The MONOCLE Travel Guide Series

Tokyo

It would take a lifetime to get to know every facet of Tokyo, so large that it spreads as far as the eye can see. But look closely and you will find a city of exceptional charm and breathtaking efficiency. The Japanese capital is a fascinating tangle of opposites: the latest technology and traditional arts; crowded stations and quiet backstreets; concrete highways and green parks. Yet it all works like a dream.

Need to know
Get to grips with the basics

01 City sticklers: Etiquette rules here – when riding escalators stand on the left, don’t cut to the front of a queue and be mindful about where you smoke in public.

02 Table manners: Avoid chopstick taboos: don’t point the tips at anyone, never leave them planted vertically in your rice and never use them to pass food to someone else.

03 Stand-up socks: It’s customary to remove your shoes when entering someone’s home. If you want to avoid the embarrassment of padding around in socks with holes, stock up on a few new pairs before you arrive or head down to sock specialist Tabio.

04 Cash out of hand: When paying, don’t hand money to the cashier: you will only be asked for your change. Don’t worry about handing the correct change, it’s the culture.

05 All hail the cab: Tokyo’s taxis are spotless, most are between 2-4 years old and have 8为了让 the seatbelt. If you are unable to fit your luggage and are not able to open the back seat, please ask the driver.

Food and drink
Smart bites and top stops

01 The Monocle Café, Yurakucho
Coffee and katsu sando
At our café in Hankyu Men’s department store you can read the latest issue while enjoying a cappuccino, a taco rice or katsu sando (pork-cutlet sandwich).

02 Ginza Maru, Ginza
Lunchtime favourite
Chef Keiji Mori sources the best seasonal ingredients and even the standard elements of a Japanese meal – the rice, pickles and miso soup - are superior.

03 Sushi no Midori, Shibuya
Chain with charm
For an unupset, satisfying meal try Sushi no Midori. This casual restaurant’s Ultimate Sushi Assortment is a popular choice: fatty tuna, shrimp, eel, unich and a few seasonal specialties.

04 Tamawara, Jingumae
Buckled the trend
Masahiro Arakawa is one of the city’s most revered artisans of soba: noodles made from buckwheat. At his restaurant he mills about 3kg of buckwheat daily from eight farms in Ibaraki, and some from his own fields in Tochigi.

Retail
Shop talk

01 Conbini: Convenience store
02 Famiresu: Family restaurant
03 Gochisosama: Thanks for the meal
04 Jihanki: Vending machine
05 Kaado: Credit card
06 Nama: Draft beer
07 Okawari: Big portion (food)
08 Oshoju: Big portion (food)
09 Suimassen: Please/excuse me/sorry
10 Toire: Toilet

Vocabulary
Local lingo

Hotel
Hospitality at its finest

01 Park Hyatt Tokyo, Shinjuku
Sky-high boutique
Views are an obligatory feature of Tokyo hotels and this one has some of the best. If you want to wake up to Mount Fuji, ask for a Park Deluxe room.

02 Akaoni, Sangenjaya
Top selection
Opened in 1982 by Satoru Takizawa, this restaurant has 80 types of premium saké and a fish menu that changes daily.

03 Palace Hotel Tokyo, Marunouchi
State-of-the-art renovation
For lunch or dinner with a view book a private tatami room at the Wadakura kaseki restaurant. Try the house saké 1-1-1, made for the hotel by famed Niigata brewer Hakkaian.

04 Cinbon, Daikanyama
Made in Japan
Since opening in 2001, interiors shop Cinbon has been a beacon for imaginative retailing with an emphasis on products made in Japan.

05 Postalco, Shibuya
Duly noted
The main shop for Tokyo stationery brand Postalco has a retro feel – think Mad Men in Shibuya – and sells everything from notebooks, wallets and bags to envelope holders.

06 Daikanyama T-Site, Daikanyama
Home entertainment
Tsutaya Books, at Daikanyama T-Site, is a bookshop with few equals. Designed by Tokyo-based architecture firm Klein Dytham, the shop consists of three two-storey buildings with more than 140,000 book and magazine titles.

07 Cerulean Tower Tokyo Hotel, Shibuya
Centrally located convenience
Book the spacious 19th-floor washitsu: a traditional room with a wooden bath. The turndown service involves laying out the futon mattresses and quilts on the floor.

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