

*Last (brief) update: March 17, 2019. As of early July, 2015 I have re-written this entire document. It should be useful at this point but needs to be proof-read and edited so please be lenient on my grammatical errors.*

This is a document we've made so people can easily get an idea of things we'd suggest to do while in Japan. This is by no means the "only things" you can do of course, it's just a guideline of things we know about and have enjoyed, basically the places I take friends when they visit. There's a lot of Japan we have never visited, and it certainly would be fun to explore on your own as well. Anyways, hopefully this can help you get pointed in the right direction in exploring Japan.

**Our Videos:** Easily the best reference for things to do we have compiled is our video series. Here are some links to travel specific things, but you can find more things at our website: [kydeanderic.com](http://kydeanderic.com)

### **Videos we have made traveling around Japan:**

Sendai: <http://kydeanderic.com/Sendai/>  
Toyako Onsen, Hokkaido: <http://kydeanderic.com/Toyako/>  
Otaru, Hokkaido: <http://kydeanderic.com/Otaru/>  
Sapporo, Hokkaido: <http://kydeanderic.com/Sapporo/>  
Sendai part2: <http://kydeanderic.com/SendaiAgain/>  
Tokyo: <http://kydeanderic.com/Tokyo/>  
Osaka: <http://kydeanderic.com/Osaka/>  
Hiroshima: <http://kydeanderic.com/Hiroshima/>  
Kyoto: <http://kydeanderic.com/Kyoto/>  
Nikko, Tochigi: <http://kydeanderic.com/Nikko/>  
Fujigoko and Hakone: <http://kydeanderic.com/FujigokoAndHakone/>  
Kyoto and Osaka (again): <http://kydeanderic.com/KyotoAndOsaka/>  
Kamakura: <http://kydeanderic.com/Kamakura/>  
Matsumoto and Nagano: <http://kydeanderic.com/MatsumotoAndNagano/>  
Yokohama: <http://kydeanderic.com/Yokohama/>  
Izu Peninsula: <http://kydeanderic.com/IzuPeninsula/>  
Kumamoto and Miyazaki, Kyusyu: <http://kydeanderic.com/KumamotoAndMiyazaki/>  
Sapporo and Otaru, Hokkaido: <http://kydeanderic.com/SnowFestivalInHokkaido/>  
Nagoya: <http://kydeanderic.com/Nagoya/>  
Chiba: <http://kydeanderic.com/Chiba/>

### **Living in Japan parts 1 - 4**

<http://kydeanderic.com/LivinginJapan2011-Part1/>  
<http://kydeanderic.com/LivinginJapan2011-Part2/>  
<http://kydeanderic.com/LivinginJapan2011-Part3/>  
<http://kydeanderic.com/LivinginJapan2011-Part4/>

### **Other random activity videos**

Video Games in Japan: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1I1VI\\_rRK4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1I1VI_rRK4)  
Japanese Squirrel Garden: <http://kydeanderic.com/JapaneseSquirrelGarden/>  
Tokyo Disneyland: <http://kydeanderic.com/TokyoDisneyland/>  
Yamanote Line Bike Ride: <http://kydeanderic.com/YamanoteLineBikeRide/>

## **Brief notes:** (Read these)

-Below I have broken different areas into logical areas. We know the Tokyo area much better than other areas in Japan so I have broken Tokyo up by train station area, for everything outside of the Tokyo area it is broken up into different cities. Things to do, see and/or eat are listed under each area with maps linked where possible.

-At the end of this document I have put a list of country-wide chain restaurants that you may want to check out, specifically if you are visiting on a budget. Google Maps can help you locate your closest shop.

-There is no awful season to visit but personally I think the best season to visit Japan is in the fall. The temperature cools down and while you may need a coat it beats sweating profusely in the humid hot sun during the summer. There is also hardly any rain during the fall and if you can manage to see the leaves changing colors in the countryside it can be quite incredible. Aim for mid-November if possible. Spring is the second best time to come, but you may run into higher temperatures and a higher possibility of rain. Lots of people try to come for the cherry blossom season in the spring but it is quite brief and on different weeks every year depending on the weather so it can be easy to miss. Winters are pretty cold and summers are hot and humid, avoid them if possible. Mid June to mid-July are the rainy season and it can literally rain everyday during this time period.

-Here's a website that can calculate train prices for you: [hyperdia.com](http://hyperdia.com). When you do searches make sure you shut off "airplane" in the options box. If you are searching a short distance shut off both shinkansen and the limited express boxes. Alternatively Google Maps does a pretty good of creating routes and is capable of using buses when needed.

-Before coming to Japan remember to look into a [JR pass](http://JR.pass). It can be a little confusing, but the basic idea is you pay a flat fee for X days and you can use the train system as much as you want. It can be a deal if you plan on moving around long distances a lot, but if you are just dicking around Tokyo it'd be a waste. You **must**\* buy this before coming to Japan, so plan ahead. \*(in 2019 they did a trial letting tourist buy them inside of the country, so this may change, do some research to see if you need to buy them in advance or not when you are planning)

-Japan is incredibly safe. You will not find a dangerous street in the entire country and you can be nearly guaranteed you will not be the victim of a crime here. Point being, feel free to explore as much as you want at whatever hour of the day or night you'd like, it's safe to do so.

- Hotel rooms in Japan are generally charged per person and can be between \$50-\$100 per person per night, even dorms are \$40-ish a night. This can fluctuate with exchange rates, of course. We have often used [booking.com](http://booking.com) to find places to stay and it works really well.

-Tipping does not happen, ever.

-The best coffee shop chain for cost/taste and most importantly \*fast\* internet is Tulleys.

**Eastern Tokyo:** Just looking at a map you may assume this side of Tokyo is where the action is, but despite having a few awesome areas it is mostly residential and full of businesses, neither of which are of much interest to average tourists. It's certainly not devoid of interesting things though!

**Akihabara:** A neighborhood that is the center of the universe for Japanese video games/manga/nerd culture.

Tons of shops selling computers, video games, manga, anime and so forth. Also a ton of video game arcades.

-Don Quijote is a huge discount department store, think WalMart and Spencers crossed. It's a wild place to walk around and is actually pretty cheap. The location in Akihabara has a good video game arcade specializing in music games. This store is a chain and is located in other neighborhoods and towns, but this one is particularly large. ([Map](#))

-Arcades: Eric's favorite is Taito HEY! as it specializes in [SHMUPS](#) as well as fighting games. ([Map](#))

-For retro video games you absolutely must go to Super Potato. There are also locations in Osaka and other neighborhoods in Tokyo. [Website](#) ([Map](#))

-The biggest electronics shop I have ever seen is Yodobashi Camera in Akihabara. It's shocking how big it is. On nice days lots of people sit outside and play 3DS...not together, but all in the same place. ([Map](#))

-A cool seafood donburi (rice bowl) restaurant is in Akihabara. ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

-There is a decent cheap maguro-don (tuna rice bowl) place as well. Get some sake. ([Map](#))

-A small curry rice restaurant run by a seemingly grumpy but actually super nice older man. You can watch him as he cooks as you sit at a counter as he makes each dish fresh from scratch. Tastes good too. Not sure if there is an English menu or not, could be an adventure if there isn't. Even the Japanese menu is a bit chaotic. ([Map](#))

-A little locally owned gyudon shop. Easy to order as the vending machine you pay at before eating has pictures (I think, haha). In general the price increases with the dish size. Pretty popular but I've never seen a line. They do seem to have days they are closed at total random, so be ready for that. ([Map](#))

Asakusa: This area is famous for having a super touristy shrine/temple in Tokyo. It's not our favorite neighborhood but probably worth a quick stop as a tourist. It is also possible to take a boat down the river from Asakusa to Odaiba, but we haven't done it yet. Notably Asakusa has some of the most inflated food prices in the city because of all the tourism.

-The main tourist attraction is [Senso-ji](#). It has a famous gate called the [Kaminari-mon](#), which means "thunder gate." It's neat to see, but expect it to be crowded during the day. The main walk from the gate to the temple area is OK, and you will come across some interesting snacks and lots of tourist shops, but if you have time you should wander around the side-streets a bit that run around the area. ([Map](#))

-A ramen shop Eric quite enjoys is "Kitakata Ramen." They use huge slices of pork in the soup, it's amazing. Menus have pictures and staff is friendly. This is a small chain and other locations are around Tokyo. ([Map](#))

-A really authentic Thai restaurant, when you go inside you'd swear you are in Bangkok. The food is good, but spice levels can get out of control. Even if you like spicy go with mild on your first visit. Prices aren't super cheap but you can get a meal for around 1000yen or so, good for the quality. ([map](#))

-While not exactly in Asakusa but if you are up for about a 30 minute walk you can get to the famous [Tokyo Sky Tree](#). The walk is unremarkable in a way, but shows you what a normal suburban-style Tokyo neighborhood really looks like. You can also take a train if you are feeling lazy or the weather is a

bummer. The Sky Tree is currently the second tallest structure in the world after the Burj Khalifa. You can go up in it, but we never have. I really enjoy the view from it's base, however. ([Map](#))

Tokyo Station: Honestly this area is not the most exciting part of the city, despite it's name. It is mostly a business district. There are a few things to do.

- Tokyo Station itself is pretty neat. it's quite large and recently they renovated the western exterior which is very much worth seeing. ([Map](#))

- There is apparently a "ramen road" somewhere in the station, but somehow we have never found it. We've never really looked for it, either. haha.

- The [Tokyo Imperial Palace](#) is a ten minute walk from the station. It isn't much to see though, you can basically see the outside walls and some small park / garden areas. A couple of times a year parts of the grounds are open to the public, but it's rare. I believe tours of some sort are available but we don't know the details. ([Map](#))

Ueno: This neighborhood feels more like "Asia" than anywhere else in Tokyo. Kinda rustic, in a good way. Worth walking through for sure.

- Ueno is famous for a street that used to be a black market called [Ameya-Yokochō](#). It's now an open-air market that sells lots of stuff like fruit, bags, shoes, cheap clothes, etc. It's a bit exciting and worth checking out. Expect it to be crazy crowded on weekends. The shops tends to close down when the sun goes down, but the bars and restaurants stay open. This area feels more like China than any other part of Japan I've been to. ([Map](#))

- Ueno park is nice. Less than five minute walk from the station. There is a cheap zoo (an 8 year old girl I know raves about the place), lots of museums and lots of area to walk around. If the cherry blossoms are blooming this is an incredible area to see them. ([Map](#))

- Next to Ueno Park there is a neat little temple-ish thing that is worth seeing at night if you are in the area. [Map](#)

- Outside the central (south east-ish) Ueno gate there is a shop called "Yamashiroya". It's nothing super special, but it's one of those "a million little things in one store" places that are famous in Japan. Good place to load up on souvenirs. ([Map](#))

- If you're up for a stroll you can wander over to a neat little neighborhood northwest of Ueno Park. Nothing of huge note, but it's a nice place to just wander around. Gives you some insight into real Japanese neighborhoods in Tokyo. [map](#)

- An incredible tonkatsu restaurant is in Ueno. A bit pricy, but worth it! ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

- There is a decent Thai place in Ueno. On the second floor, look for a big Thai flag. [Map](#)

- A decent Chinese restaurant is near the station. What shines here is the Singapore style chicken rice. If you have never had this dish def get it. It's amazing. See picture [here](#). The restaurant says "Chinese Restaurant" on the sign so it's easy to locate. [Map](#)

**Ginza:** I'm going to be honest here, Ginza is a very forgettable place. Lots of overpriced designer products. If you are into that sort of thing you may enjoy it, but it's not our scene. If it is your scene I think you'd have a better time walking around Shibuya, Shinjuku and Harajuku. That said, on Saturdays they close central Chuo Dori (street) to traffic and people can walk around in the street while shopping which is kind of fun. Once I saw a lady with a ferret on a leash.

- Sony showroom and the Apple Store (they are things that exist, but are really underwhelming)

- The [UNIQLO](#) in Ginza is neat. It's very large and has an entire floor dedicated to T-shirts. ([Map](#))

**Odaiba:** Odaiba is a fun area off the south part of the city, but easily accessible. It is a man-made island that has lots of shopping, eateries and some museums. If you have kids this will probably be a fun area. If you have a rainy day, go here. Oh, the train transit to get there from the city takes you on a driverless tram across the awesome Rainbow bridge. You can also take a boat from [here](#) to Odaiba if you prefer.

- The Miraikan "future museum" is fun, I'd say like a 7 out of 10. Some of the "future" things seem a little dated. Neat, but not a must do. ([Map](#))

- Tokyo Mega Web is basically an interactive showroom Toyota built. Kinda a cross between a museum and a sales floor. It's kinda neat, especially if you like cars. ([Map](#))

- There is a giant Gundam (robot) statue that's cool to see and take pictures with outside of a mall. ([Map](#))

- Inside of a different mall there is a "theme park" called "Sega Joyoplois." We've never been, but it looks neat. ([Map](#))

- The famous rainbow bridge is also in this area. It's neat at night, you can get a nice "beach-ish" view from [here](#).

**Western Tokyo:** This is our favorite area of Tokyo. When you think of "futuristic Japan" this is most closely what matches it (perhaps after Akihabara). Tons of people, lots of shopping stuff, just a cool vibe. Setting aside a day to walk from Shinokubo Station southward to Shibuya is a cool way to see the place. Doing this you can hit Shinokubo (Korea-town), Shinjuku, Harajuku, The Meji Shrine, Yoyogi Park and Shibuya. It's a long but awesome walk.

**Shinjuku:** A extremely energetic area, famously the home of the [busiest transportation hub](#) in the world. Weekend nights here are crazy with the number of people walking around, so go then if you can. Lots of karaoke, shopping, video game arcades and eating is available. There is a "red-light" district in this area, but it's not dangerous, just annoying if you are a single male. People will try to lure you into their shops, just ignore them if you come across them. Unless you want some poontang, and then ONLY pay in cash. Never hand someone in a shady industry a credit card.

- Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building. This is a great place to get a free overlook of the city as they have an indoor observation deck with no charge to access. Sometimes on clear mornings in the winter you can see Mt Fuji from here. If possible avoid weekends because of the lines. ([Map](#))

-A movie theater has an incredible Godzilla on the roof that you can see from the street. There is a cafe in the lobby of the hotel Godzilla is next to you can go up to for a good view of him up close. ([Map](#))

-This little shop makes amazing Japanese-style curry rice with the twist that it uses cabbage in a lot of it's dishes. Highly recommended, weird vibe. The name is Acacia, it's in English on the building. Oh, right next to it is a fun video game arcade. ([Map](#))

- When we go to Shinjuku we often eat at this little donburi restaurant that is popular with locals, notable as it's not a chain, haha. Very cheap (500yen or so for a bowl), nice staff and good food. The "Taru taru toridon" (タルタルとりどん) is really good. Throw a raw egg on top and mix for best experience. They close kind of early for the area, around 8 or 9PM. They have an English menu. ([map](#))

-On floors 7 and 8 of this building are lots of places to eat, like a restaurant mall. ([Map](#))

-There is a little Thai restaurant here that is very authentic. It's gritty for sure, but the green curry is seriously on point. It's in the basement of the building with access from the street, look for the Thai flag. ([Map](#))

- Inside of a drinking area referred to in English as "Piss Alley" (called Omoide Yokochō in Japanese) is a wonderful little cheap udon/soba noodle stand. The area is great for photos and while it is full of tourists it's still a fun place to check out. Come at night, on Friday or Saturday if possible. ([map to noodle shop](#))

- Similar to "Piss Alley" Shinjuku has another famous drinking area called "Golden Gai." It's quite something to see, hundreds of tiny bars are crammed into a small little few blocks of city. It comes alive at night, weekends are best. Be careful going into places as they sometimes have seating fees that can be 1000yen or more, but some have no fees. If there are no signs explaining fees just ask before ordering, staff in this area is used to foreign guests. No one in this area is going to rip you off though, there seems to be some sort of regulation keeping the touts famous for drugging and robbing tourists out of the area, so don't worry about that here. ([map](#))

### Harajuku: Shopping! Parks! Shrines!

-[Yoyogi Park](#) is a cool place for a stroll. On Sundays people go to the park and do all sorts of weird stuff they can't do in their apartments like practice juggling, playing the bassoon or any number of weird activities. Lots of people also go and have picnics / drinking parties. This all depends on the weather, the spring and fall are your best bet. ([Map](#))

-[Meiji Shrine](#) is inside of Yoyogi Park but is accessed from a different direction than the above entry. This area also has some museums in it if you are into Japanese history. It's neat to see this peaceful oasis in the middle of the city. At the shrine itself you might see a wedding procession too, which is neat. Oh, if you happen to be in Tokyo on New Years come check out the longest line of people you'll ever see in your life. ([Map](#))

-Across the street from Harajuku Station (which, by the way is wonderful looking on it's own right) is a famous shopping street called Takeshita-dori. On weekends it is packed to the gills with teenagers shopping in all the trendy and cheap shops. If you are a teenage girl that likes Japanese fashion you'll love this. If not...well...it's interesting to see for sure and there are some famous crepe shops [here](#). Warning: When an (adult male) friend visited me I took him on a walk here on a busy day and he said to

me "Let's never come here again." Haha. ([Map](#))

-Instead of visiting Ginza I'd say to have a walk around the major streets surrounding this street corner. Lots of high fashion shops but with way more personality than I feel Ginza has. ([Map](#))

**Shibuya**: Shibuya is another wonderful neighborhood to explore at night, especially on Friday and Saturdays. It comes to life with all the people and has a wonderful personality.

-The Hachiko statue. This is the dog the Futurama episode "Jurassic Bark" was based on and has a really awesome backstory you can read about [here](#). It is a famous meeting place for people in the city "Let's meet at Hachiko" is a very common phrase! Easy to find as there is a JR station exit named for him. ([Map](#))

-Shibuya crossing is also super famous. Every time CNN talks about Japan they show footage of it, you will recognize it. ([Map](#))

-[Shibuya 109](#) is a shopping mall that is the center of "[Shibuya gal](#)" culture. ([Map](#))

-Genki Sushi is a great experience of a "high tech" Japanese sushi place. You order off touch screens (English is available) and the sushi is delivered on a little train system. you have to try the ebi seared pepper nigiri, make sure to eat it hot, it will change your religion. Expect a wait for dinner time, when you get there go in and write your name on the list. ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

-Omurisu (Omelet rice) seems a little odd as it is just rice with an egg on top smothered in ketchup, but it's actually really good. You can get lots of different things on it as well. Pomme's is a restaurant that has a pretty good selection and is recommended for sure. Menu has pictures so it's easy to point and order. ([Map](#))

-Karaoke is everywhere in Japan, but specifically one of the the Karaoke Kans in Shibuya is awesome for being the very location the karaoke scene in "[Lost in Translation](#)" was filmed. It also happens to have a pretty awesome view. Rooms 601 and 602 were used in the movie, but I can't remember exactly which was the "main one." Google might help. ([Map](#))

-Pizza Slice is a bit of a walk south of Shibuya station but is totally worth it. I list this place more for people who have been out of The States for a long time or are not from The States at all.. If you are on holiday from America skip it, but if you have been without decent pizza for a long time this is the best pizza I have had in Asia, New York style. Cheap too, a cheese slice starts at 390yen. ([Map](#))

**Roppongi**: This area is famous for being the western foreigner district. Lots of ritzy shopping and expensive bars/clubs. The upside is there is a lot of different foods to eat, but honestly we go here so infrequently I have a hard time thinking of many. This area is famously sketchy at night time, I personally try to avoid it.

-There is a really cool sculpture here, but I won't spoil for you what it is. If you want the spoiler click [here](#). ([Map](#)-no spoiler here)

-There is a wonderful Iranian restaurant called "Aladdin's". The staff is incredible and they have a good lunchtime buffet. ([Map](#))

-[Tokyo Tower](#) is also in this area. It's really iconic, but kind of underwhelming. That said, it's cool to see

at night when it's all lit up. ([Map](#))

**Ikebukuro**: Ikebukuro is somewhat of a little sister neighborhood to Shinjuku. Worth a walk-around, but if you don't make your way there it won't end the world.

-The east side of the station area is where all the shopping is centered and where the best area to explore probably is. This map link will get you right into the middle of it. ([Map](#))

-This is a big mall called "Sunshine City." It is a pretty big place by Japanese standards, but most interestingly it has an aquarium that is supposedly pretty cool, but we've never been as it's a bit expensive. ([Map](#))

-If you want to eat the hot dog pasta we had for our anniversary one year, here's a link! It is in the basement of a building, but has street access. Look for the red sign with white text that reads ナポリタン専門店 ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

**Otsuka**: Otsuka is not a normal tourist place, but we live in the area so we can suggest a couple of places to eat.

-An absolute must of a place to eat is "Bongo" (ぼんご). It is a [onigiri](#) (rice ball) restaurant where you sit at a counter and get to watch your food be prepared while you wait. The place is locally famous and has incredible food for a very low price as you can eat for around 500yen. I'd suggest going in and ordering two different onigiri. My favorites are a sweet meat based niku-soboro (肉そぼろ) and peanut miso (ピーナッツ味噌) for dessert. Other good options are cheese (チーズ), curry (カレー), bacon (ベーコン) and tuna (ツナ). Look for the white sign with lots of lights around it. The blue text reads おんぎり. They have an English menu. ([Map](#)) ([More Info](#))

-Some of the best tantanmen (spicy ramen with a Sichuan origin that includes amazing minced pork) in the city is at a little place called "Nakiryu." We used to go here quite a bit, but they recently won a Michelin star and the lines can be pretty crazy. It's worth it though if you are interested in some amazing tantanmen. ([Map](#)) ([More Info](#))

-We made video about a cool little gyoza shop that is one station away from Otsuka called "Fight Gyoza." You can find it here: ([Video](#)) ([Map](#)) ([More Info](#))

**Takadanobaba**: Interesting lively area that honestly we haven't explored enough of, but we do know two noteworthy places to eat.

-If you want some legit Vietnamese Banh Mi sandwiches with absolutely wonderful bread there is a little stand about a 5 min walk from the train station. Cheap, but important to get there somewhat early as if they run out of bread for the day they are out of sandwiches! ([Map](#)) ([More info](#))

-An incredible dish of Burmese food there is a great place here called "Swe Mynamar." Order the "Dan

Pao" (Sorry, not sure the real English spelling but the Japanese is ダンパウ) for an incredible chicken on rice dish. ([Map](#)) ([More info](#))

**Mitaka:** The only thing I know about out here is the amazing [Ghibli Museum](#). We are not huge fans of Japanese animation (not opposed to it, just not into it) but found this museum to be absolutely wonderful. The trouble is getting tickets typically has to be done in advance via vending machines in Japanese convenience stores. There are resources to get tickets from abroad with a Google search, however I have no idea how reliable they are. Just don't show up without tickets expecting to get in! ([Map](#))

**Omiya:** A suburb of Tokyo with little to offer tourists aside from an pretty awesome train museum that focuses on the history of Japanese trains. It houses a ton of actual trains that you get to climb inside of and look around. They have everything from really old trains to Bullet Trains. It's surprisingly well put together and while I wouldn't say it's a must do if you come to Japan it'd be another cool way to spend an afternoon if you get hit with a bunch of rain or if you have even a fleeting interest in trains. Kids will enjoy this as well. (1 hour from Tokyo) ([Website](#)) ([Map](#))

**Day trips from Tokyo:** In general we know a lot less in detail about places outside of Tokyo, so I will just be giving brief explanations of generally what there is to see in each place.

**Nikko:** [Nikko](#) is famous for a beautiful little series of temples and shrines built up on a hill in Japan's countryside. Basically If you can't make it to Kyoto, this is the place to go. The famous "[hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil](#)" monkey carving is here. From Tokyo it takes about 2 hours to get there by train. ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

**Kawagoe:** I wouldn't say [Kawagoe](#) is a must do, but it's cool to see an "old city". It's famous for not being firebombed in WW2 and having a cool old wooden clock tower ([Map](#)). There is also a "candy street" that local kids love, but seems a bit underwhelming in my opinion. ([Map](#)) (Note: parking on weekdays is ~600yen a day, weekend parking is 400yen an HOUR. Train access exists at about an hour from Tokyo.) ([Map](#))

**Kamakura:** [Kamakura](#) is a little beach town that has a super famous huge Buddha ([map](#)) as well as a nice collection of easy-to-hike trails connecting different temples and shrines. Don't come here specifically for the beach, which is oddly a little on the trashy side. (About 2 hours from Tokyo by train) ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

**Yokohama:** Asia's largest chinatown outside of China is apparently in [Yokohama](#). It's neat, but is really a very Japanese version of China as opposed to being super authentic. I feel like the Chinatown in San Francisco is more authentic. That said, Yokohama is a pretty cool city and has a nice boardwalk type park area to see. It is also come to the Ramen [Cup Noodle](#) museum, which is fun. ([Map](#)) Train from Tokyo to Yokohama is about 30 minutes. ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

**Mt Takao:** [Mt. Takao](#) is a very popular place for people to go hiking as it is quite close to the city. Not mind blowing by any means, but is a pleasant place to explore. Kids can handle the hike as well, and there is a little train and gondola system if you want to take the easy way up. ([Map](#))

**Tokyo Disney Parks:** Tokyo (ok, well, Chiba) are home to both [Tokyo Disneyland](#) and [DisneySea](#). We went to Disneyland and it was amazing, but not a unique Japanese experience by any means. To the casual observer you could as well be in California or Florida regarding the park itself. We have not yet been to Disney Sea, but

apparently it is a bit of a more unique experience as it is the only one of its kind in the world. ([Video](#)) ([Map](#))

**Long trips outside of Tokyo area:** These are places that are generally too far outside of Tokyo to visit and return on a single day. If you have a JR Pass access to these places is really easy via the train system, if not...well...things can get expensive.

**Kansai Region:** (*Bullet Train to Kyoto from Tokyo:138minutes*) Kyoto, Osaka, Nara and Himeji are the only cities I have been to in Kansai. The cities are all within an hour or so of each other. It's easiest to stay in Kyoto and then day-trip to Nara, Himeji and Osaka. The area is kind of a "must do" thing if you come to Japan, but the costs of going from Tokyo without a JR Pass can be a bit high. Our time in this area is pretty limited, so keep that in mind. I made a brief video with a friend on a trip to this region a few years ago. ([Video](#))

**Kyoto:** Kyoto is the old capital of Japan and considered massively culturally important. It is stuffed to the brim with temples, shrines and tourists. It has some very traditional beautiful areas but has also not escaped modernization. ([Video](#))

-You will have no trouble finding tourist maps detailing all of the different shrines and temples, but I think [Fushimi Inari-taisha](#) is easily overlooked but probably the coolest thing I have seen in Kyoto. If you have the means to take the hike to the top it is highly recommended. Oh, for any Nintendo Fans its gates and stone foxes are the inspiration for Star Fox! ([Map](#))

-Speaking of Nintendo fans you can go to the outside of their R&D department ([map](#)) and headquarters ([map](#)) for cool pictures, but there is literally nothing else available to do. You can't go in or meet Mario or anything, believe me, I tried.

**Osaka:** Osaka is a huge city, but I wouldn't say I've been blown away with it in the brief time I have been there. It's worth a visit at night and a wander around to get the feel of it, aim for this area: ([Map](#)) [Okonomiyaki](#) and [takoyaki](#) are famous in the area, so try to give it a go if you are interested. ([Video](#))

**Nara:** This little town has a lot of temples similar to Kyoto but is most famous for tons of little deer that are all over the place. It's pretty neat and if you have a chance to make it there it's pretty fun!

**Himeji - Himeji Castle** is the only thing I'm aware of to see here, but it really is amazing. You get to see the huge complex, walk around the grounds and go inside to see how living inside of it would have been. It's one of the better castles I've seen in Japan. Ideally daytripping here from Kyoto in the morning and then headed to Osaka on the way back to Kyoto in the evening makes a pretty good day.

**Chugoku Region:** Quite a hike from Tokyo the only city we have been to is Hiroshima.

**Hiroshima:** (*Bullet Train from Tokyo: 235minutes/From Kyoto: 107min*) Honestly as a tourist I didn't find Hiroshima that stand-out aside from the stunning peace park that was built in the area where the atomic bombing was centered. The museums they have on the grounds are shocking and you could easily spend two days in them on their own. Especially of note they have (English subtitled) videos set up of survivors talking about the day the bomb dropped...it's emotionally draining but really amazing. ([Map](#)) Also in Hiroshima is a Mazda factory you can go on a free tour of where you get to go inside and see the machines and people literally building cars. Really cool! Free reservations are necessary, but can be made online in English. ([Website](#)) ([Video](#))

Further places to check out via our videos are [Kyushu](#), [Nagoya Prefecture](#), [The Izu Peninsula](#), [Mt Fuji's five lakes and Hakone](#), [Hokkaido in the winter](#), [Nagoya](#) and [Chiba](#)!

**Country-wide cheap eats**: If you are coming to Japan on a budget keeping an eye open for these places can help out the wallet! Most (all?) chain restaurants have menus with pictures so ordering is easy.

-Gyudon restaurants are everywhere, especially near train stations. The meal is very simple: thinly sliced strips of beef steamed in a sweet soy-sauce base on a bowl of rice. You can eat as cheaply as 400yen. [Yoshinoya](#) is my favorite followed by [Sukiya](#) (they have cheese gyudon, it's awesome). [Matsuya](#) is another popular choice.

-[Fuji Soba](#) is a common soba / udon restaurant that I thought was country-wide but might just be a Tokyo thing. Anyways, it's very cheap at under 400yen for a meal and quite good. They will likely ask you if you want your soba hot or cold when you hand them your ticket (that you bought from a vending machine), just answer in English, they will understand. Probably. Aside from this chain there are tons of soba shops all over Japan, just look for the Japanese そば.

-For Japanese style curry rice find a [Ichibanya](#). Meals are around 700yen and very filling. They allow you to select the spice level, so don't be scared away by the word "curry" if you are inexperienced in it.

-For about 500yen you can get a bowl of tempura on rice called tendon. [Tendon Tenya](#) is a common place and good for the price.

-For a very cheap meal (300 to 400yen or so?) you can eat some..well...kinda watered down Japanese pasta. If you are a pasta connoisseur you might want to avoid [Saizeriya](#), but if you are in need of cheap calories it's hard to beat.

-Ramen is everywhere and typically between 500 and 1000 yen. Big chains tend to be lower quality, but you can easily find endless ramen restaurants around the country that are locally owned. Look for the word ramen in Japanese: ラーメン

-Bento shops are pretty common too. Bentos are little take-away meals that usually have a meat, rice and vegetable of some sort pre-prepared and ready to go, usually for 500 to 700 yen. Hotto-Motto is a popular chain. Look for the Japanese: ??

-[Yayoiken](#) is one of Kyde's favorites! Lots of fast-but-good Japanese food. Can eat for 800 yen or less. ([Video](#))

-Japanese McDonalds is everywhere as well. Typically it is very similar to what you have from your own country's McDonald's only cleaner. Sometimes they have wonky specials, if they do there will be posters of them all over the shop.

-[Mos Burger](#) is a Japanese owned burger joint. We find it to be a bit on the pricy side as it seems hard to get out for less than 800yen per person which is a bit much for a fastfood burger joint, but they do have selections and flavors you aren't going to find at home or at a McDonald's. It's worth trying at least once, some people love the place.

-[Lotteria](#) is another Japanese burger place that seems to be like...you know how Burger King in the states is kinda grimy? This has the same feel. They do really crazy burgers all the time though, so keep an eye out for interesting things if you are interested in such things. I think I've eaten in Lotteria like three times though, haha.

-There are Indian restaurants everywhere in Japan and are actually quite good, if you come from the states and have never had Indian food this is a good place to start. They tend to all offer about the same thing with varying qualities in the flavor. Lunch sets are the best time to go as you can get stuffed to the brim with a curry, nan, small salad and often a lassi to drink for around 800yen. Keep an eye peeled for the Indian flag to find them. Often the staff speaks English and will allow you to choose spice level.

-Also keep a lookout for [doner kebab](#) stands. They usually don't have an inside but are instead just little booths. Look for a spit of meat turning in front of a big oven. They are usually 500yen each.

-Finally, when in doubt don't pass up Japanese convenience stores! The food is quite good and they have lots of bentos available. They will heat them up for you and provide you with eating utensils so you can be eating in seconds of making your selection. Some even have seats inside to eat at. Look for [7-11](#), [Family Mart](#) and [Lawsons](#) in that order for quality. 7-11 and Family Mart also have free wifi! ([Video](#))