

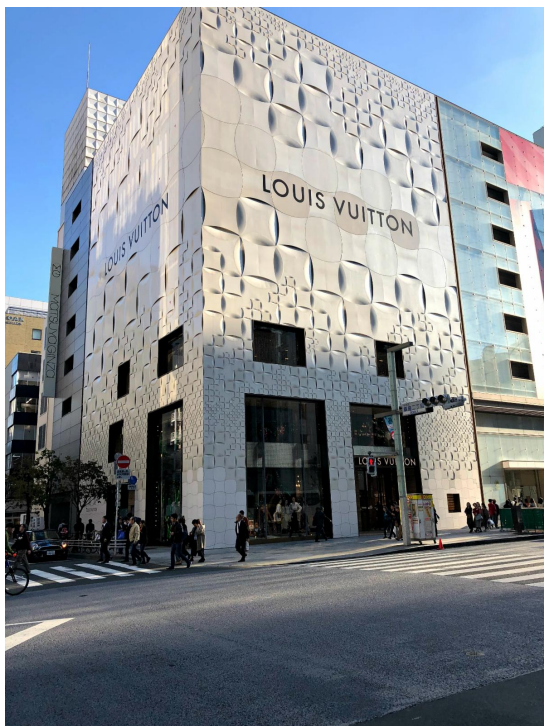
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Tokyo Sugoi! - Episode 10 by Steve Gillick

Tokyo Neighbourhoods: Mini Worlds of Wonder, Part One

Tokyo is a large city, with approximately 14 million people residing in the city proper and nearly 37 million in the Greater Tokyo Area. It's no wonder that Tokyo boasts one of the world's most sophisticated and user-friendly transportation networks. The two major subway systems, the Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway, encompass 13 underground lines and 286 stations. And just about every one of those stations is tied to a sense of neighbourhood, embracing shops, restaurants, bars, shrines, temples, parks, attractions, a community ambiance, and a mini world of wonders for Tokyo explorers.

While the internet is replete with lists of Tokyo's "top neighbourhoods", it's really a matter of enjoying those areas that best reflect the interests of the individual visitor. This, in itself, can involve hundreds of passionate pursuits: food, drink, antiques, shopping, art, strolling, architecture, bookstores, nature, nightlife, adventure, and more. In this vein, this is Part One of some of my favourite neighbourhoods, in no particular order.



Louis Vuitton store, Ginza



A festive atmosphere along the weekend

Ginza is my top choice for hotel accommodations, whether I'm seeking budget-friendly options or the occasional upscale indulgence. Convenient subway station locations allow access to the entire subway network. It's a very short walk to the Tsukiji Market and the Kabukiza Theatre. A festive and energetic atmosphere prevails along the seasonal weekend pedestrian thoroughfare on Chuo Dori, affirming Ginza's renowned reputation as a premier shopping destination, featuring luxury clothing, jewelry, specialty stores, everyday-wear shops, and department stores. And even the side streets are great for wandering, checking out awe-inspiring architecture, enjoying a restaurant or café, and taking photos.



Daikanyama Streets are lined with shops and restaurants



Tsutaya Bookstore entrance, Daikanyama

Daikanyama. The low-rise buildings complement Daikanyama's relaxed "strolling vibe". Streets are lined with shops, cafés, and art galleries. The award-winning architectural design of T-SITE features Tsutaya Books with a wide selection of books, music, movies, toys, and stationery. Brunch, brews, and boutiques draw crowds on weekends.



Shopping in Shimokitazawa



Vinyl Record Store, Shimokitazawa

Shimokitazawa is an older area of Tokyo that has undergone gentrification. It now lays claim to an exciting array of used clothing stores, notable curry restaurants, craft beer, and vinyl record shops. Shimokitazawa has that "place to be" feel to it. Wander, look, shop, eat, sip, relax, and enjoy.



Sukajan Jackets for sale, Ameyoko Market



The Fresh Fish Market, Ameyoko

Ueno happily shows off its multiple personalities. Ameyoko is a bustling street market featuring clothing, shoes, bars, restaurants, a fish market, and an almost carnival-like atmosphere where vendors loudly promote their wares.

Solace is just a short walk away in Ueno Park, featuring tree-lined paths that are resplendent with Cherry Blossoms in the Spring. Lunch can be enjoyed at one of the restaurants, food trucks, or food stalls, and then you can continue exploring. The park is home to some of Tokyo's most famous Museums, including the Tokyo National Museum, the National Museum of Nature and Science, and the National Museum of Western Art.



Mallard near Shinobazu Pond, Ueno Park



Ueno Togoshu Shrine, Ueno Park

Some visitors head to the Ueno Zoo. Birders flock to the area near Shinobazu Pond, where colourful Common Kingfishers (Kawasemi), ducks, and Grebes can be spotted.

The splendour of Ueno Toshogu Shrine, initially built in 1627, is a sight to behold, as are the vermilion Torii Gates, lined up at Hanazono Inari Shrine. The park is also home to Toeizan Kan'ei-ji, founded in 1625, and Kiyomizu Kannon-do, which was inspired by Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto.



The Gorilla Building, Sangenjaya



(from top) Scallops, Horse Mackerel and Hamachi. Assorted Sushi at Uoshin Izakaya



Sangenjaya has something that no other Tokyo neighbourhood possesses. King Kong! We arrived a bit early to find Uoshin, an excellent and friendly seafood izakaya. We asked for directions and were told that it was next to the Gorilla Building, where a giant, King Kong-like figure hangs over a Family Mart convenience store, with a woman in his right paw, whom he has seemingly rescued from falling off the rooftop. It's a pretty spectacular photo opportunity.

There are so many mini worlds of wonder that we love to explore in Tokyo. In Part Two next month, we'll get a taste of more of my favourite neighbourhoods.

*All photos are taken by Steve Gillick, *Talking Travel*



Steve Gillick loves to travel and loves to talk to people who love to talk about travel. He's been at it since 1967 when he visited nine European destinations on a school trip. Steve has had over 370 articles published in consumer and travel trade publications. To date he has explored 85 countries and over 770 destinations. He recently returned from his 22nd trip to Japan. Steve is the author of *A Symphony of Camels: Travel Adventures & Conversations Around the World*, available on Amazon.com

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