

# 25 hours in tokyo

Not enough time to explore Tokyo? We scope out the essential experiences to make the most of your short stay in this exciting city. By **Michael Franco**



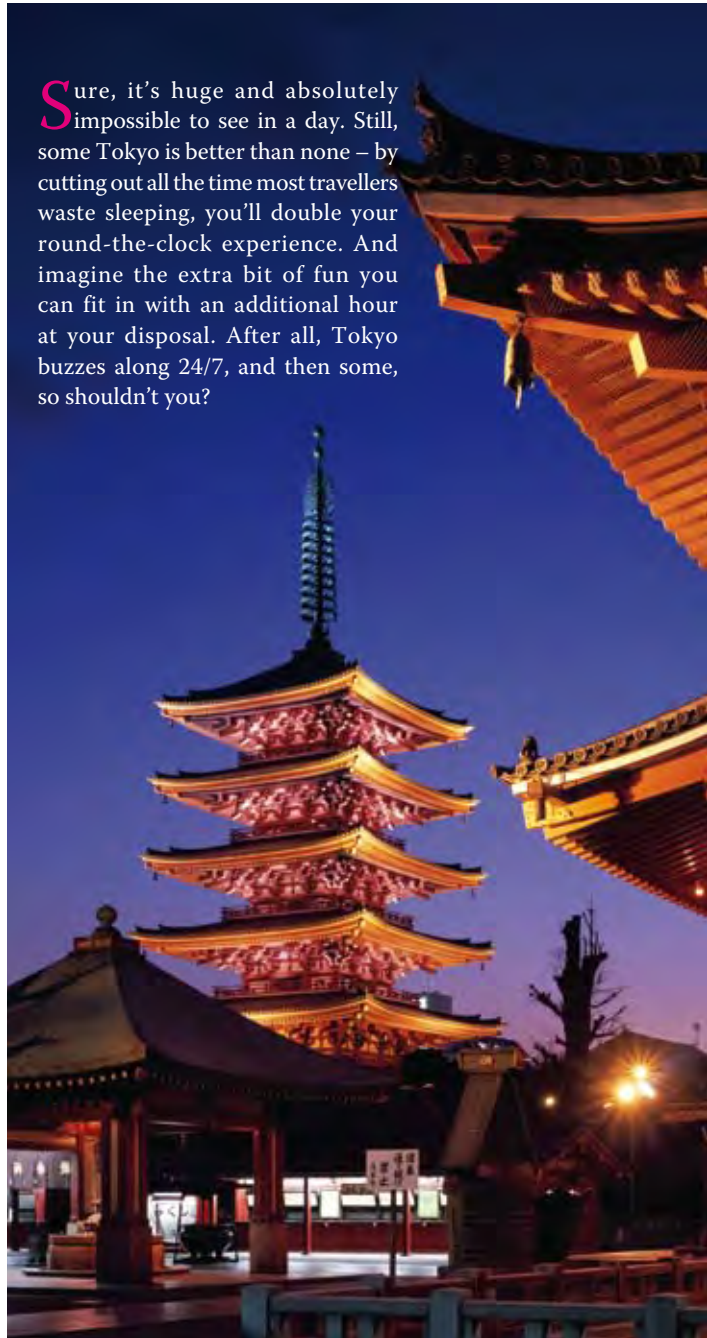
*An auction takes place at a fish market in Tsukiji*

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*A crowded restaurant at Tsukiji Fish Market*

GETTY IMAGES



**S**ure, it's huge and absolutely impossible to see in a day. Still, some Tokyo is better than none – by cutting out all the time most travellers waste sleeping, you'll double your round-the-clock experience. And imagine the extra bit of fun you can fit in with an additional hour at your disposal. After all, Tokyo buzzes along 24/7, and then some, so shouldn't you?



Night view of  
Sensoji Temple  
and a five-  
storeyed pagoda



### 6:00 AM – 8:00 AM

Crowds and sushi. Tokyo is famous for both, so dive in at the famous Tsukiji Fish Market ([www.tsukiji-market.or.jp](http://www.tsukiji-market.or.jp)). Arriving at 6am will give you just enough time to catch the tail end of the seafood and produce auction that wraps up at around 6.30am. After that, wander around the cavernous space where more than 450 mind-boggling kinds of fresh seafood are on offer – some looking more like sci-fi creatures than premium delicacies. And there's no better way to end the tour than by tucking into the freshest sushi for breakfast at the sushi stalls adjacent to the covered market area and along the nearby streets – Daiwa Sushi and Sushi Dai are two popular spots.



Geishas at the  
annual Jidai  
Matsuri Festival  
held at Sensoji  
Temple

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### 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

After the madness of the market – and with your hunger sated – catch your breath at Sensoji Temple, Tokyo's oldest Buddhist temple ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)) in the Asakusa neighbourhood. Next, head to the adjacent Asakusa Shrine and get a pass to Demboin Garden, located near the Asakusa Station. It's a rarely visited enclave complete with an arbor and pastoral pond. When you've finished enjoying this pocket of peace, be sure to walk around Asakusa which, more than any other district in the city, preserves what's left of old Tokyo.

### 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Continue your exploration of old Tokyo, or Edo as it was once known, at the Edo-Tokyo Museum ([www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp](http://www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp)). Here you'll enjoy a striking visual tour of the city from its beginnings in 1590 through to 1964 – the year Tokyo hosted the Olympic games.



**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

History lesson complete, it's on to modern Tokyo. And no visit is complete without a stop in Harajuku, Tokyo's famed fashion and shopping district in the Shibuya neighbourhood. The two major streets leading away from Harajuku station tell a tale of two Tokyos. Takeshita Dori is narrow and lined with bold, outlandish youthful fashion. Omotesando, a broad thoroughfare often known as the "Champs-Élysées of Tokyo", carries the usual international retail suspects. Both roads harbour dozens of quaint cafés, so do grab some lunch. If it's the weekend, don't miss the bridge from Harajuku station to Yoyogi Park, where you'll spot scores of anime-inspired "Harajuku Girls" dressed in an unmistakable style dubbed "Gothic Lolita" or "Gothli". You'll know it when you see it.

Harajuku girls



**4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

After the buzz of Harajuku, you're sure to need a breather— you have a big night ahead of you after all. Why not soak your weary body in the relaxing waters of one of Tokyo's more than 1,000 excellent public bath houses, or *sento*. Onsen Monogatari ([www.oedoonsen.jp](http://www.oedoonsen.jp)) near the Telecom Centre Station offers a refreshing experience in a reproduction Edo-period town complete with water from hot springs. Be careful if you have tattoos though – they are not a welcome sight at some bath houses (like Monogatari) as they are associated with the local mafia.

**6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Kabuki is one of Japan's national cultural treasures, but seeing an entire show can take four hours. Fortunately, the Kabuki-za Theatre ([www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater](http://www.shochiku.co.jp/play/kabukiza/theater)) has the perfect solution for someone with a tight time schedule: single-segment viewings. Tickets can be purchased approximately one-and-a-half hours before each act, known as *makumi*, which lasts about an hour-and-a-half.

**8:00 PM – 10:00 PM**

Time to eat! One of the best ways to feel like a local in Tokyo is to pig out at a *yakitori-ya*, which is basically a watering hole where skewered and grilled chunks of chicken and other snacks are served. A highly recommended spot is Tecchan located near the north exit of the Shimokitazawa Station. Because all parts of the chicken are served, you might want to know that *sasami* is the word for chicken breast.

Omotesando, Harajuku, Tokyo







*Peter, Peninsula Hotel*

### 10:00 PM – MIDNIGHT

By now, Tokyo will be dazzling in its neon evening wear accented with ruby tail lights and emerald traffic signals. To get a breathtaking view of it all, have drinks at Peninsula Hotel's Peter ([www.peninsula.com/Tokyo](http://www.peninsula.com/Tokyo)), a restaurant perched on the 24th floor, where you have a bird's eye view of Tokyo and the Imperial Gardens outdoors. Inside, marvel at the chrome polished trees, interactive video wall, and other avant-garde design touches in the restaurant.

### MIDNIGHT – 6:00 AM

There are countless ways to spend the wee hours in Tokyo. The club land area of Roppongi can be touristy and tacky, but it's hard not to have a good time here. Many clubs stay open until 5am when the trains start running. If clubbing's not your thing, check out the jaw-dropping sound system at Virgin Toho Cinemas ([www.tohotheater.jp](http://www.tohotheater.jp)) where they screen movies 24 hours. If you just want to sit and chill, Kichijoji is an area in West Tokyo chock-full of bars and restaurants where you'll find Funk Step ([www.good24.jp/shop](http://www.good24.jp/shop)) – a live music joint open till the early hours. Not quite ready to turn in? Then greet a new day the peaceful way – by watching the sun rise at the Takeshiba Pier. As the gold and orange rays bounce off the river, you can reflect on what an amazing 24 hours it's been in the Land of the Rising Sun. ■



*Early evening buzz in Roppongi*

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*Omotesando Avenue in Tokyo is home to many international luxury brands*





## THE 25<sup>TH</sup> HOUR

Have a spare hour in Tokyo? Check out these activities. Some are fun, others wild, wacky, even downright strange, but no less quintessentially Tokyo.

### Go to a Sumo Wrestling Practice.

Sumo matches are only held in Tokyo at the Kokugikan Sumo Stadium in January, May and September, but practices pretty much take place all year long at various Sumo “stables”. Morning practice generally begins at 6am. Tagonoura Stable in Koto Ward has a great website and is particularly visitor-friendly. Be sure to email before attending.

[www.tagonoura.com](http://www.tagonoura.com)

### Visit the Meguro Parasite Museum.

That’s right, we said Parasite Museum. Don’t miss the second floor where you’ll learn about the entire parasite lifecycle – complete with 300 actual specimens, including a 30-foot long tapeworm.

[www.kiseichu.org](http://www.kiseichu.org)

**Have a drink at a Magic Bar.** Most bars have one trick – making your money disappear. At magic bars across Tokyo, the tricks are much

more dazzling and if they make some yen disappear, they’ll definitely return – probably inside a piece of fruit or some other unlikely location. The Ginza neighbourhood is particularly rich with such establishments like Conjuror’s, Joker and Toto’s bar.

**Conjuror’s:** B1, 8-5-9 Ginza, Chuo-ku; nearest station: Shimbashi or Ginza

**Joker:** 4F, 8-7-9 Ginza, Chuo-ku; nearest station: Ginza

**Toto’s Bar:** 6F, 5-4-15 Ginza, Chuo-ku; nearest station: Ginza or Yurakucho

### Experience Service in a Maid Café.

These establishments, particularly popular in the Akiba district, feature young women dressed like French and Anime maids who put the “serve” in subservient. The whole thing is a bit surreal and must be seen to be believed. At Cos-Cha’s ([www.cos-cha.com](http://www.cos-cha.com)), the maids have bear ears, and the girls’ costumes at St. Grace’s Court ([www.st-gracecourt.com](http://www.st-gracecourt.com)) are something “holy” different.



Ginza

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**Shop at Nakano Broadway.** *Otaku* is a term for people obsessed with anime, cosplay and manga. You can see the objects of their attention at this mall that specialises in costumes, figurines, vintage Nintendo games and more. Don’t forget to get an enormous, multi-coloured ice cream cone at Giant Icecone (B1).

[www.bwy.jp](http://www.bwy.jp)

Sumo match  
in Tokyo



PHOTOLIBRARY

Citadines Tokyo Shinjuku



### MAXIMUM CONVENIENCE

Discover dynamic Tokyo in a day when you stay in the comfort of the newly opened, centrally located **Citadines Tokyo Shinjuku**. It is within walking distance to the buzzing Shinjuku East area, one of the city’s thriving urban centres. On business or leisure, it combines the convenience of a hotel with the freedom and privacy of an apartment, and is a stone’s throw from

restaurants, malls and the Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden.

Also in the heart of the city is **Somerset Azabu East, Tokyo**. Surrounded by the lush, peaceful Shiba Park, the 79-unit residence in the Minato-ku district is a three-minute walk to the magnificent Tokyo Tower and just 15 minutes to the main Roppongi entertainment district. Just around the corner is **Somerset Roppongi, Tokyo**, which is just five minutes from the Roppongi Station, and close to attractions like the Roppongi entertainment district, Suntory Hall, and Ark Hills.

All three serviced residence properties come with fully-equipped kitchens, home entertainment systems, broadband Internet access and contemporary furnishings. It is cosmopolitan city-living in the ideal private urban retreat.