

## Tokyo Pulse | July 2024 vol.3

### Tokyo on the Move - Episode 2 by Michael Kanert

#### A Tokyo Anime Shopping Guide



Nakano Broadway

Despite the global popularity of anime — now buoyed by Hayao Miyazaki’s second Oscar, won for *The Boy and the Heron* in March — Tokyo actually doesn’t greet travellers with the plethora of permanent anime experiences one might expect.

Of course, there’s the life-sized Gundam Unicorn statue in Odaiba — which shifts from “Unicorn Mode” to “Destroy Mode” four times a day, accompanied by its dramatic theme music from the *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* anime series.

Visitors can also find tourist-oriented “anime centres” in Shibuya and Ikebukuro.

And there are the Toei and Suginami animation museums, as well as the Ghibli Museum in Mitaka. But tickets for the Ghibli Museum are notoriously tricky — not only

are they in hot demand, they are only available through the [LAWSON TICKETS app](#), which requires a Japanese phone number for registration. If you don't want to get a virtual Japanese number, your only other option is to sign up for a bus tour through JTB — or to know someone who lives locally who can get you tickets and accompany you to the museum.

If you happen to be in the city at the right time, there are a number of events you can access: March is the month for AnimeJapan, the big industry convention, while August and December offer Comiket, a gargantuan amateur manga convention with an equally gargantuan fan cosplay event stealing the limelight outside.



Comiket

There are also countless smaller concerts and events at any given time. But keeping on top of these can be challenging — even if you can read the Japanese event schedules.

So for many Tokyo visitors, the principal way to indulge the anime itch is by going shopping.

There are a number of major retail stores dotted around the city, with Animate being the standard-bearer of mainstream merch. Also offering a selection of manga drawing tools, these multi-storey, blue-signed stores can be found in several corners of Tokyo, with the flagship in Ikebukuro.

For more specific interests, visitors can look to Pokémon Centres and Pokémon Stores, One Piece Mugiwara Stores, Jump Shops, and Ghibli merchandise stores called Donguri Kyowakoku.

These specialized stores can't be found just anywhere, however. Most are concentrated in a few key centres, including the Sunshine City shopping mall in Ikebukuro, another mall called Tokyo Solamachi® at the base of Tokyo Skytree®, and Tokyo Character Street, which is found in the underground shopping centre around Tokyo Station.

For less mainstream anime goods, the best bet is Akihabara, on the city's east side. While the area offers a broad variety of options — including an Animate store — the best place to start is Akihabara Radio Kaikan. Standing right outside the station, this 10-storey building offers floor after floor of anime merchandise both common and obscure.



Akihabara

Those looking for more vintage merch should head to Nakano Broadway on the west side of town. This older shopping mall is full of multiple Mandarake stores offering everything from decades-old action figures to used manga.



Mandarake

A recent addition to Tokyo's anime shopping mix is the Bandai Namco Cross Store, which can be found in Sunshine City in Ikebukuro, with a smaller outpost in Akihabara. These shops offer Bandai Namco licensed merchandise — including Dragon Ball — as well as an extensive selection of gachapon toy capsule machines.

(To be continued next time)

Photo credit: Michael Kanert



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