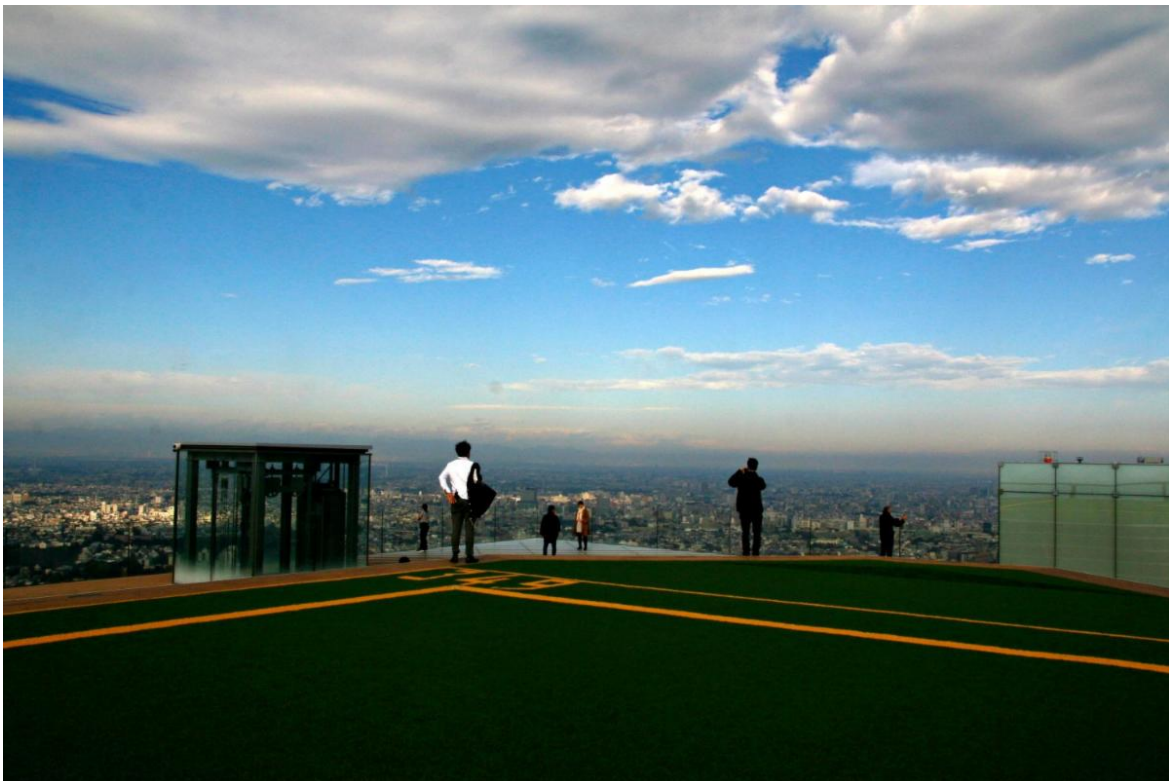


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Tokyo Sugoi! - Episode 12 by Steve Gillick

Refreshing Oases in Tokyo. It's all about *Kachoufugetsu*



Shibuya Sky View

Aside from the name of the British rock band, "Oasis" refers to a lush green area in the midst of a dry desert environment. However, the word can also refer to an area of calm and relaxation surrounded by the high energy and hustle and bustle of a world-class destination, such as Tokyo. This article is dedicated to Tokyo explorers looking to experience both sides of the city.

The Japanese expression "*Kachoufugetsu*" translates as "flower, bird, wind, and moon" and is used to describe the beauty and the wonders of nature. It may be both a surprise and a relief to know that *Kachoufugestu* can appear serendipitously throughout Tokyo.



The bamboo walkway entrance to the Nezu Museum.



Inside the Nezu Museum.



Stone Lantern and Koi Pond in the garden of the Nezu Museum.



Stone sculpture in the garden of the Nezu Museum.

Omotesando, located in Minato, is home to high-end shops, cafes, restaurants, and galleries. It's also home to the **Nezu Museum**, which boasts a notable collection of Japanese and East Asian Art. Designed by architect Kengo Kuma, the bamboo walkway entrance immediately transports visitors out of the mindset of nearby traffic and crowds, leading them to the peaceful serenity of the museum. But even more so, the garden behind the museum, with stone-paved paths, stone lanterns, and koi ponds, is relaxing, refreshing, and reinvigorating.



(left and above) Miyashita Park.



Shibuya is one of Tokyo's main draws. There's so much to see in the area of the famous Shibuya Scramble crossing, including the manga and anime displays in Tsutaya Bookstore, the awesome 3D billboards, and packs of selfie-takers by Hachiko, the statue of the legendary dog. Yet, 229 meters above this scene, visitors peacefully revel in the incredible vistas at **Shibuya Sky**, the outdoor rooftop deck of the Shibuya Scramble Square skyscraper, and a few minutes' walk from the Crossing is **Miyashita Park**, a shopping, dining, and sports facility, with green spaces on the rooftop. It's a perfect, calm, and quiet place.



(above) Sweet shops abound on Takeshita Street in Harajuku.

(left) Tokyo Plaza Harajuku "Harakado"

In **Harajuku**, crowds of locals and visitors flock to Takeshita Street, lined with shops selling avant-garde clothing, cos-play fantasies, souvenirs, and sugary delicacies. It's a fun and energetic experience, but just a few minutes away are the shade trees lining the peaceful paths of the Meiji Jingu Shrine. And not far away is **Tokyu Plaza Harajuku "Harakado"** with a rooftop garden for viewing and unwinding. In the basement is Kosugiyu Harajuku Sento—the public bath—ideal for immersive decompression.



The East Gardens of the Imperial Palace.

After visiting the Nijubashi bridges, marking the entrance to the impressive Imperial Palace, take a short stroll over to the **East Gardens of the Imperial Palace**. Curated, sculpted trees, ponds, stone lanterns, and remnants of Edo Castle tower, along with sightings of Herons, Egrets, and Kingfishers, contribute to the regal serenity of the experience.



Mt. Takao Summit.



The start of the walking path on Mt. Takao.



Tengu mask at the Yakuo-in Temple, Mt. Takao.

Outside the city of Tokyo, but still within Tokyo Metropolis, lies **Mt. Takao**. A visit can be a revitalizing wander, past shrines and temples and on to the summit to view the mystical silhouettes of distant mountains. Visitors picnic at the summit after they have walked, taken the chairlift, or ridden the cable car.



Okutama scenery.





(above) Dinner at Chiwaki. Shibukawani, boiled chestnut covered in bright green tea noodles, with yuzu (a yellow citrus fruit) and succulent boiled peanuts on the side.

(left) One of the waterfalls along the Tama River.

Okutama is Tokyo's "nature" crown jewel. It's about a 90-minute train ride or rental car drive from the city. This can be a one-day or multi-day excursion, featuring nature trails, mountains, shrines, a waterfall, the Mugiyama floating bridge, Lake Okutama, the Nippara Limestone Caves, troops of Macaques, the Sawanoi Ozawa sake brewery (with free tastes), a visit to the Yamashiroya wasabi shop, and dining at unique restaurants, such as **Chiwaki**, that specialize in local fare with mountain vegetables.

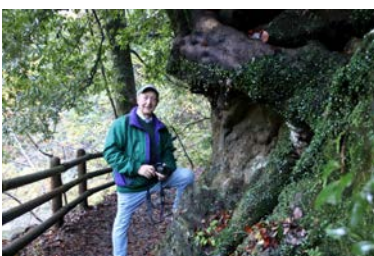


Detail from the Musashi-Mitake-jinja Shrine, Mt. Mitake.



Our room at Mitake Sanso, Mt. Mitake, Okutama.

For overnight accommodations, the steep cable car ascends **Mt. Mitake**, where accommodations, such as **Mitake Sanso**, are located along the path to the summit. Spectacular sunrises can be viewed from the beautiful Musashi-Mitake-jinja Shrine, followed by an enlightening early morning prayer service. The experience is nothing short of moving, meditative, and memorable.



Visitors to Tokyo can customize their own version of *Kachoufugetsu* through interaction with one of the many refreshing oases that the city has to offer. It's an excellent way to connect with the whole Tokyo experience.

(left) Steve is on one of the trails in Okutama. Photo by Mitsuru Sasaki, *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

Steve Gillick,
President,
Talking Travel

steve@talkingtravel.ca



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