

Palace Hotel Tokyo  
The Resident Online Magazine  
February 2014

# The resident



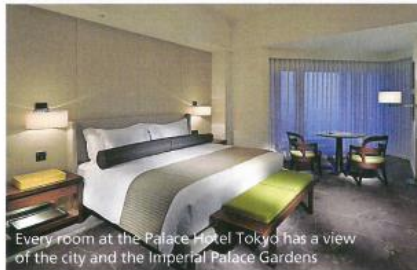
*February 2014*



**T**okyo is vast and sprawling, but if you're savvy about it, you can cover its furiously beating heart in a short stay. (It's a 12-hour flight, but fly business class with Japan Airlines and you should arrive fresh as a daisy.)

The incredible transport network means it's easy and quick to get around, but the myriad lines can be daunting, so ask your hotel concierge for a map and advice. The best way to tackle this fascinating city – an unrivalled combination of the über contemporary and the quaintly traditional – and to dissolve that language barrier, is to hire a guide.

We headed off to discover some of Tokyo's highlights with Tyler Palma of InsideJapan Tours. He took us to Tsukiji fish market, which tops most of the travel guides as a must-see. Get there at the crack of dawn for the frenetic tuna auctions, or rock up around 7am for the freshest sushi breakfast you'll ever eat. The ramen there is top notch too. We also visited the tranquil Hama Rikyu gardens,



Every room at the Palace Hotel Tokyo has a view of the city and the Imperial Palace Gardens

bordered by a cluster of skyscrapers. We stopped for green tea served by kimono-clad staff in a peaceful teahouse on the seawater ponds, before wandering on to see the Ghibli clock, the world's largest mechanically animated clock, designed by film director Hayao Miyazaki of *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle* fame.

We then hopped on a couple of trains to Shimokitazawa, an off-the-tourist-trail shopping hub with a touch of Shoreditch about it, with its maze of quirky little 'hipster' boutiques and coffee shops.

Other big draws include the imposing Meiji Shrine on the outskirts of Yoyogi Park, downtown Tokyo, set at the end of a peaceful tree-lined pedestrian avenue, and Sanjūsama shrine in Asakusa, flanked by busy market stalls selling souvenirs. We were guided by Izumi Hirano (arranged by our hotel), who also took us to Omotesando, a relatively new shopping district billed as Tokyo's Champs-Élysées, with some very impressive

architecture. Stop for lunch at Heiroke, about half way up Omotesando, a bustling, good value kaiten (conveyor belt) sushi restaurant. Then hunt out Takeshita Street, which runs parallel to Omotesando to the north east – it's a mecca for Japan's teen culture and a real sight to behold.

For more shopping, head to Shibuya for *Harajuku Girl* fashion, or for flagship stores by brands like Gucci, Chanel, Carolina Herrera, Apple and Sony, make for Ginza, where you'll also find Mitsukoshi, which is the Japanese equivalent of Selfridges.

For an internationally minded hotel that's proud of its Japanese heritage, stay at the recently refurbished Palace Hotel Tokyo. Situated moat-side, adjacent to the Imperial Palace Gardens, it has beautiful views. The interior is understated luxury with delicate Japanese touches, and the cuisine is top notch, ranging from French to Chinese and, of course, Japanese. It also features Japan's first Evian Spa, so should the dreaded jet lag strike, send it packing with a steam and a massage.



Ginza's shopping is unrivalled with leading brands in fashion, cosmetics and electronics

## TRIP NOTES

✦ Rates at the Palace Hotel Tokyo start from JPY 50,000 (£289) for a standard room (including 10% service charge, 5% tax and accommodation tax), without breakfast. See [en.palacehoteltokyo.com](http://en.palacehoteltokyo.com) or call +81 3 3211 5218

✦ Japan Airlines flies from London to Tokyo from £645 (£3,250 business class). See [uk.jal.com](http://uk.jal.com)

✦ To arrange a tour with InsideJapan Tours, see [insidejapantours.com](http://insidejapantours.com) or call 0117 370 9751