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TERRA FIRMA



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**ALL EYES ARE ON TOKYO AS THE CITY
WELCOMES THE RUGBY WORLD CUP LATER
THIS YEAR, FOLLOWED BY THE SUMMER
OLYMPIC GAMES IN 2020. DISCOVER THE
CALM & EFFICIENT RHYTHM OF THE CITY
THAT RUNS LIKE CLOCKWORK**

WORDS MIRIAM CAIN



01
The Tokyo Tower
punctuates the
city's skyline

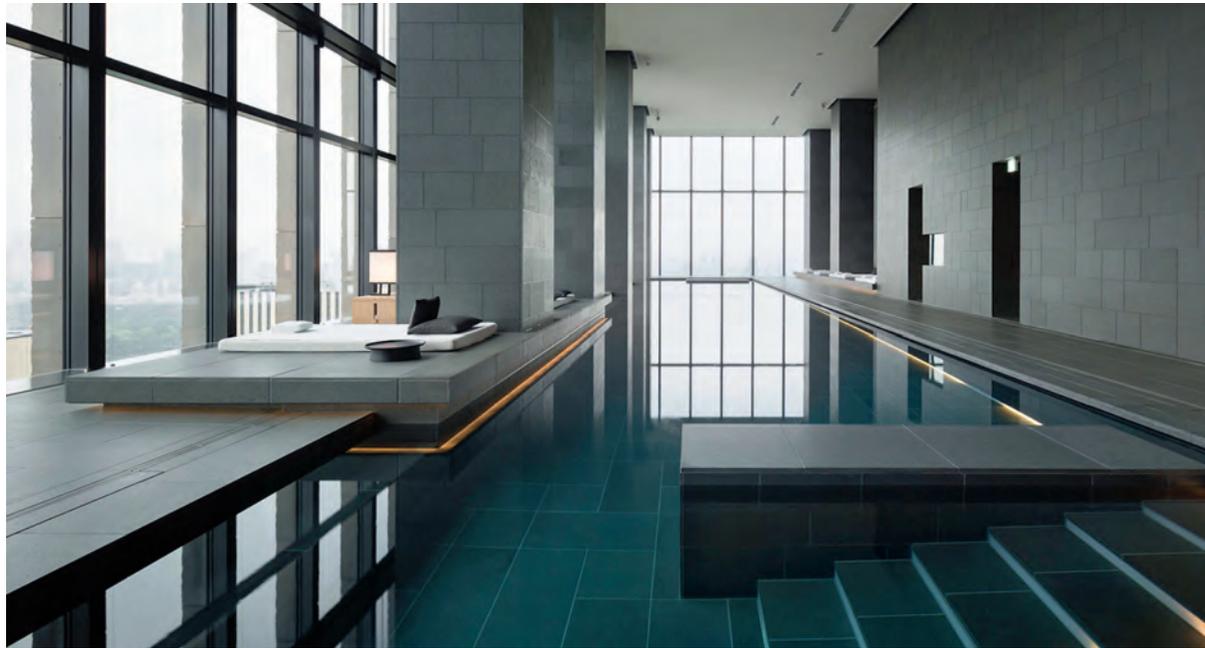


Nowhere beats Tokyo for its incredible energy. Quite simply, the city is like nowhere else on earth with its astute balance of heritage and high-tech. Undeniably a city of innovation in technology, wellness and design, Japan's capital has all the latest travel luxuries in abundance. Whether you are a foodie or a shopper, a culture vulture or a sports fan, the sprawling metropolis is having its heyday right now as it prepares to welcome two of the world's biggest sporting events. The city's waterfront is flourishing, spots for sushi restaurants are always being added, and the anime-inspired shopping streets are bustling with the most up-to-date fashions. Contemplating the megalopolis can at first be overwhelming, but choose a selection of neighborhoods to discover and you will find just the right balance of art, cuisine, nightlife and culture.

02



03



02
Contemplating the megalopolis can at first be overwhelming

03
The Aman Spa & swimming pool

04
Lounge at the Park Hyatt

05
Cityscape-backed dining at the Mandarin Oriental Tokyo

PILLOW TALK

From world-class luxury hotels to trendy boutique properties, Tokyo has become a heaving metropolis of the fashionable and funky. With such major sporting events on the horizon the city has welcomed a raft of new openings alongside lavish refurbishments to some old favorites.

Set in the exclusive Nihonbashi district near Ginza, the **Mandarin Oriental Tokyo** is a peaceful retreat away from the bustle of Shinjuku and Shibuya. Every one of the 179 rooms and suites boasts floor-to-ceiling windows affording spectacular views over **Tokyo Skytree** and **Mount Fuji**. The hotel is also known for its fine dining, with 12 restaurants, including three with Michelin stars.

At night the neon blaze of Shinjuku comes alive. Here you will find the **Park Hyatt Tokyo**, of *Lost in Translation* fame, situated on the top 14 floors of the Shinjuku Park Tower. Nearly every room offers spectacular panoramic views of Tokyo, the Kanto plain and Mount Fuji.

Located in the business district Ōtemachi, close to the Imperial Palace, the **Aman Tokyo** is true to Aman's signature understated style. Minimalist interiors tap into Japan's design heritage with its wood, paper and stone. The rooms are bright and spacious with expansive windows framing the city beyond. The spa is the property's main draw. Spanning two serene floors, the sun-drenched enclave has a vast treatment menu, including the highly recommended Aman Tokyo Signature Journey. The spa also boasts a 100-foot indoor pool with views across the city.



04



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EAT, DRINK & DANCE

Tokyo has the most Michelin stars of any city in the world, but it's not just the haute cuisine that will impress. The famous **Toyosu Market** (previously located at Tsukiji Market) supplies fresh fish to some of the best sushi restaurants in the world. Rise early and you will see seafood of all shapes and sizes being auctioned. If you can't make the 5am start, then there are several sushi restaurants dotted around the market.

Daiwa Sushi is the place to have breakfast, however it is so good that lines form outside starting at 5am. It is worth noting that an average-priced sushi restaurant in Tokyo, with a highly skilled chef, can match a top-tier sushi restaurant in the US or Europe, so whatever gem you find it should not disappoint.

The aforementioned Mandarin Oriental Tokyo features three Michelin-starred restaurants – **Signature**, **Sense** and **Tapas Molecular Bar**. Signature offers French fine dining, while Sense is the place to head for authentic Cantonese cuisine. The Tapas Molecular Bar, known for its Instagram-friendly theatrical dining scene, is an experience by itself, thanks to its innovative molecular cuisine.

For a more relaxed affair, head to a local izakaya. These casual eating and drinking places serve fantastic dishes and are frequented by locals. **Doma-doma** is a very good chain of izakaya, one of which can be found in the Shibuya district.

Tokyo also excels at all things nocturnal – as the sun sets the urban landscape lights up with neon signs. Trendy cocktail bars and backstreet drinking dens can be found on every corner. Of particular note is **Baccarat's B Bar**. Located in the basement of the flagship store, every drink is served in individually selected glasses designed to suit the drink, but the recommended tippie is a killer martini. The city is one of Asia's top nightclubbing destinations and for good reason. Maintaining Tokyo's long and rich history of nightclubbing, the world's biggest DJs perform on a weekly basis. **IOAK Tokyo** in the Roppongi district is the club that received the most hype in 2018. With popular hip-hop artists and international DJs, this is the place to be and be seen – expect a New York vibe with celebrities and VIP areas. Other clubs of note include **Alife**, also in Roppongi and **ATOM Tokyo**.



06

Izakayas

07

The Tapas Molecular Bar,
Madarin Oriental

08

Breakfast at Daiwa Sushi

09

The serene Nezu Museum

10

Asakusa District

06



07



09



08



DO & DISCOVER

Stroll through the gardens of the **Imperial Palace**. When originally built, the castle was the largest in the world comprising 10 miles of grounds. Emperor Meiji downsized the palace in the late 19th century and his hidden palace cannot be visited, but the gardens, moats and turreted watchtowers are a stunning backdrop to any walk.

A mega-metropolis of contradictions, despite Tokyo's modernity, traditional culture is never far from sight. Look behind the gleaming façade of skyscrapers and you will find Tokyo's cultural core. There is no one particular museum area as such, rather you will find there are many small museums and galleries spread throughout the city. If you are short on time, take a whistle-stop tour of Japanese culture at **Ueno Park**. Here you will find a host of museums, including the **Tokyo National Museum**, the **National Museum of Modern Art**, the **National Museum of Nature and Science** and the **Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum**.

The **Nezu Museum** in the Aoyama district is a serene space where exhibitions of pre-modern Asian arts, including calligraphy, textiles, painting and tea ceremony tools are showcased. Take a stroll around the gardens surrounding the museum where carp-filled ponds are framed by crimson maples in the autumn and blooms in the spring.

For a taste of traditional Tokyo head to **Asakusa**, the old downtown district of the capital. The area centers on the capital's oldest temple, Sensoji, a Buddhist temple founded in the ninth century, which enshrines a tiny gold image of the Buddhist goddess of mercy, Kannon; legend has it that the image was fished from the nearby Sumida River in AD628. Complete with vermilion gateways and a bustling market, the shrine is in the liveliest part of town.

Tokyo is still the seat of an Emperor. As of press time, the current is Emperor Akihito, who acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne upon the death of his father, Emperor Shōwa, in 1989. After 30 years ruling, Akihito will abdicate at the end of April this year and his heir, Naruhito, is expected to succeed as Emperor to become the 126th Emperor of the world's oldest monarchy. Visit the **Meiji Shrine**, the deified spirit of the Emperor Meiji, Akihito's great grandfather. The shrine resides in a Shinto temple surrounded by a forest of 170,000 trees and is a peaceful haven away from the busy streets of Tokyo.

In stark contrast, a short stroll takes you to one of the city's most contemporary landmarks, **Tokyo Skytree**, which at more than 2,000 feet (634 meters) is the world's tallest broadcast tower. Take the elevator to the viewing platform for epic vistas across Tokyo and beyond.





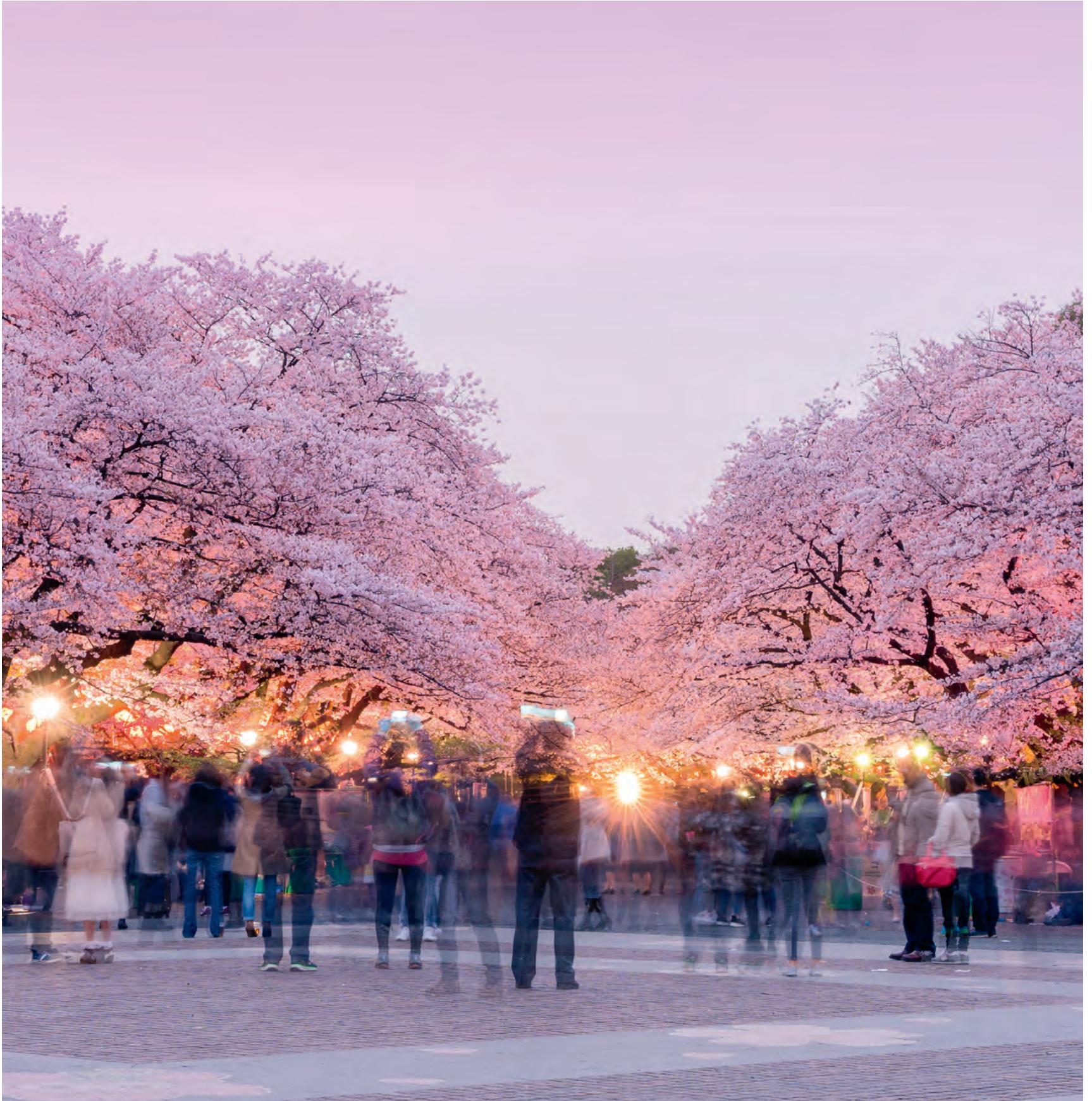
11
Neon signs illuminate
Tokyo's busy Shinjuku
neighborhood at night

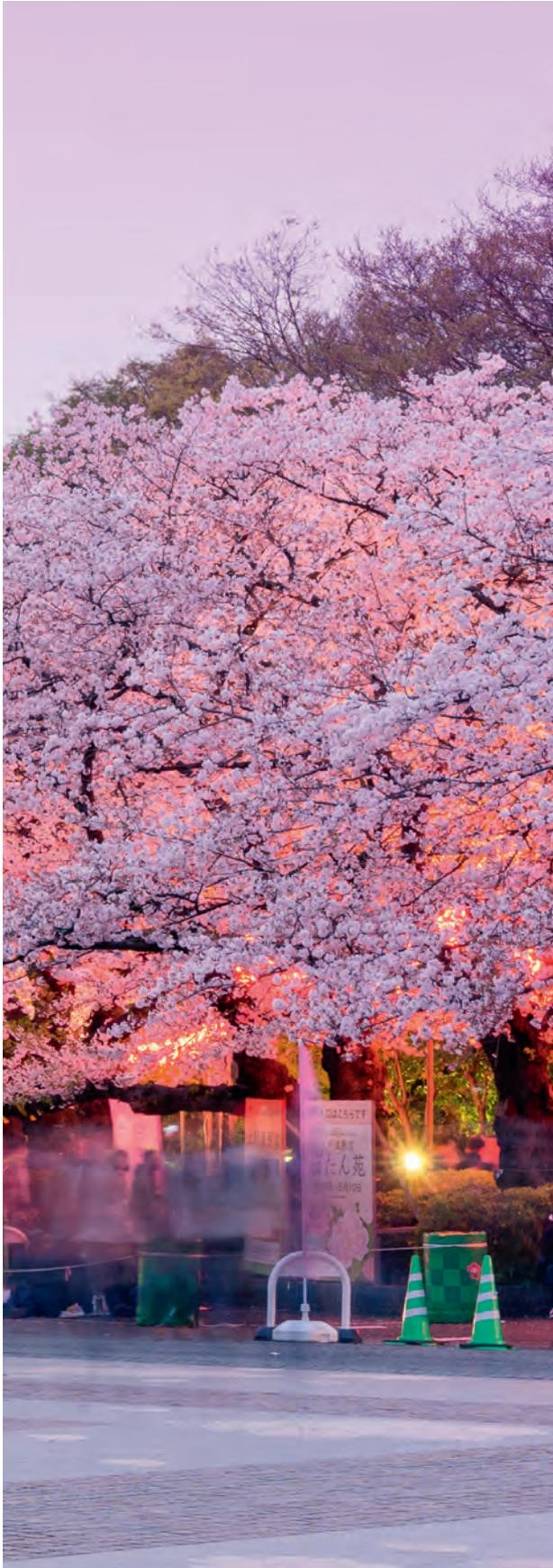
SEE & SHOP

Tokyo has a shop for practically anything one could ever want to buy. From cutting-edge electronics to trendy fashion and traditional crafts, prepare yourself for a shopping spree. Most of the sightseeing areas double as shopping districts so you can kill two birds with one stone as you take in the city. **Shinjuku** is one of the largest shopping and entertainment districts. Centered around the Shinjuku Station, the shopping comprises of a handful of major department stores. Flagship boutiques and some of the largest electronic retailers in Japan can also be found down the side streets. For the Japanese youth trends head to **Shibuya**, another large shopping district with small boutiques, including high fashion and designer brands.

For a more upscale shopping experience head to the tree-lined avenue of **Omotesando** in the **Harajuku** district. Over in the **Ginza** district, the new **Ginza Six** complex offers retail and culture combined. High-end flagship stores sit beside contemporary art installations. Nearly every leading Japanese and international brand name has a presence here, as well as major electronics retailers.

Outside the city center the **Nihonbashi** district is home to Japan's original department store, the **Mitsukoshi Main Store**, which originated in 1673. Step inside the regal entrance and head to the expansive fourth floor kimono section. The store's huge food court is also worth visiting simply to marvel at the exquisite produce. The small side streets around Mitsukoshi are where you will find traditional artisan goods in ancient shops with hundreds of years of history. You can even try for yourself the techniques that are employed to create them. The best souvenir to take home is your name in calligraphy on Japanese paper that you have made yourself. Equally unique would be a pair of bespoke shoes that artisans handcraft in the small atelier **Sonomitsu**. A bespoke pair takes up to eight months to complete so when they are delivered home, they will bring happy memories.





UNWIND

There is no better place to escape the bustling metropolis than in the serene surroundings of a Japanese garden. Spring is synonymous with sakura (cherry blossom), when the city is awash with hundreds of cherry blossom trees in full bloom. As a general rule, any time between March 20 and the first week of April is usually peak time for blossoms that dance on the breeze like snow. In Japanese culture, the cherry blossom is a symbol of transience and renewal; the ritual of appreciating and contemplating the blossom is known as “hanami.” Join locals at the bridge in the **Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden**, which, along with **Chidorigafuchi** (the gardens surrounding the Imperial Palace), is one of the most picturesque spots in Tokyo during the cherry blossom-viewing season. The Japanese way to view the blossom is to make a packed lunch in a bento box for the family to share in the park under the sakura trees.

For a taste of traditional Japanese serenity in the heart of the city venture on foot to **The Koomon**, a small family-run cultural institution. Here kimono-clad masters teach the art of the tea ceremony, calligraphy and kimono dressing. You can also find urban hot springs dotted around the city, including the **Oedo Onsen Monogatari**. The onsen (hot spring) complex has a dozen different types of steaming water baths in a setting inspired by old Tokyo with wooden buildings and traditional Japanese lanterns.

And finally, if you really want to let it all out, head to a private karaoke booth and sing like no one is watching. No visit to Tokyo is complete without taking part in this national pastime. Karaoke venues with private rooms are found all over the city. Try **Uta Hiroba** in Shibuya.

Spend a few days exploring the bright lights and intimate backstreets and you will be surprised what you find right on your doorstep. ●



12
Ueno Park during cherry
blossom-viewing season