

The Best of Tokyo

Describing Tokyo to someone who has never been here is a formidable task. After all, how do you describe a city that—as one of my friends visiting Tokyo for the first time put it—seems like part of another planet?

To be sure, Tokyo is very different from Western capitals, but what really sets it apart is its people. Approximately 12 million people reside within Tokyo's 1,288 sq. km (800 sq. miles), and almost one-fourth of Japan's total population lives within commuting distance of the city. This translates into a crush of humanity that packs the subways, crowds the sidewalks, and fills the department stores beyond belief. In some parts of the city, the streets are as crowded at 3am as they are at 3pm. With its high-energy, visual overload, Tokyo makes even New York seem like a sleepy, laid-back town.

And yet, despite its limited space for harmonious living, Tokyo remains one of the safest cities in the world, with remarkably little crime or violence. No matter how lost I may become, I know that people will go out of their way to help me. Hardworking, honest, and helpful to strangers, the Japanese are their country's greatest asset.

With Tokyo so densely packed, it comes as no shock to learn that land here is more valuable than gold, and that buildings are built practically on top of each other, shaped like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle to fit the existing plots of real estate. More than perhaps any other city in the world, Japan's capital is a concrete jungle, with a few parks but not many trees to break the monotony, and it stretches on and on as far as the eye can see. Fires, earthquakes, wars, the zeal for modernization, and the price of land have taken their tolls on the city, eradicating almost all evidence of previous centuries. It's as though Tokyo was born only this morning, with all the messy aftermath of a city conceived without plan and interested only in the future.

Thus, first-time visitors to Tokyo are almost invariably disappointed. They come expecting an exotic Asian city, but instead find a megalopolis Westernized to the point of drabness. Used to the grand edifices and monuments of Western cities, they look in vain for Tokyo's own monuments to its past—ancient temples, exquisite gardens, imperial palaces, or whatever else they've imagined. Instead they find what may be, quite arguably, one of the ugliest cities in the world.

So, while Tokyo is one of my favorite cities, my appreciation came only with time. When I first moved here, I was tormented by the unsettling feeling that I was somehow missing out on the "real" Tokyo. Even though I was living and working here, Tokyo seemed beyond my grasp: elusive, vague, and undefined. I felt that the meaning of the city was out there, if only I knew where to look.

With time, I finally learned that I needn't look farther than my own front window. Tokyo has no center, but rather is made up of a series of small towns and neighborhoods clustered together, each with its own history, flavor, and atmosphere. There are narrow residential streets, ma-and-pa shops, fruit stands, and stores. There's the neighborhood tofu factory, the lunch-box stand, the

grocery shop, and the tiny police station, where the cops know the residents by name and patrol the area by bicycle. There are carefully pruned bonsai trees gracing sidewalks, women in kimono bowing and shuffling down streets, and wooden homes on impossibly narrow streets. Walk in the old downtown neighborhoods of Asakusa or Yanaka and you're worlds apart from the trendy quarters of Harajuku or the high-rises of Shinjuku. Neighborhoods like these make Tokyo lovable and livable.

What's more, once visitors get to know Tokyo better, they learn that you can't judge Tokyo by what it looks like on the outside, for this is a city of interiors. Even those concrete monsters may house interiors that are fascinating in design and innovation. In the basement of that drab building could well be a restaurant with wooden beams, mud walls, and thatched ceiling, imported intact from a farmhouse in the Japan Alps; on its roof could be a small Shinto shrine, while the top floor could house a high-tech bar or a sophisticated French restaurant.

And beneath Tokyo's concrete shell is a thriving cultural life left very much intact. In fact, if you're interested in Japan's performing arts as well as such diverse activities as the tea ceremony or sumo, Tokyo is your best bet for offering the most at any one time. It is rich in museums and claims the largest repository of Japanese art in the world. It also gets my vote as the pop-art capital of the world, so if you're into kitsch, you'll be in high heaven. I can't imagine being bored here for even a minute.

1 Frommer's Favorite Tokyo Experiences

- **Strolling Through Asakusa.** No place better conveys the atmosphere of old Tokyo than Asakusa. Sensoji Temple is the city's oldest and most popular temple, and Nakamise Dori, the pedestrian lane leading to the temple, is lined with shops selling souvenirs and traditional Japanese goods. As in days of yore, arrive by boat via the Sumida River. See "Walking Tour: Asakusa" on p. 183.
- **Catching the Action at Tsukiji Fish Market.** Get up early your first morning in Japan (you'll probably be wide awake with jet lag, anyway) and head straight for the country's largest fish market, where you can watch the tuna auctions, browse through stalls of seafood, and sample the freshest sushi you'll ever have. See "The Top Attractions" in chapter 6.
- **Viewing Treasures at the Tokyo National Museum.** It's a feast for the eyes at the largest museum of Japanese art in the world, where you can see everything from samurai armor and lacquerware to kimono and woodblock prints. If you visit only one museum in Tokyo, this should be it. See "The Top Attractions" in chapter 6.
- **Sitting Pretty in Shinjuku.** On the 45th floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office (TMG), designed by well-known architect Kenzo Tange, an observatory offers a bird's-eye view of Shinjuku's cluster of skyscrapers, the never-ending metropolis and, on fine winter days, Mount Fuji. Best of all, it's free. See "Spectacular City Views" in chapter 6.
- **Time Traveling in the Edo-Tokyo Museum.** Housed in a high-tech modern building, this ambitious museum chronicles the fascinating and somewhat tumultuous history of Tokyo (known as Edo during the Feudal Period), with models, replicas, artifacts, and dioramas. Guided tours in English are available for free. See "The Top Attractions" in chapter 6.

Japan



- **Hanging Out in Harajuku.** Nothing beats Sunday in Harajuku, where you can begin the day leisurely with brunch, stroll the promenade of Omotesando Dori, shop the area's many boutiques, take in a museum or two and perhaps a flea market, visit Meiji Shrine, and then relax over drinks at a sidewalk cafe watching the hordes of teenyboppers parading past. See "Walking Tour: Harajuku & Aoyama" on p. 188.
- **Escaping Big-City Life in the Temple Town of Yanaka.** With its many temples, offbeat attractions, sloping hills, and peaceful narrow streets, the neighborhood of Yanaka makes for a wonderful half-day escape from the crowds of Tokyo. See "Walking Tour: Yanaka" on p. 196.
- **Walking the Imperial Moat.** It's an easy, 4.8km (3-mile) walk around the Imperial Palace moat, especially beautiful in spring when the many cherry blossoms are aflame. Don't miss the attached (and free) East Garden. See "The Top Attractions" in chapter 6.
- **Taking Part in a Festival.** Tokyo offers a myriad of annual festivals, ranging from processions of portable shrines to ladder-top acrobatics. Be ready to battle good-natured crowds, as festivals can be unbelievably packed. See "Tokyo Calendar of Events" in chapter 2.
- **Strolling a Japanese Landscaped Garden.** There's no better escape from Tokyo's urban jungle than a stroll through one of its landscaped gardens, especially in spring, when irises, wisteria, peonies, azaleas, and other flowers are in bloom. Top picks are Hama Rikyu Garden, Koishikawa Korakuen, Shinjuku Gyoen and—in nearby Yokohama—Sankei-en Garden. See "Parks & Gardens" in chapter 6.
- **Viewing Cherry Blossoms at Ueno Park.** Ueno Park is famous throughout Japan for its 1,000 cherry trees, attracting multitudes of company employees and organizations. It's not, however, the communing with nature you might think, as everyone drinks, eats, dances, and sings karaoke, seemingly oblivious to the shimmering blossoms above. Observing Tokyoites at play here is a cultural experience you won't forget. See "Parks & Gardens" in chapter 6 and "Walking Tour: Ueno" on p. 192.
- **Watching the Fat Guys Wrestle.** Nothing beats watching huge, almost-nude sumo wrestlers, most weighing well over 300 pounds, throw each other around. Matches are held in Tokyo in January, May, and September; catch one on TV if you can't make it in person. Great fun and not to be missed. See "Spectator Sports" in chapter 6.
- **Getting a Massage.** After a hard day of work or sightseeing, nothing beats a relaxing massage. *Shiatsu*, or pressure-point massage, is available in the privacy of your room at virtually all first-class and most medium-range Tokyo hotels, as well as at a number of clinics in the city, many of which offer acupuncture as well. See "Five Unforgettable Ways to Immerse Yourself in Japanese Culture" in chapter 6.
- **Soaking Away your Cares.** Tokyo now has its own hot-spring spas, thanks to drilling that released therapeutic waters from deep below the surface. Top on my list is **Oedo-Onsen Monogatari**, a theme-based spa that emulates bathing houses of yore with its Feudal Period replica architecture, shops, restaurants, indoor and outdoor baths, massage rooms, and more. See "Five Unforgettable

Ways to Immerse Yourself in Japanese Culture” on p. 165.

- **Appreciating the Beauty of Ikebana.** After seeing how flowers, branches, and vases can be combined into works of art, you'll never be able to simply throw flowers into a vase again. You can learn the basics of *ikebana*, Japanese flower arranging, at several schools in Tokyo. Exhibitions of *ikebana* are held regularly at Yasukuni Shrine and department stores. See “Five Unforgettable Ways to Immerse Yourself in Japanese Culture” in chapter 6.
- **Experiencing the Serenity of the Tea Ceremony.** Developed in the 16th century as a means to achieve inner harmony with nature, the tea ceremony is a highly ritualized process that takes years to learn. You can experience a shortened version at several Tokyo hotels. See “Five Unforgettable Ways to Immerse Yourself in Japanese Culture” in chapter 6.
- **Browsing the Electronics Shops of Akihabara Electric Town.** Even if you don't buy anything, it's great fun—and very educational—to see the latest in electronic gadgets in Japan's largest electronics district, which offers many products unknown in Western markets. See “Shopping A to Z” in chapter 8.
- **Hunting for Bargains at Flea Markets.** You never know what treasure you might find at one of Tokyo's monthly outdoor flea markets, where vendors sell everything from used kimono to antiques and curios. Go early, and be sure to bargain. See “Shopping A to Z” in chapter 8.
- **Getting the Royal Treatment at Department Stores.** Tokyo's department stores are huge, spotless, and filled with merchandise you never knew existed; many also have first-rate art galleries. Shibuya and Ginza boast the greatest concentration of department stores. Tobu, in Ikebukuro, is the city's largest—a virtual city in itself. Service in a Japanese department store is an unparalleled experience: Be there when it opens, and you'll see employees lined up at the front door, bowing to incoming customers. See “Shopping A to Z” in chapter 8.
- **Shopping for Japanese Designer Clothes.** Japanese designer clothing is often outrageous, occasionally practical, but always fun. Department stores, designer boutiques in Aoyama, and second-hand shops in Ebisu are the places to try on the digs—assuming you've got both the money and the figure. See “Shopping A to Z” in chapter 8.
- **Feasting on a Kaiseki Meal.** Although expensive, a *kaiseki* feast, consisting of dish after dish of artfully displayed delectables, may well be the most beautiful and memorable meal you'll ever have. Splurge at least once on the most expensive *kaiseki* meal you can afford, and you'll feel like royalty. See “Tips on Dining, Japanese Style,” in chapter 5.
- **Rubbing Elbows in a Yakitori-ya.** There's no better place to observe Tokyo's army of office workers at play than at a *yakitori-ya*, a drinking man's pub that also sells skewered grilled chicken and bar snacks. It's fun, noisy, and boisterous. See “Tips on Dining, Japanese Style,” in chapter 5.
- **Attending a Kabuki Play at the Kabukiza Theater.** Kabuki has served as the most popular form of entertainment for the masses since the Edo Period. Watch the audience as they yell their approval; watch the stage for its gorgeous costumes, stunning settings, and

easy-to-understand dramas of love, duty, and revenge. See “The Performing Arts” in chapter 9.

- **Taking a Spin Through Kabuki-cho.** Shinjuku’s Kabuki-cho has the craziest nightlife in all of Tokyo, with countless strip joints, porn shops, restaurants, bars, and the greatest concentration of neon

(and drunks) you’re likely to see anywhere. It’s a fascinating place for an evening stroll. See “The Club & Music Scene” in chapter 9.

- **Clubbing in Roppongi.** You can dance the night away in the madness that is Roppongi; most revelers party till dawn. See “The Club & Music Scene” in chapter 9.

2 Best Bets for Accommodations

- **Best Historic Hotel:** Established in 1937, the **Hilltop Hotel**, 1–1 Surugadai, in Kanda (☎ 03/3293-2311), boasts an Art Deco facade and was once a favorite haunt of writers. It’s changed little over the decades. Endearing touches include fringed lampshades, doilies, cherrywood furniture, velvet curtains, old-fashioned heaters, and washlet toilets (combination toilets and spray bidets). A unique, old-fashioned hotel at reasonable prices. See p. 95.
- **Best Historic Japanese-Style Inn: Homeikan**, 5–10–5 Hongo (☎ 03/3811-1181), consists of three historic buildings, one with a Japanese garden and very nice tatami rooms. A great choice for those who don’t mind roughing it a bit (there are no private bathrooms), this is traditional Japanese living at inexpensive rates. See p. 98.
- **Best Modern Japanese-Style Inn:** With a great location in historic Asakusa, just a stone’s throw from famous Sensoji Temple, **Ryokan Shigetsu**, 1–31–11 Asakusa (☎ 03/3843-2345), is a modern, moderately priced Japanese-style inn that combines the best of the old and the new with simple yet elegant interiors that utilize natural woods and artwork throughout. If you want to experience a Japanese inn but don’t want to sleep on a futon, stay in one of Shigetsu’s Western-style

rooms, but don’t pass up the public bath with views of the five-story pagoda. See p. 96.

- **Best Hotel if Money is No Object: Park Hyatt Tokyo**, 3–7–1–2 Nishi-Shinjuku, in Shinjuku (☎ 800/233-1234 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/5322-1234), is among the most gorgeous and sophisticated hotels in Japan, with rooms to die for, stunning views, and one of Tokyo’s best restaurants. See p. 74.
- **Best Location: Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi**, 1–11–1 Marunouchi, next to Tokyo Station (☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S., or 03/5222-7222), provides easy access to Narita International Airport, the Shinkansen bullet train, and local commuter and subway lines, and is also within easy walking distance of financial districts and the Ginza. Yet with only 57 rooms, it cocoons guests from the mad swirl of central Tokyo with the best money can buy. See p. 71.
- **Best for Business Travelers: Imperial Hotel**, 1–1–1 Uchi-saiwai-cho, across from Hibiya Park (☎ 800/223-6800 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/3504-1111), wins my vote as the best for business travelers, with its central location close to the Ginza and financial districts, excellent service, 17 restaurants and bars, 24-hour room service, an extensively equipped business center,

comfortable rooms complete with three phones, a fax machine, free high-speed Internet access (and a private e-mail address for each guest), and a safe large enough for a briefcase. See p. 79.

• **Best for a Romantic Getaway:**

Nothing beats a weekend getaway to the historic **Fujiya Hotel**, in Hakone (☎ 0460/2-2211). Established in 1878, it is one of Japan's finest, most majestic hotels, boasting great views, Japanese- and Western-style architecture, a wonderful 1930s dining hall, and a large landscaped garden perfect for moonlit walks. See p. 270.

• **Best Trendy Hotel: Hotel Sofitel,**

2-1-48 Ikenohata, in Ueno (☎ 800/221-4542 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/5685-7111), is not only Tokyo's most uniquely shaped hotel—five trapezoids stacked on top of each other—but it's also Tokyo's best-kept secret. A sophisticated boutique hotel with only four rooms on each floor, it offers great views of Shinobazu Pond and a fine French restaurant. See p. 81.

• **Best for Internet Buffs: Royal Park Hotel,**

2-1-1 Nihombashi-Kakigara-cho (☎ 800/457-4000 in the U.S., or 03/3667-1111), offers a sophisticated TV center that provides high-speed Internet access, computer games, and e-mail capability in all its rooms. See p. 81.

• **Best Lobby for Pretending You're Rich:**

With its high rates, tons of marble, neoclassical columns, statuary, huge floral bouquets, palm trees, and attentive doormen, the **Westin Tokyo**, 1-4-1 Mita, in Ebisu (☎ 800/WESTIN-1 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/5423-7000), is a favorite among wealthy Japanese. See p. 75.

• **Best for Families: National Children's Castle Hotel,**

Jingumae, in Aoyama (☎ 03/3797-5677), is located in the same complex as Tokyo's best and most sophisticated indoor/outdoor playground, and even offers some Japanese-style rooms where families can experience tatami living. See p. 99.

• **Best Moderately Priced Hotel:**

Occupying the top floors of a Shinjuku skyscraper just a couple minutes' walk from Shinjuku Station, the **Hotel Century Southern Tower**, 2-2-1 Yoyogi (☎ 03/5354-0111), offers great views, a convenient location, and comfortable rooms at reasonable prices. See p. 90.

• **Best Budget Accommodations:**

Although the building is rather nondescript, **Ryokan Sawanoya**, 2-3-11 Yanaka, in Ueno (☎ 03/3822-2251), is nestled in a delightful neighborhood of traditional shops and old wooden houses; the English-speaking owner goes out of his way to introduce the neighborhood and make guests feel at home with such extras as complimentary tea and instant coffee, and free laundry detergent. An added bonus is the free weekly lion dances performed by his son. See p. 98.

• **Best Health Club: Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Chinzan-So,**

2-10-8 Sekiguchi, in northwest Tokyo (☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S., or 03/3943-2222), wins hands-down with its health spa boasting a gorgeous glass-enclosed indoor swimming pool with a retractable ceiling, sunning terrace, indoor and outdoor Jacuzzis, sauna, steam room, 24-hour fitness gym with personal-size TVs at most workstations, complimentary continental breakfast, and hot-spring baths with thermal water shipped in from Izu Peninsula—all absolutely free for

hotel guests, a rarity in Japan. See p. 79.

- **Best Hotel Pool for Serious Workouts: Park Hyatt Tokyo** in Shinjuku wins kudos for free entry for hotel guests to its dramatic, sunlit, 20m (66-ft.) indoor pool, on the 47th floor with great views over Tokyo. See p. 74.
- **Best Views:** If it's winter, when Mount Fuji is most likely to be visible, the **Park Hyatt Tokyo** in Shinjuku affords great views of Japan's tallest mountain. Otherwise, I love the views from the **Hotel Inter-Continental Tokyo Bay**, 1-16-2 Kaigan (☎ 800/327-0200 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/5404-2222), located right on the waterfront with great views of Tokyo Bay and the chameleon Rainbow Bridge, even from the bathrooms. See p. 74 and 85.
- **Best Hotel for Spotting VIPs:** Located across from the American Embassy, the dignified **Hotel Okura**, 2-10-4 Toranomon, in Minato-ku (☎ 800/223-6800 in the U.S., or 03/3582-0111), provides discreet refuge for visiting U.S. dignitaries and a wide range of celebrities, including the Rolling Stones, the late Vladimir Horowitz, Yo-Yo Ma, Henry

Kissinger, and David Bowie. See p. 78.

- **Best Hotel Restaurant: New York Grill** in the Park Hyatt Tokyo has long been Tokyo's dining hot spot, boasting great food, excellent service, knockout views, live jazz, and tables booked weeks in advance. See p. 128.
- **Best Hotel Garden: Hotel New Otani**, 4-1 Kioi-cho, in Akasaka (☎ 800/421-8795 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/3265-1111), has a beautiful 400-year-old Japanese garden that once belonged to a feudal lord. Its sprawling 4 hectares (10 acres) contain ponds, waterfalls, bridges, bamboo groves, and manicured bushes. See p. 84.
- **Best Hotel for Pretending You're Not in Tokyo:** Located on the man-made island of Odaiba, the **Hotel Nikko Tokyo**, 1-9-1 Daiba (☎ 800/645-5687 in the U.S. and Canada, or 03/5500-5500), has a resortlike atmosphere, is surrounded by parks and gardens, and is just a short walk away from a sandy swimming beach. A glance outside your hotel room, however, serves as a reminder—the city skyline crowds the edge of Tokyo Bay. See p. 86.

3 Best Bets for Dining

- **Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner:** Great Pacific Rim fusion cuisine, attentive but unobtrusive service, dim lighting in an airy, tropical setting, a year-round open deck for after-dinner drinks, and a row of massage chairs make **Casita**, 54-10-25 Roppongi (☎ 03/5414-3190), a perfect rendezvous for a romantic evening. See p. 144.
- **Best Spot for a Business Lunch:** The convenient Akasaka location and varied, international menu of **Trader Vic's**, 4-1 Kioi-cho

(☎ 03/3265-4707), make playing host or hostess here a cinch. See p. 151.

- **Best Spot for a Celebration: New York Grill**, 3-7-1-2 Nishi-Shinjuku (☎ 03/5322-1234), has all the makings of a joyous occasion: great food, excellent service, breathtaking views, and superb live jazz. See p. 128.
- **Best Decor:** In a city where presentation counts as much as the food itself, it's difficult to choose the best decor. For traditional surroundings, nothing beats the

Japanese-style rooms of **Takamura** in Roppongi (☎ 03/3585-6600), **Komagata Dojo** in Asakusa (☎ 03/3842-4001), or **Kandagawa** in Kanda (☎ 03/3251-5031). For offbeat decor, one of my favorites is **Tableaux** in Daikanyama (☎ 03/5489-2201), with its whimsical, Russian-tearoom atmosphere. See p. 142, 124, and 153.

- **Best View: New York Grill**, located on the 52nd floor and surrounded by glass, offers breathtaking views of an endless city and, on clear days, Mount Fuji, making this the closest you can get to dining on a cloud. See p. 128.
- **Best Wine List: New York Grill** wins here, too, with 1,600 bottles in its cellar, featuring mostly California wines. **La Tour d'Argent**, New Otani Hotel, 4-1 Kioi-cho (☎ 03/3239-3111), has an excellent choice of French wines. See p. 128 and 150.
- **Best for Kids:** Loud music, rock 'n' roll memorabilia, and familiar fare like burgers, chicken, and sandwiches make the **Hard Rock Cafe**, with two locations at 5-4-20 Roppongi (☎ 03/3408-7018) and 7-1-1 Ueno (☎ 03/5826-5821), a sure winner with children and baby boomers alike. See p. 147.
- **Best American Cuisine:** Steaks and seafood are the mainstays of the classy **New York Grill** (see above), with high prices to match. Easier on the budget is the U.S. chain **Tony Roma's**, with several locations in Tokyo. See p. 128 and 152.
- **Best French Cuisine: La Tour d'Argent**, Hotel New Otani, 4-1 Kioi-cho, in Akasaka (☎ 03/3239-3111), is the Tokyo branch of this very famous Parisian restaurant, serving excellent classic French cuisine, including duckling flown in from Brittany. A beautiful, dramatic setting and superb service round out the experience. See p. 150.
- **Best Kaiseki:** Perched on a wooded hill in a 50-year-old traditional house, **Takamura**, 3-4-27 Roppongi (☎ 03/3585-6600), offers eight private tatami rooms and exquisitely prepared kaiseki meals. Expensive but worth it. See p. 142.
- **Best Sushi:** If money is no object, head for **Sushiko**, 6-3-8 Ginza (☎ 03/3571-1968), a fourth-generation restaurant with room for only 11 privileged diners. Otherwise, for sushi on a budget, try **Sushi Dai**, located in the Tsukiji Fish Market (☎ 03/3542-1111), where the fish couldn't be any fresher. See p. 115 and 123.
- **Best Fusion/Crossover Cuisine: Nobu**, 6-10-17 Minami Aoyama (☎ 03/5467-0022), is Tokyo's hottest restaurant for fusion food, serving its own beautiful creations of East-meets-West cuisine with a unique blend of Pacific Rim ingredients. Also good: **Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill** in Roppongi Hills (☎ 03/5786-9630) and **Casita** (see above). See p. 131, 145, and 144.
- **Best Burgers:** Hawaiian import **Kua' Aina**, 5-10-21 Minami Aoyama (☎ 03/3407-8001), hits the spot with the best burgers in town, a real lifesaver when nothing else will do. See p. 137.
- **Best Pizza:** Italian-owned **Trattoria-Pizzeria Sabatini**, 2-13-5 Kita-Aoyama (☎ 03/3402-2027), offers the closest thing to real pizza in Tokyo, with many ingredients actually flown in from Italy. See p. 139.
- **Best Late-Night Dining: La Boheme**, with several convenient locations around Tokyo, has made a name for itself by offering

inexpensive Italian food daily until 5am; ditto for **Zest Cantina**, which serves Mexican food, and **Gonpachi**, which specializes in Japanese fare, all under the same ownership and open daily until 5am. See p. 120 and 141.

- **Best People-Watching: Aux Bacchanales**, 1-6-1 Jingumae, in Harajuku (☎ 03/5474-0076), with sidewalk seating, is a very civilized place from which to watch the hordes of teenyboppers throng past as you dine on good bistro fare and cheap wine, thankful that your own adolescent days are over. See p. 132.
- **Best for Japanese Desserts: Tatsutano**, 7-8-7 Ginza (☎ 03/3571-1850), has been popular with Japanese housewives for more than a century, especially for its *anmitsu*, a dessert made from beans, molasses, sweet-bean paste, and gelatin. See p. 121.
- **Best Weekend Brunch:** The weekend brunch at **New York Grill** (see above) is so popular there's practically a waiting list. See p. 128.
- **Best Theatrics:** There's never a dull moment at **Inakaya**, 4-10-11

Roppongi (☎ 03/5775-1012), with waiters shouting out orders, U-shaped counter seating, mountains of food, and kneeling cooks laboring over charcoal grills. Great fun. See p. 141.

- **Best Buffets: Imperial Viking**, on the 17th floor of the Imperial Hotel, 1-1-1 Uchisaiwai-cho (☎ 03/3504-1111), with views of the Ginza and Hibiya, was a pioneer of all-you-can-eat buffets in Japan. After 40-some years, it still offers great lunch and dinner buffets with international selections. See p. 116.
- **Best Place to Chill Out:** When the crowds get you down, escape to **Selan**, 2-1-19 Kita-Aoyama (☎ 03/3478-2200), with its glorious setting on a gingko-lined street, complete with sidewalk seating and an airy dining room with lots of windows. It's a good place to relax and do absolutely nothing. Another good choice: **Sunset Beach Brewing Company** on the man-made island of Odaiba (☎ 03/3599-6655), with mediocre buffet meals but great views of the Tokyo skyline from its outdoor deck. See p. 134 and 154.