

Tokyo Sugoi! - Episode 13 by Steve Gillick

## Hajimemashite Tokyo!



The Main Hall at Sensoji Temple

Hajimemashite (ha-ji-ma-ma-sh-teh) is the polite way to greet someone for the first time in Japan and begin a conversation. Meaning “nice to meet you,” it’s a useful phrase to remember on your first visit to Tokyo—a city rich with memorable experiences, exceptional cuisine, and a variety of accommodations to suit every kind of traveller.

With so much content available—social media, travel blogs, videos, and articles—first-time visitors can feel overwhelmed. Questions about how to get around, where to stay, what to do, safety, and what to eat are common. The key is not to over plan. You don’t need to fill every hour. Leave room for spontaneity: step into a cozy izakaya you stumble upon, enjoy a coffee at a streetside café, or relax in one of Tokyo’s many parks. Often, these unplanned moments become the most memorable, creating a lasting sense of the city’s unique “afterglow.”

Despite its size (roughly 14 million people), Tokyo is considered one of the safest major cities in the world. Whether walking, using public transit, or taking a taxi, visitors generally feel comfortable at any time of day or night. The Government of Canada advises travellers to “take normal security precautions,” similar to what you would do at home. Keep an eye on your belongings, secure valuables, and avoid drawing unnecessary attention. Overall, Tokyo’s safety allows visitors to focus on enjoying their surroundings.



Shibuya Metro Station

## How to get around

Tokyo has a comprehensive and efficient transportation network that includes subways, buses, monorails, trains, boats, and even streetcars. At first glance, the colour-coded subway system may seem complex, but signage is clear, maps are widely available, and staff are often helpful—frequently speaking some English or using translation apps. Stations are well-equipped with stairs, escalators, and in most cases, elevators.

Walking is also one of the best ways to explore Tokyo. Each station opens into a distinct neighbourhood, often with English signage, area maps, and a nearby police box where you can ask for directions. Taxis and ride services are readily available. Your hotel can assist in printing the name and address of a restaurant in Japanese and providing a hotel business card for your return trip.

## Where to stay

A successful stay in any destination is based on "location, location, location." Tokyo is in the enviable position of having numerous distinctive, walkable neighbourhoods that offer excellent options, from budget hotels to luxury properties, easy transit access, convenience stores, restaurants, and shopping.

Here are just a few popular areas, and their attractions.

**Asakusa** - Home to Senso-ji Temple, Hoppo Street, and close to the Tokyo SkyTree and the Sumida River.

**Ginza** – Known for mid-market to upscale shopping, Kabuki Theatre, proximity to the Tsukiji Market, Mitsukoshi, and department stores.

**Shibuya** – Famous for the Statue of Hachiko, Shibuya Crossing, Shibuya Sky, Miyashita Park, SHIBUYA TSUTAYA, and 3D billboards.

**Shinjuku** - A hub for shopping, nightlife, electronics, and major sights such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building.



Shigeru Ito spins the discs at 33 1/3, a popular bar in Shibuya



Assorted sashimi platter at Shibata Wasuke in Kappabashi

## Where to eat

Tokyo is one of the world's great food cities, offering everything from international and local fare, and from fast food to high-end dining, and everything in between. While a number of restaurants provide English menus, others use photos or plastic displays, making ordering easy. Translation apps can also help bridge any language gaps.

The hotel concierge can provide suggestions for restaurants and izakayas. Popular review sites like [tabelog.com](http://tabelog.com) are also useful for discovering places to eat. Reservations may be required. Be adventurous and pamper your taste buds!

## What to do

Research top attractions and align them with your interests—but keep your schedule flexible. One activity in the morning and one in the afternoon, balanced with time for lunch, exploring Tokyo's unique neighbourhoods, shopping, or enjoying a cultural experience like a tea ceremony or sushi-making class, makes for a fulfilling day. Take a break before dinner, then experience Tokyo at night—whether at a bar, jazz club, theatre, or simply admiring the city lights.

Tokyo is such a great city for first time visitors that many return to experience more. Apparently, "hajimemashite" is more than just a first time greeting!

Where to get more information - <https://www.gotokyo.org/en>

\*All the photos in this article were taken by Steve Gillick, *Talking Travel*



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**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 23rd 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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