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## Industry Meets Inspiration In Tokyo

By Frank Johnson

Tokyo just might be the largest city in the world, comprised of 23 individual wards, all with their own unique characteristics. Foreigners are easily intimidated by the sheer expanse of Japan's capital city and its 17 million inhabitants (5 million are commuters); however, due to this volume alone Tokyo has developed an unmatched public transportation system and an intricate network of visitor friendly information resources. The best way to travel Tokyo's frantic bustle is to allow the subway to lead the way. A loose itinerary will draw you into true Japanese life through unexpected encounters and more intimate experiences.

### Tokyo: A Consumer Capital

It may be ironic that one of the most expensive cities in the world also has one of the most rampant and flamboyant consumer cultures. Tourist attractions in Tokyo consist of many gargantuan shopping complexes in addition to the cultural favorites. The Ginza shopping district reigns supreme for ostentatious spending habits, with thousands of mega-stores, boutiques and an excessive array of non-functional novelty stores for the easily amused within us all. For a dose of New York in Tokyo, visit Shibuya, which is rife with higher-end shops, shrines, King-Kong-sized plasma TV screens and the busiest pedestrian street crossing in the world.

### A Culture of Retrospect and Reflection

There is a tendency to become inundated and desensitized by the neon lights that line the city streets like masts in Japan's ocean of technology. While these electric temples serve to extol a hyper-modern age, Tokyo also possesses some of the most idyllic and serene shrines and pagodas in the country. Meiji-jingu is the most impressive of Tokyo's Shinto shrines, built with Japanese cypress and copper plates for the roof. Even though the shrine was destroyed during World War II, the reconstruction has not lost any of the grandeur. Just north of the city, Bonsai Park treats visitors to the zen-like art of cultivating these meticulously placed miniature trees and experiencing the calming of the mind. An essential experience for anyone traveling to Tokyo is the view of Mount Fuji in the early hours of dawn. This is possible from within the city, atop one of the massive skyscrapers such as the Government Building in Shinjuku. Directly in the center of Tokyo, the Imperial Palace (Kokyo) is an inner-city

sanctuary that is home to the Imperial Family. The public can visit the surrounding East Gardens and walk along the double bridge over the tranquil moats of the palace grounds, but the palace buildings and inner courtyard are closed to visitors.

Travel to Tokyo with a willingness to get lost among the hustle and perhaps find yourself again in the silence of a shrine. The expansive city and system of subways make it nearly impossible to make a wrong turn.

For more information on international travel and discount airfare to Tokyo

<http://www.cfares.com/tokyo/>

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### **A Visitors Guide To Tokyo Japan**

**By Thomas Smith**

Tokyo, Japan is an exciting travel destination. Head to the city where the East meets the West but do some planning before you take off.

First of all, travel to Tokyo can be expensive so be sure to do a little checking into prices and comparing of prices before you make your final travel arrangements. For those veteran travelers you will find that many of the hotels are wonderful and less expensive than those in other major cities in the world. Foreign travelers will even qualify for a little discount if the reservations are made ahead of time.

You will also find that domestic transport is moderately priced as long as you choose other modes of transportation over taxis and airplanes. Many hotels have limousine busses to get you to and from the airport or you could take the Keisei Sky Liner train. In the city you may want to use the subway or a Tokyo Combination ticket which is good for one day on a streetcar, Toei bus, JR train or the subway. There are thirteen subway lines and they operate from 5am to a little past midnight. If you are traveling with children from ages 6–12 they will pay half fare prices.

The food in Tokyo is often expensive and that is because most of it needs to be imported. The best thing to do if you are not willing to pay really high prices for meals is to avoid the tourist–trap restaurants and expensive Western–style hotels. Look for the best prices at lunch. The restaurants that serve the lower priced meals will often be the smaller ones and can be found in office building basements and in narrow lanes of business districts. Ask at your hotel desk for recommendations.

Do you have at least one or two days to spend in the city in the role of tourist? Get ready for an

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adventure! Anime is a big cultural rave right now and no one is better at it than the people in this country. If you want to go a little further and see Anime in human form you are in the right place. Head to the Harajuku district and experience Anime in a very personal way. You can also visit Shibuya which is a trendy spot especially favored by the young.

There are many traditional arts that remain popular in Tokyo. There are places to learn flower arranging. You can dress as a geisha and have your photo taken and you will want to leave time to visit traditional sites like the shrines, temples, museums and gardens. These are spots to visit that represent the older aspects of a culture that is found nowhere else on earth.

Tokyo is also a city of the future. You can shop at some of the most fashionable places imaginable in the Roppongi district. Have fun shopping your way through 53 stories and you may want to visit the City View observatory and the Mori Art Museum.

Welcome to the exciting city of Tokyo, Japan!

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