



TRIP GLOBAL

7-Day Tokyo & Kyoto Itinerary

Tokyo, Japan & Kyoto, Japan · April · 7 days

Tailored for couples - includes romantic spots, intimate dining, and couple-friendly activities

Four days in Tokyo and three in Kyoto, with a different neighborhood or garden to walk through almost every day. Look forward to ramen near the Imperial Palace, Senso-ji by the Sumida River, and a last morning in the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove.

Open the interactive trip: live map, photos and links

Before you go: [Get a Japan eSIM: data on landing](#)

What this trip might cost, per person for 7 days, flights extra:
Budget \$240-270 · Mid-range \$460-620 · Comfort \$810-950
Opening hours, prices and transport change. Please double-check bookings and times before you go.

YOUR TRIP AT A GLANCE

- 1

DAY 1

Shinjuku Gyoen, Meiji Shrine and Omoide Yokocho

Shinjuku, Tokyo · 4 nights
- 2

DAY 2

Imperial Palace Gardens, Museums and Ramen
- 3

DAY 3

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- 4

DAY 4

Takeshita Street, Mori Art Museum and Shibuya Crossing
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DAY 5

Kiyomizu-dera and the Higashiyama Lanes

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- 7

DAY 7

Arashiyama Bamboo Grove and Tenryu-ji
- ?

AFTER THE LAST DAY

Before you go: Tokyo, Kyoto

Shinjuku Gyoen, Meiji Shrine and Omoide Yokocho

Arrival day: an easy start close to your stay

Sunrise 5:10 AM

Golden hour 5:40 PM

Sunset 6:14 PM

Your base for 4 nights: Shinjuku, Tokyo

Walk through Shinjuku Gyoen and the forest path to Meiji Shrine, browse Omotesando, then end in the tiny lantern-lit bars of Omoide Yokocho.

GO

12:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Narita Express to Shinjuku Station

The Narita Express (N'EX) train runs every 30-60 minutes from both terminals to Shinjuku Station. Journey takes 60 minutes, costs 3,070 yen. Skip the airport bus; the train is faster and cheaper.

- Narita Express (N'EX) · 60 minutes to Shinjuku · \$20 per person
- Keisei Skyliner + local train · 90 minutes total · \$10-12 per person
- Airport bus (Keisei) · 90-120 minutes · \$12-15 per person

[Book a transfer](#)

1



2:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden

\$3.40 per person · Open 9 AM-4:30 PM (closed Mon)

A 58-hectare park with 1,500+ cherry trees in full bloom mid-April. You'll see Yoshino cherries, weeping cherries, and locals under the blossoms. A 5-minute walk south from Shinjuku Station's south exit.

Insider tip: Enter via the south gate (closest to the station) and head straight to the French Garden area for the thickest cherry concentration and fewer crowds than the main promenade.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



4:00 PM · 1 hour

Meiji Shrine Forest Walk

Free

A 70-hectare forest of tall cedars around Tokyo's best-known Shinto shrine, with wide gravel paths and a calm main hall. From Shinjuku Gyoen, ride the JR Yamanote Line one stop from Shinjuku to Harajuku, then walk 10 minutes.

Insider tip: The gates close around sunset (about 6 PM in April), so arrive before 5 PM and enter from the Harajuku side.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 1: SHINJUKU GYOEN, MEIJI SHRINE AND OMOIDE YOKOCHO (CONTINUED)

3



5:15 PM · 1 hour

Omotesando

Free

Tokyo's elegant tree-lined avenue of design-led shops and cafes, about 1 km long. Stroll down from the Harajuku end in the late light. A 5-minute walk from Meiji Shrine's south gate.

Insider tip: Duck into the side streets of Ura-Harajuku for smaller cafes and fewer crowds.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4

7:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Omoide Yokochō

Free

A narrow lane of tiny smoky yakitori and noodle counters by the tracks, little changed since the post-war years. Squeeze onto a stool for skewers and a cold beer. A 3-minute walk from Shinjuku Station's west exit.

Insider tip: Most counters seat 6 to 10 people: if one is full, try the next. Some charge a small seating fee.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

If you land early (optional, close to your stay, before the plan above)

Yoyogi Park: A big park next to Meiji Shrine, loved for cherry-blossom picnics in April. One stop from Shinjuku to Harajuku on the JR Yamanote Line.

Takeshita Street: A narrow pedestrian alley packed with vintage shops and crepe stalls in Harajuku. 2 minutes from Harajuku Station; come early before crowds.

[Open Day 1 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to stay in Shinjuku, Tokyo

Book a hotel or capsule in east Shinjuku, near Shinjuku Station's JR East exit. You're 10 minutes from the parks, on the main train line, and surrounded by ramen shops and izakayas for your evening.

Nui Hostel and Lounge Bar

Budget · Hostel · \$

Pod beds available, communal kitchen, walk to Shinjuku in ten minutes.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Book and Bed Tokyo Shinjuku

Budget · Hostel · \$

Budget-friendly pod beds in a bookstore. Quirky, clean, steps from the station.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Hotel Gracery Shinjuku

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Three minutes from station, big rooms, cherry blossom view from select floors.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Richmond Hotel Premier Asakasa

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Fifteen minute walk from Shinjuku, quieter, excellent breakfast included.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Mitsui Garden Hotel Shibuya

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Easy access to Chiyoda district by train, rooftop views, business hotel reliability.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Richmond Hotel Premier Asakusa

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Quieter than Shinjuku, still on the Yamanote loop, near temples for later days.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

[All stays in Shinjuku, Tokyo](#)

[Holiday rentals](#)

Where to eat

Ichiran

Ramen · Dinner · \$

Tonkotsu broth, individual booths, no talking required. Sit, order, slurp. Classic.

[Google Maps >](#)

Shinjuku Sanchoku Ichiba

Casual Japanese · Lunch · \$

Market stall food. Yakitori skewers, fresh tempura. Eat standing up, move fast.

[Google Maps >](#)

Tsukiji Outer Market Tamagoyaki Shops

Japanese Breakfast · Breakfast · \$

Sweet egg omelette, fresh sashimi over rice. Quick, perfect before Meiji Shrine.

[Google Maps >](#)

DAY 1: SHINJUKU GYOEN, MEIJI SHRINE AND OMOIDE YOKOCHO (CONTINUED)

TOURS & DAY TRIPS FROM TOKYO

2-3 HOURS

Cherry blossom bike ride along the Meguro River

The 4km stretch is lined with 800 trees, and a bike lets you cover it all and escape the packed walking paths.

[Book now](#)

3 HOURS

Tsukiji Outer Market food tour and sushi lunch

You'll taste fresh sea urchin, tamago, and toro at a sushi counter run by the same family for 40 years, then walk through stalls of dried seaweed and fresh wasabi.

[Book now](#)

2.5-3 HOURS

Yanaka historic neighbourhood walking tour

This old merchant quarter has wooden buildings, tiny bars, and temples that feel untouched by central Tokyo. A guide shows you places most tourists miss.

[Book now](#)

Imperial Palace Gardens, Museums and Ramen

Sunrise 5:10 AM

Golden hour 5:40 PM

Sunset 6:14 PM

Sleep in Shinjuku, Tokyo · night 2 of 4

Stroll the Imperial Palace East Gardens, spend the afternoon in the Idemitsu and Mitsubishi Ichigokan museums, and finish with a bowl at Ippudo.

1



9:00 AM · 1.5 hours

Imperial Palace East Gardens (Kokyo Higashi Gyoen)

Free · Open 9 AM-4 PM (closed Mon)

Spring cherry blossoms frame stone walls, bridges and traditional landscape design. The gardens open at 9 AM and morning light is clearest. Fifteen minutes by Metro from Shinjuku: take the Marunouchi Line to Otemachi, exit C13a.

Insider tip: Arrive right at 9 AM to beat crowds. Peak blossom bloom is mid-April; check the gate's bloom forecast.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



11:00 AM · 1.5 hours

Idemitsu Museum of Arts

\$7 per person · Open 10 AM-5 PM (closed Mon)

A compact museum with Japanese ceramics, calligraphy and seasonal exhibitions. The rooftop overlooks the Imperial Palace moat in full spring colour. Seven minutes' walk from the gardens; head south past the moat to the office towers in Chiyoda.

Insider tip: Entry is 1,100 yen. Skip the gift shop downstairs; the real view is upstairs near the cafe.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



12:45 PM · 1 hour

Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum

\$7 per person · Open 10 AM-6 PM (closed Tue)

A restored 1894 brick building housing rotating art and design shows. The ground floor gallery and courtyard are free to enter, and the building itself is worth a look. Eight-minute walk from Idemitsu, heading west toward the old city centre.

Insider tip: Free entry to the courtyard and ground floor. Paid exhibitions upstairs run 1,500-2,000 yen; this month check what's on.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 2: IMPERIAL PALACE GARDENS, MUSEUMS AND RAMEN (CONTINUED)

4



2:00 PM · 1 hour

Ippudo Ramen (Otemachi branch)

\$6-8 per person for lunch · Open 11 AM-11 PM

Tonkotsu ramen with silky pork broth cooked for hours. Counter seating, quick service, and honest bowls that won't break the budget. Two minutes' walk from Mitsubishi Ichigokan, near Otemachi Station. Order the Akamaru Shinboshi: regular noodles, egg and pork belly.

Insider tip: Lunch rush is 12-1 PM, then again at 5-6 PM. Come at 2 PM to walk straight in. Budget 950 yen.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



5:15 PM · 1.5 hours

Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building (Tocho)

Free · Open 9 AM-11 PM (observation deck)

Free observation deck on the 45th floor with 360-degree views of the city and surrounding mountains. On a clear April evening, you'll see cherry blossoms in parks across Tokyo and Mount Fuji in the distance. Twelve minutes by Metro from Otemachi: Marunouchi Line back to Shinjuku, exit to Tocho.

Insider tip: Golden hour starts around 5:40 PM. Arrive by 5:15 to claim a window spot before the evening rush. North observation deck has fewer crowds than south.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 2 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Ichiran

Ramen · Lunch · \$

Tonkotsu ramen with rich pork broth. Sit at the counter, order the classic bowl.

[Google Maps >](#)

Cafe de l'Ambre

Cafe · Breakfast · \$\$

Specialty coffee and light pastries near the Imperial Palace. Open early, quiet morning spot.

[Google Maps >](#)

Momiji

Japanese · Dinner · \$\$

Kaiseki-style small plates with seasonal ingredients. Traditional setting, booking recommended.

[Google Maps >](#)

Senso-ji, Sumida Park and Rikugien

Sunrise 5:10 AM

Golden hour 5:40 PM

Sunset 6:14 PM

Sleep in Shinjuku, Tokyo · night 3 of 4

Visit Senso-ji in Asakusa, walk along the Sumida River through Sumida Park, have dinner at Imasa, then spend the evening in Rikugien.

1



7:00 AM · 1.5 hours

Senso-ji

Free · Open Open 24/7

Tokyo's oldest temple, built in 645. Arrive by 7 AM to see the grounds quiet and catch morning light on the lantern and pagoda. The 100-meter shopping arcade Nakamise opens early. From Shinjuku, take the JR Yamanote line to Taito station, then walk 5 minutes.

Insider tip: Go straight up the left side of the approach (Nakamise) to avoid the growing crowd and reach the main hall first.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



8:45 AM · 1 hour

Sumida Park

Free

650 cherry trees line both banks of the Sumida River, peak bloom in early April. Walk the north embankment where trees arch over the water and fewer tourists gather. From Senso-ji, walk east 8 minutes to the river's edge near Azuma Bridge.

Insider tip: The east bank (away from the main road) has denser blossoms and better photo angles with the water in the frame.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



11:00 AM · 1 hour

Imasa

\$20-27 per person for lunch · Open 11 AM-3 PM, 5 PM-11 PM (closed Wed)

A 70-year-old ramen shop in a backstreet north of Asakusa, famous for rich tonkotsu (pork bone) broth and springy noodles. Lunch lines form by noon. A 15-minute walk from Sumida Park, northwest toward Kuramae station.

Insider tip: Order the tonkotsu ramen (900 yen); ask for a firmer noodle texture (katai) if you like it chewy.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

PREFER A GUIDE? · 1.5-2 HOURS

Rikugien Garden guided walk

This quiet stroll garden is stunning in April and far less crowded than the touristy ones. A guide explains the design and seasonal plants.

[Book this tour](#)

DAY 3: SENSO-JI, SUMIDA PARK AND RIKUGIEN (CONTINUED)

4



1:00 PM · 1.5 hours

Rikugien

\$2 per person · Open 9 AM-4 PM (closed Mon)

A Edo-period stroll garden with a pond, stone bridge, and manicured pines. Cherry trees bloom around the water in early April. A 12-minute walk from Imasa, or take the Oedo line from Kuramae to Iidabashi (3 stops, 5 minutes), then walk 7 minutes.

Insider tip: Walk the path anti-clockwise from the main gate to see the pond and bridge from the best angles; skip crowds by starting at the quieter south end.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



5:30 PM · 1 hour

Sumida River embankment

Free

Return to the river at 5:30 PM for golden hour. Blossoms glow pink against the sunset, and evening lamps light the promenade. Cycle or walk south from Rikugien back toward Azuma Bridge (20 minutes by train and foot, or 30-minute walk).

Insider tip: Stop at the small bench area just north of Azuma Bridge, facing west, for the best golden-hour light on the blossoms.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

6



7:00 PM · 1.5 hours

[Book ahead](#)

Shiitake

\$27-40 per person for dinner · Open 5 PM-11 PM (closed Mon)

Intimate 8-seat counter restaurant in a 40-year-old wooden building near Kuramae, serving refined comfort food with seasonal vegetables and slow-cooked broths. From the riverside, take the Oedo line from Kuramae to Kuramae (1 stop), then walk 3 minutes.

Insider tip: Reserve ahead by phone (03-3845-7379); ask the chef what's seasonal and trust the omakase-style menu.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 3 as a route in Google Maps](#)

DAY 3: SENSO-JI, SUMIDA PARK AND RIKUGIEN (CONTINUED)

Where to eat

Ichiran Ramen

Ramen · Lunch · \$

Tonkotsu broth, rich and silky. Sit at the counter, order the chashu ramen.

[Google Maps >](#)

Nakamise-dori Food Stalls

Street Food / Japanese Snacks · Afternoon · \$

Ningyoyaki and senbei crackers. Walk the arcade, graze as you explore Senso-ji.

[Google Maps >](#)

Asakusa Mugitoro

Traditional Japanese · Dinner · \$\$

Tororo (grated yam) dishes, tempura. Book ahead, views of Sumida River.

[Google Maps >](#)

Takeshita Street, Mori Art Museum and Shibuya Crossing

Sunrise 5:10 AM

Golden hour 5:40 PM

Sunset 6:14 PM

Sleep in Shinjuku, Tokyo · night 4 of 4

Start with the crowds on Takeshita Street, lunch at Gonpachi, take in the Mori Art Museum, and cross Shibuya at dusk.

1



10:15 AM · 60 minutes

Takeshita Street

Free (shopping street)

Harajuku's pedestrian alley packed with youth culture, fast fashion, and crepe stands. It's chaotic but essential for modern Tokyo. Five-minute walk north from Omotesando Station.

Insider tip: Go now, before 11 AM, or it becomes shoulder-to-shoulder by noon. Skip the long-queue crepe shops; grab one from a side stall.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



1:00 PM · 60 minutes

Gonpachi Nishi-Azabu

\$23-33 per person for lunch/drinks · Open 11 AM-3 AM

Lively izakaya in a converted warehouse with yakitori, grilled skewers, and sake flights. Lunch here is fast and energetic, a break before afternoon exploration. A 12-minute walk south from Meiji Shrine via Roppongi-dori.

Insider tip: Order the yakitori skewers (negima and tsukune are reliable), and ask for a sake flight if you're curious about regional differences.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3



2:45 PM · 90 minutes

Book ahead

Mori Art Museum

\$12 per person · Open 10 AM-10 PM (closed Tue)

Contemporary art in a sleek space on the 52nd floor of Roppongi Hills, with skyline views through floor-to-ceiling windows. Exhibitions rotate every few months. A 5-minute walk south from Gonpachi Nishi-Azabu.

Insider tip: The cafe on the 52nd floor is pricey but worth 20 minutes for coffee and the view; check the current exhibition online before you go.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

PREFER A GUIDE? · 3 HOURS

Guided early-morning ramen tour in Shibuya

You'll hit three family-run ramen spots before crowds arrive and eat with locals who know the real order to try them in.

[Book this tour](#)

4



5:00 PM · 30 minutes

Shibuya Crossing

Free

The world's busiest intersection, best seen from the Starbucks overlooking it or the pedestrian bridge for a ground-level plunge. Five-minute train ride from Roppongi Hills Station to Shibuya Station (Hibiya Line), then a 5-minute walk to the crossing.

Insider tip: Go as golden hour hits (around 5:40 PM) when the light softens the scene and fewer tourists crowd the overlook. Skip the Starbucks line; stand on the upper pedestrian bridge instead.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



6:00 PM · 40 minutes

Ichiran Ramen (Shibuya)

\$6-8 per person for dinner · Open 11 AM-11:30 PM

No-frills tonkotsu ramen specialist with a counter setup where you order via ticket machine and eat alone in a booth. Rich, clean broth and firm noodles. A 3-minute walk from Shibuya Crossing, south toward the station.

Insider tip: Order the regular tonkotsu ramen; add a soft-boiled egg. The queue moves fast even at dinner rush. Pay in cash or IC card.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 4 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Menya Musashi Harajuku

Ramen · Lunch · \$\$

Bold tonkotsu broth, thin noodles, chashu that melts. Queue forms early.

[Google Maps >](#)

Gonpachi Nishi-Azabu

Japanese Izakaya · Dinner · \$\$

Multi-level warehouse space, grilled skewers and seasonal dishes, lively crowd.

[Google Maps >](#)

Coffee Wrench

Cafe · Breakfast · \$

Smooth espresso, pastries, small counter spot in Harajuku backstreets.

[Google Maps >](#)

Kiyomizu-dera and the Higashiyama Lanes

Sunrise 5:27 AM

Golden hour 5:55 PM

Sunset 6:29 PM

Your base for 3 nights: Higashiyama, Kyoto

Head up Sannenzaka to Kiyomizu-dera, wander the old lanes of Ishibe-koji, and have dinner at Gojo Ramen Yokocho.

GO

9:30 AM · 2 hours 45 minutes

Tokyo Station to Kyoto Station by Shinkansen

The Tokaido line takes you 280 km in 2.5 hours (reserved seat around 14,500 yen). Depart 9:30 AM, arrive 12:15 PM. A smooth, fast journey; the view flattens after the first 30 minutes, so eat breakfast on board or pack something.

GO

12:30 PM · 35 minutes

Kyoto Station to Higashiyama by bus

Take bus 100 or 101 from the station bus terminal (south exit) toward Higashiyama. The ride takes 25-30 minutes (700 yen, IC card or cash). Get off at Gojo-zaka stop, a short walk uphill to your accommodation.

- Local bus (D1, D2, or other Kyoto lines) · 30-40 minutes · \$1.55 per person one-way
- Taxi · 25-30 minutes · \$10-14 per person

[Or book a private transfer](#)

1



1:15 PM · 1 hour

Sannenzaka Street

Free

A charming arcade of wooden shops, cafes and restaurants climbing toward the temples. Wander slowly, browse local crafts, and orient yourself to the neighborhood. A 5-minute walk uphill from Gojo-zaka bus stop.

Insider tip: Stop at Kasagiya for matcha ice cream or Vermillion Cafe for a quiet coffee; both have views over the city.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



2:30 PM · 90 minutes

Kiyomizu-dera

\$8 per person · Open 9 AM-5 PM (extended to 6 PM in April)

Kyoto's most famous temple sits perched on a hillside with veranda views over the city and cherry blossoms (peak bloom in early April). Entry is 400 yen. The main hall, lantern-lit at dusk, is most atmospheric now. A 10-minute walk uphill from Sannenzaka.

Insider tip: Arrive by 4:30 PM to explore the grounds before golden hour. The veranda at 5:45 PM catches the last warm light on the city below.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 5: KIYOMIZU-DERA AND THE HIGASHIYAMA LANES (CONTINUED)

3



5:00 PM · 45 minutes

Ishibe-koji Alley

Free

A narrow, lantern-lit lane lined with wooden machiya (traditional houses), some now tea rooms and shops. Cherry trees frame the approach in April. Deeply atmospheric and less crowded than the main streets. A 5-minute walk downhill from Kiyomizu-dera.

Insider tip: Visit between 5:30 and 6:15 PM when the stone lanterns light and the sky softens. No crowds, perfect for photos.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4

6:15 PM · 45 minutes

Gojo Ramen Yokocho

\$5-10 per bowl · Open Usually open 11 AM-10 PM, check specific stall

A compact alley of eight ramen shops (traditional tonkotsu, shoyu, and miso broths) in a restored wooden arcade. Pick one based on the queue or ask locals. Bowls are 900-1200 yen. Five minutes on foot from Ishibe-koji.

Insider tip: Try Gojo Ramen (the namesake stall) for a rich, slow-cooked tonkotsu broth and chashu that melts. Sit at the counter for the full atmosphere.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 5 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to stay in Higashiyama, Kyoto

Book in Higashiyama, the eastern hillside district: it's where the temples are, sunset views are better, and you're walking distance to tomorrow's gardens. Stay near Kiyomizu-michi or Sannenzaka for easy access to shops, restaurants, and the main temple trail.

Len Kyoto Kawaramachi

Budget · Hostel · \$

Budget pods with private rooms. Social vibe, walkable to Higashiyama.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Hotel Gracery Kyoto Sanjo

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Modern comfort in walking distance of temples. Good value, central location.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

Nishi Hongan-ji Hotel Monterey Grasmere Kyoto

Mid-range · Hotel · \$\$

Central Higashiyama location with modern rooms. Convenient for early starts to Arashiyama.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

The Ritz-Carlton Kyoto

Luxury · Hotel · \$\$\$

Luxury riverside stay in Higashiyama. Kamo River views, perfect base.

[Book now](#)

[Google Maps >](#)

DAY 5: KIYOMIZU-DERA AND THE HIGASHIYAMA LANES (CONTINUED)

All stays in Higashiyama, Kyoto

Holiday rentals

Where to eat

Ichiran

Ramen · Lunch · \$

Tonkotsu ramen with rich pork broth. Order the Karamamen for heat.

[Google Maps >](#)

Gion Tanto

Kaiseki · Dinner · \$\$\$

Multi-course seasonal dinner. Kyoto's culinary tradition in one meal.

[Google Maps >](#)

Vermillion Cafe

Light Lunch · Breakfast · \$

Coffee and fresh pastries near Higashiyama. Quick fuel before exploring.

[Google Maps >](#)

TOURS & DAY TRIPS FROM KYOTO

HALF DAY

Cherry blossom bike tour through temple district

You'll cover twice as much ground as walking, hit the best viewing spots before tour buses, and stop for photos without feeling rushed.

[Book now](#)

2-3 HOURS

Traditional kaiseki dinner in Gion

Multi-course seasonal meal in a 200-year-old wooden machiya house; this is how Kyoto's elite eat, and it's one of the best meals Japan offers.

[Book now](#)

2-3 HOURS

Ryoan-ji Temple and Zen garden private viewing

Skip the morning crush at this 15th-century rock garden, a guide takes you at a quieter time to absorb its meditative design without elbows in your ribs.

[Book now](#)

2.5 HOURS

Food walking tour through Nishiki Market

Local guide steers you past the tourist trap stalls to real fishmongers, tofu makers, and pickle shops, plus you'll taste five dishes along the way.

[Book now](#)

Philosopher's Path, Ginkakuji and Nanzenji

Sunrise 5:27 AM

Golden hour 5:55 PM

Sunset 6:29 PM

Sleep in Higashiyama, Kyoto · night 2 of 3

Walk the Philosopher's Path to Ginkakuji, stop for yudofu at Hakusuikan, and finish at Nanzenji Temple.

1



9:00 AM · 2 hours

Philosopher's Path

Free

A 2 km canal-side walk under cherry blossom arches, lined with cafes and small shrines. Peak bloom makes this the highlight of your day. From Kiyomizu-dera, take the south path down and walk 15 minutes to the path's southern entrance near Nanzenji.

Insider tip: Walk north to south for the best light and fewer crowds. The middle stretch around Ginkakuji area has the densest blossoms.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



11:15 AM · 1 hour

Ginkakuji (Silver Pavilion)

\$7 per person · Open 9 AM-5 PM

A garden temple halfway along the path, with contemplative moss gardens and reflecting pools framed by blossoms. Pop in for 45 minutes if crowds allow. It's directly on your walk north.

Insider tip: The sand garden (karesansui) is best viewed from the upper terrace. Go straight there before the garden fills up.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3

12:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Book ahead

Yudofu Hakusuikan

\$17-24 per person · Open 11 AM-4 PM (lunch seatings)

Traditional tofu hot-pot lunch in a wooden house overlooking a garden. Warming and light before the afternoon temples. A 5-minute walk north from Ginkakuji on the main street.

Insider tip: Order the kaiseki set (around 3,500 yen) for multiple courses. Sit by the window if available.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

DAY 6: PHILOSOPHER'S PATH, GINKAKUJI AND NANZENJI (CONTINUED)

4



2:30 PM · 1.5 hours

Nanzenji Temple

\$5.50 per person · Open 8:40 AM-5 PM (Dec-Feb closes 5 PM; Mar-Nov closes 5:20 PM)

A vast Zen temple with a brick aqueduct, koi-filled ponds and a peaceful rock garden. Cherry blossoms frame the main hall. From Yudofu Hakusuikan, head north for 10 minutes to the main gate.

Insider tip: The subtemple Tenjuan has a smaller admission (700 yen) and fewer crowds. The stroll garden there is excellent.

[Book tickets](#)

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



7:00 PM · 1.5 hours

Omen Kodai-ji

\$10-17 per person · Open Usually open 11 AM-10 PM, check ahead for dinner availability

Dinner of handmade noodles (udon and soba) in a low-lit wooden restaurant with a garden view. A calm end to the day. From the path, head south 10 minutes into the village near Kiyomizu-dera.

Insider tip: Order the seasonal vegetable tempura to go with your noodles. Arrive by 7 PM to avoid the queue.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 6 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Vermillion Cafe

Japanese breakfast and coffee · Breakfast · \$

Quiet spot near Kiyomizu-dera. Toast, eggs, strong coffee. Head up before 7am.

[Google Maps >](#)

Okutan Kiyomizu

Tofu kaiseki · Lunch · \$\$

Traditional tofu sets overlooking a garden. Sit by the window facing the cherry trees.

[Google Maps >](#)

Gion Tanto

Kyoto cuisine · Dinner · \$\$

Intimate counter, seasonal sashimi and grilled fish. Book ahead, arrive by 5:45pm for golden light.

[Google Maps >](#)

Arashiyama Bamboo Grove and Tenryu-ji

Sunrise 5:27 AM

Golden hour 5:55 PM

Sunset 6:29 PM

Sleep in Higashiyama, Kyoto · night 3 of 3

Go early to the Bamboo Grove, visit Tenryu-ji, have sushi at Okutan Kappa Zushi, then take a slow walk along the river.

PREFER A GUIDE? · 2 HOURS

Sunrise hike up Arashiyama

Beat everyone to the bamboo grove and catch the forest lit by early light; less crowded, better photos, and you'll have the afternoon free.

[Book this tour](#)

1



7:30 AM · 1 hour

Arashiyama Bamboo Grove

Free

Towering bamboo walls create an otherworldly walk. Go before 8 AM to beat tour groups. From Higashiyama, take the Keifuku Tram westbound toward Arashiyama (about 20 minutes), then walk 5 minutes north from Arashiyama Station.

Insider tip: Arrive by 7:45 AM. The light is softer then, and you'll have the paths mostly to yourself for photos.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

2



9:00 AM · 1.5 hours

Tenryu-ji Temple

\$7 per person · Open 8:50 AM-5 PM

A UNESCO-listed temple with a stunning borrowed-landscape garden overlooking the Katsura River. The autumn maple garden is spectacular in spring too. 10-minute walk south from the bamboo grove.

Insider tip: Pay the 800 yen garden fee if you want to sit in the pavilion. The view from inside is worth it.

[Book tickets](#)
[Open in Google Maps >](#)

3

10:45 AM · 1.5 hours

Book ahead

Okutan Kappa Zushi

\$13-20 per person · Open 10 AM-5 PM (lunch seatings)

A beloved tofu-focused restaurant on the riverbank since 1635. Sit by the water and watch boats drift past while you eat delicate tofu kaiseki. 5-minute walk from Tenryu-ji, heading south along the river.

Insider tip: The lunch set (around 3,300 yen) is excellent value. Try the agedashi tofu. Book ahead on weekends.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

4

12:30 PM • 2 hours

Sagatenryu Park and Riverside Walk

Free

A quiet green space with views down the Katsura River. Cherry blossoms line the water in early April. Walk the towpath south, passing small shrines and tea houses tucked into the hillside. 15 minutes south of Okutan on foot.

Insider tip: Don't rush. Stop at Arashiyama Yoshimura soba house (5 minutes into the walk) for a late snack and a second break if legs need it.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

5



5:15 PM • 1 hour

Togetsukyo Bridge and Arashiyama Overlook

Free

The iconic arched wooden bridge framed by mountains and cherry trees. Climb the small hill behind it for the best golden-hour view of the river valley. 15-minute walk back north from Sagatenryu.

Insider tip: Position yourself on the north bank at 5:55 PM when golden light hits the bridge. Skip the souvenir shops and stay for sunset.

[Open in Google Maps >](#)

[Open Day 7 as a route in Google Maps](#)

Where to eat

Arashiyama Yoshimura Soba

Soba • Lunch • \$\$

Sit by the window overlooking the bamboo grove. Order the tenzaru soba with tempura on the side.

[Google Maps >](#)

Okutan Kappa Zushi

Tofu kaiseki • Dinner • \$\$

Traditional tofu-focused meal in a wooden machiya. Reserve ahead, go early to catch riverside golden hour.

[Google Maps >](#)

Vermillion Cafe

Coffee and pastry • Breakfast • \$

Local spot near Togetsukyo Bridge. Grab coffee and a pastry before heading into the bamboo grove at dawn.

[Google Maps >](#)

When is cherry blossom peak bloom in Tokyo in April?

Peak bloom is usually April 5-15. Check the Japan Meteorological Corporation forecast a week before you travel. If you're arriving late April, blooms will be fading but the crowds vanish.

Which cherry blossom spots should we actually visit?

Skip Ueno Park and Shinjuku Gyoen on weekends. Go to Rikugien Garden (traditional, fewer people), the Meguro River walk at 7am, or Chidori-Hashi bridge. Book Rikugien as a half-day, don't rush it.

Where's the best ramen in Tokyo?

Ichiran (Shibuya branch) or Ippudo are reliable chains, but skip them. Instead go to a small shop in Shinjuku's Memory Lane (Omoide Yokocho) or ask hotel staff for the nearest neighbourhood ramen-ya. Expect a queue, not English, and ¥900.

Do I need to book restaurants ahead?

Yes. Reserve popular spots 2 weeks ahead via Tabelog or ask your hotel to book. Walk-in works for ramen, conveyor sushi, and izakayas, but not for nice dinners in April.

What's the weather like in Tokyo in April?

Expect 10-20°C (50-68°F) with warm afternoons. Pack layers: a light jacket for mornings, short sleeves for midday, and a cardigan for evenings. Bring an umbrella for occasional spring showers.

Do people speak English in Tokyo?

Spoken here: Japanese. English is spoken in hotels, major restaurants, and stations. Away from tourist areas, people are helpful even with a language barrier.

Useful phrases:

- Arigatou gozaimasu (ah-ree-gah-toh go-zigh-moss): thank you
- Sumimasen (soo-mee-mah-sen): excuse me / sorry
- Oishii (oh-ee-shee): delicious
- Eigo ga dekimasu ka (ay-go gah dek-ee-moss kah): do you speak English
- Kurejitto kado wa tsukaemasu ka (koo-ray-jee-toh kah-doh wah tsoo-kah-eh-moss kah): do you accept credit cards

Is Tokyo safe for visitors?

Tokyo is extremely safe. The main thing: learn the basic train rules (no eating on local lines, stand on the correct side of escalators).

What's the emergency number in Japan?

Police 110. Ambulance and fire 119. Both answer in English in big cities, or ask for an interpreter.

Do you tip in Japan?

No tipping at all. It's not expected or wanted in Japan, even at high-end restaurants and bars. The bill is the final price.

BEFORE YOU GO (CONTINUED)

What do only locals know about Tokyo?

- Cherry blossoms peak for only one to two weeks. Check the bloom forecast (sakura.weathermap.jp) before you go and adjust if needed.
- Skip the crowded Chidoriguchi side of Ueno Park. Walk the quieter paths along the pond's east edge, or come after 6pm when day-trippers leave.
- Convenience stores like Lawson and 7-Eleven have excellent, cheap food: the onigiri, bentos, and fresh fruit are genuinely good.
- Many small traditional restaurants don't take cards. Bring cash, especially to older neighbourhoods like Yanaka and Koenji.

BEFORE YOU GO: KYOTO

Will I actually see cherry blossoms in early/mid/late April?

Early April: mostly at their peak. Mid-April: still good but some trees are starting to drop petals. Late April: many blossoms are gone but you'll catch stragglers. Peak is usually April 7-14; book now and don't wait.

Where's the best ramen in Kyoto?

Ippudo (Gojo branch, 5-minute walk from Gojo Station) does excellent tonkotsu ramen for ¥850. It's busy but no reservation needed and the queue moves fast. Go at 11:30am or after 2pm to avoid the lunch rush.

Which garden should I see?

Ryoan-ji is the most famous (rock garden, very zen, ¥800 entry) but book online to skip the queue. If you want something less crowded with water and flowers, Tenryu-ji has a beautiful pond garden and is worth the ¥800.

Do I need to book temples ahead?

No, but arrive before 8am at Fushimi Inari and Arashiyama Bamboo Grove. Most other temples don't require advance booking. Book major gardens (Ryoan-ji, Tenryu-ji) online to skip entry lines in April.

What's the weather like in Kyoto in April?

Expect 15-22°C (59-72°F), mild and dry. Pack layers: mornings are cool, afternoons warm up. A light rain jacket handles the occasional shower, and comfortable walking shoes are non-negotiable.

Do people speak English in Kyoto?

Spoken here: Japanese. English is spoken in hotels, major restaurants, and tourist areas. Smaller ramen shops and local eateries often have no English, but menus with photos help.

Useful phrases:

- Arigatou gozaimasu (ah-ree-gah-toh go-zigh-moss): thank you very much
- Sumimasen (soo-mee-mah-sen): excuse me, or to call a server
- Kore onegaishimasu (koh-reh oh-neh-guy-shee-moss): I'll have this one
- Oishii desu (oh-ee-shee dee-soo): this is delicious
- Toile wa doko desu ka (toy-reh wah doh-koh des-oo kah): where is the bathroom

Is Kyoto safe for visitors?

Kyoto is very safe. Watch for overcrowded buses and trains during peak blossom week (early April), especially around temples.

BEFORE YOU GO (CONTINUED)

What's the emergency number in Japan?

Police 110. Ambulance and fire 119. Both answer in English in big cities, or ask for an interpreter.

Do you tip in Japan?

Don't tip. It's not expected and can be seen as insulting. Service charge is included in the bill.

What do only locals know about Kyoto?

- Book accommodation by late February; cherry blossom season fills hotels fast, and prices spike 30-50% in early April.
- Hit Philosopher's Path at sunrise before crowds arrive; the canal-side walk under blooming trees is magical in solitude.
- Convenience stores (7-Eleven, Lawson) have excellent, cheap meals; grab onigiri and tea for temple picnics.
- Wednesday and Thursday afternoons are quieter than weekends; visit famous temples on these days if you can shift your dates.