large hotel or a convenience store. Some will only accept coins, but newer models take prepaid phone cards, too, or only prepaid cards. Buy phone cards at major convenience stores.

Japanese telephone numbers can be confusing. If you're calling a number in Tokyo from inside Japan but outside the city, add the Tokyo area code (03) to the number. If you're calling Tokyo from outside Japan, you'll need to dial the country code (81) and the area code (3) without the leading zero. Toll-free numbers begin with 0120 or 0088.

Japan uses a different phone wireless system from the rest of the world. Using mobile phones locally will require a local SIM card unless you can switch or add to your service provisions overseas before arriving, so it's important to check with your phone company to see which Japanese company has roaming agreements and to see how much it will cost. iPhone users, for example, can rent a local iPhone SIM card from SoftBank (<http://www.softbank-rental.jp>), but only at Narita or Haneda airports (not at SoftBank offices in town). Coverage is usually not an issue in and around Tokyo, but some do experience problems in some areas. For those not willing to risk it, it's easy to pick up a rental piece at a point of entry such as Narita Airport, where there are many companies offering rental phones, SIM cards, and even mobile Wi-Fi routers that allow access to the internet wherever you go (useful for Skype and other Web-based phone calls). Alternatively, you can also have one forwarded to your hotel. It's best to prebook these phones, which offer either preset usage plans or pay-as-you-go options. <http://www.rentafonejapan.com>.

Internet Access

Most major hotels offer high-speed internet access in the rooms; some charge for the service, but an increasing number are providing it free of charge. Most young Japanese use their mobile phones to send mail and go online. Since this may not be an option for your own phone (or will be very expensive due to roaming charges), you might consider renting a mobile Wi-Fi router at the airport, which will allow you to connect to the internet with your phone, computer or other device no matter where you are.

Otherwise, as modern as the city is, there are still very few areas with Wi-Fi, and for tourists, although that is slowly changing with the 2020 Olympics on the horizon: Providing more Wi-Fi for foreign visitors is high on the city's agenda. Around Tokyo, your best bet for free Wi-Fi is at a Starbucks that displays a sticker announcing the free service (you do, of course, have to make a purchase to use the service). See



http://starbucks.wi2.co.jp/pc/index_en.html for a list of area stores and more information. In addition, a rising number of cafes, restaurants and bars offer free Wi-Fi to paying customers, but most require that you ask for the password. Other places with free internet access include airports (both Narita and Haneda airports for Tokyo) and JR stations around Tokyo, including Shinjuku, Shibuya, Harajuku, Tokyo and Ueno stations.

For a list of free Wi-Fi locations in Tokyo and beyond, there's a free app called NAVITIME for Japan Travel, which provides Tokyo subway information, train routes and other useful information in addition to an offline search for free Wi-Fi spots around Japan.

If you don't mind paying for the service, internet cafes are very common in Tokyo, but most people use them to play games or read comic books rather than surf the Web. Most internet cafes include drinks with the fee, and each computer user has his own private booth. Most major shopping areas have cafes situated either below ground or a few levels up. Check the signage on the side of a building to determine if there is an internet cafe inside.

Mail & Package Services

Japan has an extensive and efficient postal system, and all hotels will provide mail and package service. Only major post offices typically process packages, including those in Shibuya, Shinjuku and the Central Post Office west of Tokyo Station. For information on postal service in Japan, including rates and package restrictions, see <http://www.post.japanpost.jp> or call for English assistance at 0570-046-111 Monday to Friday 8 am-10 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-10 pm.

Tokyo Central Post Office

Monday-Friday 9 am-9 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-6 pm; one counter open for packages 24 hours daily. 2-7-2 Marunouchi (just outside the Marunouchi west exit in the KITTE building), Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

Newspapers & Magazines

Tokyo and the rest of Japan are served by two major daily English-language newspapers that can be found at most kiosks and foreign bookstores: *The Japan Times* and *The Japan News*. For local financial and business news, *The Nikkei Asian Review* publishes business information on Japan and the rest of Asia online at <http://asia.nikkei.com>

Many major international newspapers and magazines are available at hotel newsstands and foreign bookshops. *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The International New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Asian Wall Street Journal* are just some of those available.

The Tokyo Weekender and *Metropolis* are two English-language entertainment publications with excellent upcoming events and gallery listings, as well as bar, disco and restaurant listings (although some of these are paid advertisements rather than impartial reviews). Both are available free in some hotels, foreign bookshops and popular expat hangouts. You can also see them online at <http://www.tokyoweekender.com> and <http://metropolisjapan.com>.

Visitors can check out the CNNGo website (<http://www.cnn.go.com/tokyo>) and *Time Out Tokyo* (<http://www.timeout.jp/en/tokyo>) to find out what's going on in the city.

Transportation

The subway and surface train system is, without a doubt, the most efficient way to get around Tokyo. Both are clean, quiet and efficient. However, it's best to avoid rush hours, since they can also get incredibly crowded (and don't even think about taking luggage with you in the morning rush hour). But at other times of day, trains are a much better option than taxis, which are not only expensive (usually ¥730 for the first 1.2 mi/2 km) but often get caught in the tangle of traffic. The rail system may seem complex, but the key is knowing the color and letter codes of the line that stops nearest your destination. Maps are available in English.

One of the best aspects of travel in Tokyo is the people. Most of them will bend over backward to help you. Just point out your destination on an English- and Japanese-language map or show them your destination written out in Japanese by your hotel staff. They'll almost always help you buy your ticket and direct you to the right platform. And don't be surprised if they take you halfway across town, right to where you want to go, just out of kindness—or, sometimes, for an opportunity to practice speaking English.

Air

Most international flights to Tokyo land at New Tokyo International Airport (NRT) in Narita. Narita is located some 40 mi/65 km east of Tokyo, but because of unpredictable traffic, it can take 90 minutes to two hours to reach the city by car or limousine bus. During heavy traffic—which is much of the time—a drive to or from the airport can take as long as three hours or more. For that reason, it is usually more reliable to use one of the train services. If you have an early flight, consider booking a room near the airport for your last night.

Narita has two terminals, each with a tourist information office, ATMs and currency exchange counters, post offices, pay showers, shopping and restaurant facilities, business- and first-class lounges, cell phone rentals and luggage storage. Airlines are assigned terminals based on their partner affiliations, making transfers easy. <http://www.narita-airport.jp>.

Tokyo International Airport (HND) in Haneda used to handle the bulk of Tokyo's domestic traffic but since the opening of its international terminal, the convenient spot is now handling more international passengers. The international terminal has restaurants, bars and cafes, 27 shops and 25 duty-free stores. Although the bulk of the overseas flights originate in Asia, flights from U.S. cities have increased. Haneda is conveniently located between Tokyo and Yokohama, about 15 minutes by bus, train or monorail ride from downtown Tokyo. <http://www.haneda-airport.jp>.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

The most convenient way to travel between Tokyo and Narita is using the commercial shuttle buses (known as Limousine Buses; <http://www.limousinebus.co.jp>). The Limousine Bus Service counter is in the arrivals lobby, and the staff speaks English. Destinations to all major hotels, train stations, and the Tokyo City Air Terminal (T-CAT; <http://www.tcat-hakozaki.co.jp/eng/top.html>) and Yokohama City Air Terminal (Y-CAT; <http://www.ycat.co.jp/en/narita.html>)—which are actually bus terminals—are displayed prominently.



You don't have to be staying at a major hotel to take the bus, and if your hotel isn't served directly, the conductor will put you on a bus to the hotel nearest your destination. The fare to most destinations in the city is about ¥3,100. Buses leave every 30 minutes to an hour or so for each hotel from around 7 am until early or late evening, depending on the hotel. If you miss the last bus because of a delayed arrival, be aware that a taxi to downtown is prohibitively expensive. Otherwise, the last Limousine Bus from Narita to the Tokyo City Air Terminal is around 11 pm.

Other options:

We really don't recommend that you drive in Tokyo, but if you do decide to, cars from most recognized international rental companies and some Japanese companies are available at both Tokyo airports. Car navigation systems are available in some cars in English, but they must be booked well in advance. It should also be noted that driving is on the left in Japan, English signage is limited in rural areas and parking in urban centers is difficult to find and expensive.

All drivers must hold an International Driving License, which must be obtained before you leave home. Anyone staying for more than one year or applying for residency will need to change the International Driving License to a Japanese license. Regardless of the minimum age in your own country, all drivers in Japan must be at least 18 years old.

Both Keisei Corporation and Japan Railways (JR) run express train services between Narita and points downtown.

An interesting ride and a good way to avoid heavy highway traffic, the JR Narita Express, called NEX, stops at Tokyo, Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Shinagawa and Shibuya stations inside the city, as well as at Yokohama and Ofuna to the south of Tokyo and Omiya to the north. The NEX (<http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/nex>) is the most popular way to and from the airport. It's fast, comfortable and convenient. Be aware that you'll have to climb up and down stairs to reach the trains, so this is a good option only if you can easily manage all your baggage. If you are arriving at Terminal Two, be prepared to get on the train quickly, as it will only stop for a minute or so. The trip to Tokyo station costs ¥3,020. If you have a validated JR Rail Pass (you can have it validated at Narita airport), you can use it on the NEX. English-language information is available from the JR East Infoline daily 10 am-6 pm (except year-end and New Year's holidays). Phone 050-2016-1603.

The private Keisei Line links Narita with Nippori and Ueno stations in eastern Tokyo. The Skyliner express takes just less than 40 minutes to get to Nippori and 41 minutes to Ueno, with tickets to both destinations costing ¥2,470. <http://www.keisei.co.jp/keisei/tetudou/skyliner/us>.

It is possible to take a taxi from Narita into the city, but it'll cost an astronomical ¥20,000-¥26,000 (late-night fares are even more). Taking a bus or a train is much less expensive and won't take any longer.

Bus

Few foreign travelers use the intercity buses in Japan, which is a shame, because they are becoming more user-friendly, but they are not as fast as trains. For more rural destinations, travel is only by bus. Tokyo can be reached by bus from some major cities on Japan Railways (JR) highway buses (<http://www.jrbuskanto.co.jp>), but private companies like Willer Express (<http://willerexpress.com>) manage most long-distance routes. Willer Express offers online bookings in English and offers transportation between Tokyo and Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Aomori and other destinations. These leave distant cities in



the evening or late at night and offer reclining seats and restrooms, arriving at Tokyo station and a few other locations around the city early in the morning. There are ladies-only buses available for women traveling alone. For information about JR in English, phone 050-2016-1603 (JR East Infoline) or contact the tourist information office.

Car

Traveling by car is not a good choice in Japan. There are only about 4,065 mi/6,545 km of expressways, and more than 72.8 million cars clog them 24 hours a day. Traffic jams that back up 20-30 mi/30-50 km and last an entire day are not uncommon, especially during peak travel seasons. Toll roads are everywhere, and the prices make driving almost as expensive as flying or taking the train.

If you do decide to drive, rental cars from most recognized international companies and some Japanese companies (Orix, Nippon, Nissan and Toyota) are available at both Tokyo airports and at numerous city locations. Otherwise, a good website with English information on car rental, car types and driving laws is www.japan-experience.com. Drivers must be 18 to rent a car, cell phones are prohibited while driving, and the legal alcohol limit is equal to about one beer. Be sure to obtain an International Driver's License. Driving is on the left side of the road. For information on roadside assistance, visit the website of the Japan Automobile Federation at www.jaf.or.jp/e/index.htm.

Public Transportation

Tokyo's public transportation is fast, clean, safe and convenient to use. Most signs are in both English and Japanese, and transfers between stations are clearly marked. Start with good maps of the rail and subway systems—you can pick them up from the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) or in most subway and train stations, although not all stations have English copies of the maps.

Japan Railways (JR) East runs several lines in Tokyo. The main line visitors are likely to use is the Yamanote line, which encircles the center of the city as it travels to such major stations as Tokyo, Ueno, Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Harajuku, Shibuya, Shinagawa and Yurakucho (the full trip takes about an hour). Two other useful JR lines are the Chuo and Sobu lines, which cut across the center of the city from east to west. Tokyo station is the hub of the system. The other main train stations are Shinagawa, Shibuya and Shinjuku. Fares start at ¥140. For information in English, phone 050-2016-1603 (JR East Infoline) or visit <http://www.jreast.co.jp/e>. There are also privately owned trains operating to destinations outside of Tokyo, such as Odakyu to Hakone.

In addition to trains, there are also subway companies, Tokyo Metro and Toei. Fortunately, the subway system has a coding system that makes getting around much less stressful if you are not very good with Japanese station names. Each line is represented with a letter in addition to the existing color (the Ginza line being G and the Marunouchi, M, for example) and each stop on any line with a number. So, Ginza station will appear as M16, G9 or H8 depending on which line you use to get there (G9, for example, means that it's the 9th station from Shibuya on the Ginza line). A downloadable English map can be found at <http://www.tokyo-metro.jp/en/subwaymap/index.html>.

You can transfer among any of the subway lines and any of the JR trains, but you have to buy a new ticket if transferring between subways and trains. Fares start at ¥170 for subways. Try to avoid the subway at rush hour unless you're curious to see the "pushers" whose job it is to pack people onto the crowded trains.



Tickets for trains and subways are sold in vending machines. Figuring out how to work the machines is the hardest part. The fare for your destination is shown on the wall map above the machines. It helps to know the color code of the station closest to your destination. Insert coins or bills (all the machines give change), press the button showing the required fare and out pops a ticket. You'll need the ticket on both ends of your journey, so don't lose it. If you get confused trying to buy the right ticket (or are in a rush), buy a minimum fare ticket and then use one of the yellow automated fare adjustment machines (usually just inside the ticket gates) when you get to your destination. They operate in English as well as Japanese. Alternatively, purchase a Pasmo or Suica prepaid card for denominations starting at ¥1,000, which eliminates having to buy individual tickets for each ride and can be used for almost all trains, subways and buses throughout Tokyo. It can even be used to buy food and drinks at places that display the "Suica" logo. There are also day passes and tourist tickets sold by both JR and subway companies that are economical for multiple trips in one day.

Although city buses cover far more territory than the subway, they are not recommended unless you can read Japanese. Almost none of the drivers speak English, and buses are subject to the same congested traffic conditions as cars and taxis.

Taxi

Taxis are clean, safe and readily available everywhere in Tokyo. Most hotels and all train stations have a taxi stand. You also can flag down a taxi by holding out your hand. However, the taxis may pass you by to pick up Japanese people—most drivers do not speak English, and some may be afraid of communication problems with foreigners. Because traffic moves on the left-hand side of the street, enter and leave the taxi using the left-hand door. But don't open it yourself—it's operated automatically by the driver.

A red-lit sign in the left front window of the taxi (or on the roof at night for visibility) means it's available; yellow means that the taxi's on radio call and will not stop. You also can order a taxi by phone for a 20% surcharge, but that's hardly ever necessary. There's also a 20% surcharge on fares 10 pm-5 am.

Have your hotel write down your destination in Japanese and make sure to take the hotel's taxi card along so you can get back: Japanese names for hotels are not always the same as the English names, and drivers may not be able to understand where you want to go. Carry an English- and Japanese-language map to point out your destination if necessary. One good feature of Tokyo taxis is that most of them come equipped with in-car navigation systems, so if you give the taxi driver the exact address of where you want to go he can program in the route and get you through even the most confusing of backstreets.

Recently, many taxis also carry an English-language sheet with major destinations written on it, so visitors only need point.

Train

Japan has some of the best train networks in the world—fast, safe, efficient and clean. The main network is operated by the Japan Railways (JR) group of companies, and there are many other privately operated lines. Stations in the city include Tokyo, Ueno, Shinjuku, Shibuya and Yurakucho. Phone 050-2016-1603 (JR East Infoline)