



TRAVEL GUIDE

Tapan

ESSENTIAL SIGHTS BY CITY

Tokyo

Tokyo is a big city in the way of New York or Singapore. Worth a visit? Yes, but only for two days or so.

IMPERIAL PALACE GARDENS

SENSO- JI TEMPLE

UENO PARK

SHIBUYA DISTRICT

KABUKI MUSEUM



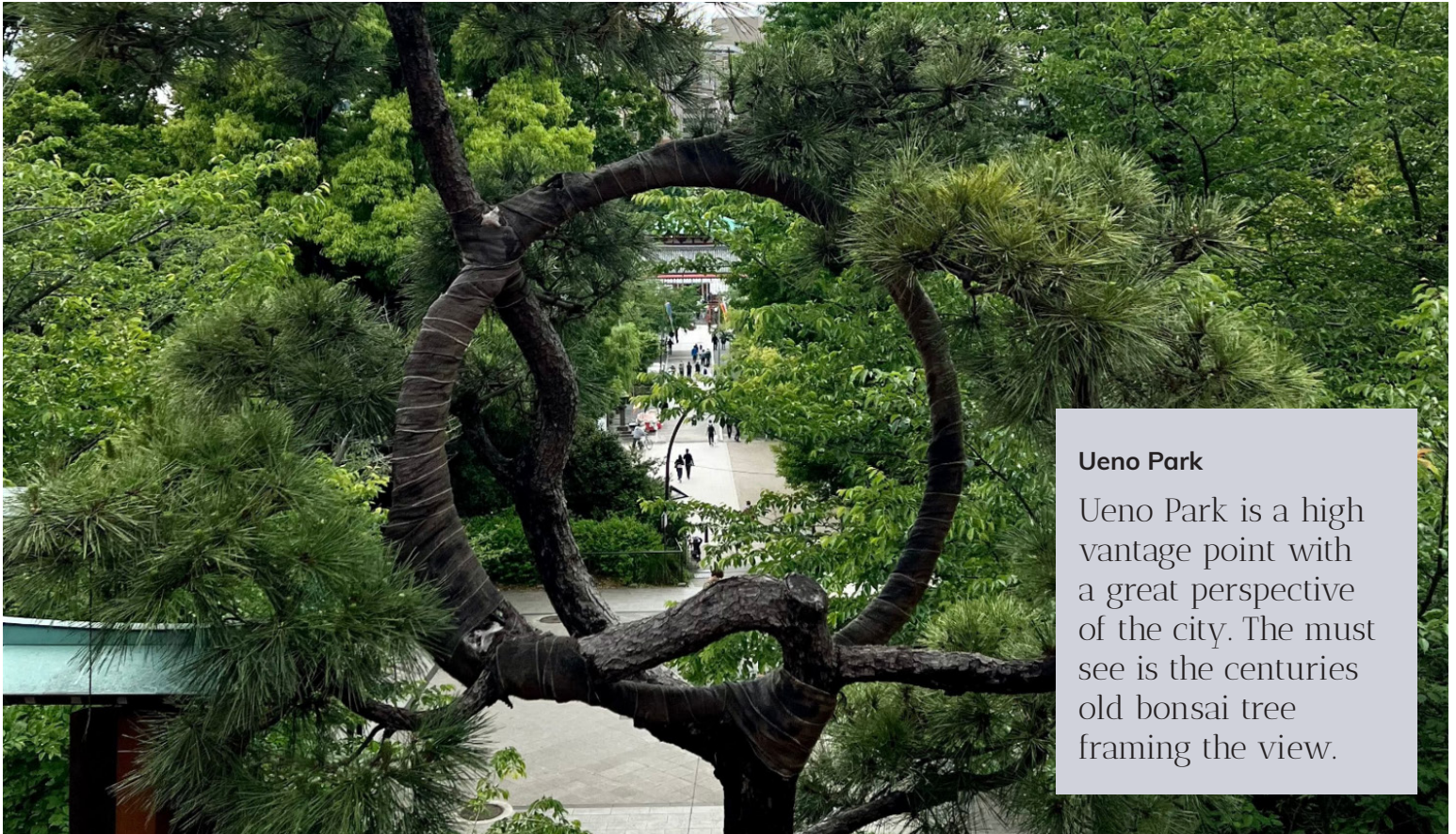
Imperial Palace Gardens

The Imperial Palace Gardens and the Meganeshashi (Spectacles) bridge. You can't see the palace of the current royals, but the ruins of the old gates and the gardens are wonderful.

Senso- ji Temple

The Asakusa area with Senso- ji Temple (the oldest one in the city) and Nakamise Street (an old souvenir street with almost 100 stalls) is a great start to your trip. At the end of the street is Meiji Shrine, with a dramatic 40 foot Torii gate.





Ueno Park

Ueno Park is a high vantage point with a great perspective of the city. The must see is the centuries old bonsai tree framing the view.

Shibuya District

The Shibuya District with the famous "Scramble" and neon lights and signs is a classic experience. Go to the overlook in the Starbucks for a great view back over the square.



Kabuki Museum

The Matcha Tea House inside of the Kabuki Museum is a treat. I might not be a fan of Matcha Tea, but I love a beautiful space.

Old Quarter

Take time to stroll the streets of the old quarter. The shops and buildings are charming, and you never know what you might see.





Heian Shrine

Heian Shrine is interesting on its own - the scale of the courtyard is huge. But the best part of a visit here are the gardens. Laid out alongside pools of water, the foliage and flowers are colorful at all times of year. If you are a fan of Lost in Translation, and I hope you are, you will recognize this place.

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HEIAN SHRINE
KIYOMIZU TEMPLE
KENNIN-JI
NIJO-JO CASTLE
GOLDEN PAVILION
TENRYU-JI TEMPLE
YUSAITEI



Kiyomizu Temple

Kiyomizu Temple, at the top of a hill, offers beautiful views over Kyoto alongside iconic Japanese temple architecture.



Kennin-ji

Kennin-ji is the oldest and most beautiful Zen Temple in Kyoto, featuring rock gardens and Twin Dragons, a massive painting by Koizumi Junsaku.



Yusaitei

Yusaitei (near Arashiyama Bamboo Forest) features several different viewing options of the landscape reflected in high gloss table surfaces and in water. Odd, but actually very enjoyable.



Kinkaku-ji Temple

Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji Temple)--Buddhist temple, became a World Heritage site in 1994 and, although it feels a lot like a movie set, it is not to be missed.



Nijo-Jo Castle

Nijo-Jo Castle, a former Imperial Villa and a UNESCO World Heritage site, with spectacular murals and an interesting display of the life of a Shogun.



Tenryu-ji Temple

Tenryu-ji Temple, another World Heritage site, is at the bottom of the Arashiyama Bamboo Forest and features a beautiful lake with rocks and gardens with a variety of well labeled and interesting plants.

Naoshima

Naoshima is an entire island full of art. It is a very special experience.

THE BENESSE HOUSE MUSEUM

THE ANDO MUSEUM

THE CHI CHU ART MUSEUM



The Benesse House Museum

The Benesse House Museum features many famous artists including David Hockney, Niki de St. Phalle, and John Chamberlain.

Go'o Shrine

Go'o Shrine, designed by artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, is a renovated Shinto shrine with glass slab stairs that run underground to a stone chamber. When you squeeze into the small space, it is intended to be reminiscent of a Japanese Burial Mound.



Kadoya

Kadoya - a 200 year old house with "Sea of Time '98", an art installation of 125 digital LED number counters, each one with a different pace set by an island resident. Each counter goes from 1-9 and then resets to indicate different life lengths. It is actually kind of moving.



Minamidera

Minamidera - named after the temple that once existed on the site. The new building was designed by Tadao Ando with a not to be missed art installation by James Turrell. I don't want to spoil it for you, but it is incredibly unique.

Osaka

Osaka is a big city, but worth a one or two day visit for the street food.



Walking Tour of Street Food

Enjoy not only unexpected food like savory pancakes and octopus balls (for real), but also the local Osaka sights where all the restaurants have massive carved displays of the types of food they serve.



Osaka Castle Museum

Osaka Castle Museum has a panoramic view of Osaka from the 8th floor observation deck. Inside is an excellent history with artifacts about the Shoguns, including battle scenes and miniature dioramas.



Conrad Hilton Hotel

Have drinks at the Conrad Hilton Hotel. The views are extraordinary, day or night.

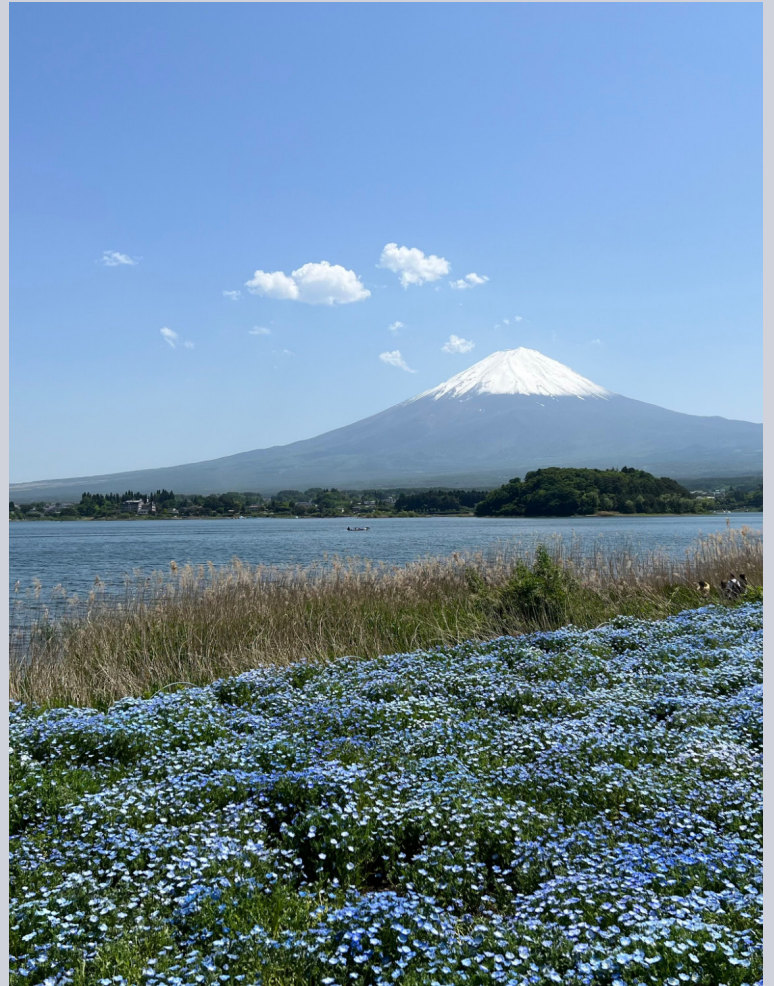
Hakone

Hakone is also a wonderful side trip easily done from Tokyo. There are excellent Ryokans here, so if you are going to try one this is the place. Gora Kadan is the best of the best.



Itchiku Kubota Art Museum

Visit the Itchiku Kubota Art Museum. This quirky building and garden were all designed by Kubota himself, but the main feature are his kimonos woven using traditional Japanese and western methods.



Mt. Fuji

Take in views of Mt. Fuji from pretty much anywhere in town. That's if you are lucky...apparently she only shows herself clearly about 25% of the time.