

Hoshinoya Tokyo

Most authentic *ryokan* inns in Tokyo are small, basic and away from the centre. That will change in 2016 with the opening of a new Japanese-style hotel in Marunouchi, the business centre of Tokyo. The Hoshinoya Tokyo will be the first of its kind in the city: a luxury 18-storey *ryokan* that will offer visitors the traditional experience – updated and adapted – that the capital has been lacking.

There will be *tatami* mats throughout (including the lifts), which means guests will be expected to remove their shoes on arrival as they would in any traditional inn. The hotel will have its own *onsen* bath on the top floor with spring water piped up from 1.5km below the property. Meanwhile, all the beds have been carefully designed to be as close to a traditional Japanese futon mattress as possible.

The company behind this ambitious project is Hoshino Resorts, run by Yoshiharu Hoshino, who hails from a family of Karuizawa hoteliers that stretches all the way back to 1904. On the company's website he hails the project as "a new operating model for urban hotels [that is] totally different from that of western-style hotels".
global.hoshinoresort.com

Famous friends

Celebrated novelist Yasunari Kawabata was the first writer to stay at the Hilltop and many followed: Shōtarō Ikenami favoured room 401, while Hitomi Yamaguchi stayed in 403 each summer. Many rooms include antique writing desks if you find yourself in the mood to pen a haiku.



7 **Yamanoue Hotel, Ochanomizu**
Quirky and charismatic

The Hilltop Hotel – *Yama no ue* in Japanese – is a one-off. Founded in 1954 in a building from 1937 that was previously used by occupying US forces, the hotel sits on top of Surugadai Hill in Kanda. With Meiji University and dozens of bookshops nearby, the area has a strong intellectual bent and used to be frequented by writers such as Yukio Mishima.

The Hilltop can't boast luxury facilities but it has an old-fashioned charm that is increasingly rare. Regulars keep coming back for the popular tempura restaurant or to snack on Mont Blanc cakes in the busy coffee parlour. All the rooms have western-style beds but ask for a *washitsu* if you want *tatami* floors and *shoji* screens. This hotel may not be for those who are looking for international five-star luxury but it's refreshingly different.

1-1 Kanda Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku
+81 (0)3 3293 2311
yamanoue-hotel.co.jp

MONOCLE COMMENT: The garden rooms are best – they come with a small patch of green – while the Mozart room at the very top of the hotel has giant vintage speakers and a sound system for classical-music fans.



*I'm bored.
Time to head to the Royal Bar*



8 **Palace Hotel Tokyo, Marunouchi**
State-of-the-art renovation

Loyal customers at the Palace Hotel feared that the essential atmosphere of the 1961 original would be lost when it was torn down and rebuilt from scratch. They needn't have worried.

Yes, the new 290-room hotel that was unveiled in 2012 is sparkling and modern: the sunny rooms with their generous bathrooms and Japanese bed linen are a major upgrade; the Evian spa is a state-of-the-art retreat; and the moat-side terrace and lobby lounge are smart additions. But the feel of the old place is still there. The hotel's Japanese identity is never forgotten, from the highly rated restaurants to the shopping arcade, which has been filled with an imaginative selection of Japanese products and handicrafts.

Most of the staff from the old hotel returned, including Masaru Watanabe (pictured), the charming GM. Other welcome returnees include the dimly lit Royal Bar and the Michelin-starred French restaurant Crown, long favoured by politicians from nearby Kasumigaseki. And, of course, that thrilling view over the Imperial Palace.

1-1-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku
+81 (0)3 3211 5211
palacehoteltokyo.com

MONOCLE COMMENT: For lunch or dinner with a view book a private *tatami* room at the Wadakura *kaiseki* restaurant. Try the house saké 1-1-1, made for the hotel by famed Niigata brewer Hakkaisan.



Old School

The Palace knows how to do luxury

