Tokyo, a 400-Year Narrative
As the countdown to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games continues, the world has become even more intrigued by Tokyo. For more than 400 years, ever since the Tokugawa Shogunate established its headquarters in Edo (present-day Tokyo), people have continued to be drawn to the city. These pages look at the metropolis from different angles, revealing its tremendous energy and influence.
Then and Now—
A Century Time Slip

The black and white photograph below was taken in 1904, more than 110 years ago, with a camera sent aloft on a balloon. It is reputedly the first aerial photo taken in Japan. The buildings laid out in an orderly fashion in the center foreground were in the Ginza district. Trees occupy a large area (background, center) around the Imperial Palace, just as they do today. The buildings grouped in a somewhat triangular fashion in the left foreground were around Shimbashi Station. The two photos demonstrate how buildings have stretched upward and the city has expanded outward.

(Old photo: taken in 1904: JCII Camera Museum; New photo: Getty Images)

War, natural disasters and major changes over the years have all been part of the history experienced by the metropolis, which is always ready to redevelop and reinvent itself. These photos offer a decade-by-decade comparison of Tokyo and an idea of the dramatic changes that have taken place since the early 1900s.

Tokyo:
Dynamic Urban Regeneration

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(Old photo: taken in 1904: JCII Camera Museum; New photo: Getty Images)
Around the end of the Edo period (19th century), Japan ended its policy of seclusion after pressure from a number of Western countries. The defensive military base constructed at the time was an island fort armed with cannon that still stands in Tokyo Bay. The offshore area is now reclaimed land home to TV stations, retail buildings and more.

Old photo, taken in 1955: The Mainichi Newspapers; New photo: amanaimages

More people pass through Shinjuku Station each day than through any other train station in Japan. The old photograph was taken in front of the station in the early 19th century. Near the west entrance to the station, where horse-drawn wagons and streetcars once passed, now stand the offices of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which relocated there in 1991, making Shinjuku the capital’s administrative center.

Old photo, taken in 1923: Shinjuku Historical Museum; New photo: amanaimages

During the 17th century, Ginza was the location for the mint that made silver coins (gin means silver). After the 20th century, the Ginza district became the most prestigious shopping area in Tokyo, with department stores lining the streets and well-established retail outlets and shops selling luxury goods. In the late 20th century, world-famous brands opened stores in the area, elevating Ginza from Japan’s premier shopping destination to the world’s foremost shopping experience. New retail buildings have opened their doors one after the other over the last five years.

Old photo, taken around 1962: Chuo City Kyobashi Library; New photo: Aflo

Four hundred years ago, the Asakusa entertainment district for city folk flourished along the banks of the Sumida River as a magnet for visitors to Senso-ji Temple. The Great Kanto Earthquake that struck in 1923 and World War II caused catastrophic damage to the area, but Asakusa recovered remarkably well. In 2012 the Tokyo Skytree tower was erected on the far side of the Sumida River, and today both sides of the river attract a growing number of sightseers out for a good time. People still use Azuma Bridge to cross the Sumida River.

Old photo, taken in 1923, Azuma Bridge collapsed in the earthquake that year: The Mainichi Newspapers; New photo: Natori Kazuhisa
The old castle area, where the Imperial Palace locates now, was at the inner end of an estuary, and he had it filled in. Today, the Marunouchi area, between the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Station, and the Hibiya district just south of the palace, are packed with office buildings, but they were once part of the saltwater bay. After the estuary was filled in, nearby hills were cut to make a new watercourse for the Kanda River, guiding it to the Sumida River.

After all this tremendous work, a moat was constructed to surround the castle. This was the inner moat. Around it, the outer moat, 12 kilometers long, was developed as a major line of defense against enemy attack.

The water channels were also used to promote urban expansion. Back then, 300 feudal lords (daimyo) were posted temporarily to Edo from different parts of the country. These were just some of the many who swore allegiance to the government of the Tokugawa shoguns (military leaders in Japan until the middle of the 19th century). The government assigned them homes in large areas along the watercourses and streets. The daimyo districts are said to have taken up 70% of the urban land. As more became established around the water channels, the city became larger and larger.

In 1654, the newly constructed Tamagawa Aqueduct began drawing water from higher ground in the west. Some of the water flowed to the outer moat, and from there to the inner moat, then to the Kanda River, the Nihonbashi River, and finally to the sea. The audacious urban plan was now complete. Conceived by leyasu 50 years earlier, it had spanned more than a generation. Edo thrived as a “city of water,” and would eventually grow to become a metropolis of one million people.

Edo ended up serving as the nation’s primary castle city for almost 300 years. Why was Edo able to take the place of Kyoto, which had been the capital for many centuries? There are a number of reasons, one of them being that the region’s terrain offers great potential. Recognizing this fact, leyasu developed his grand plan to transform Edo into a “city of water.” Today, we can only be astounded by his bold concept, impossible to conceive of today, and the tremendous energy of the people who transformed his concept into reality.

If you compare a map showing the city in the 17th century with a map of modern-day Tokyo, you will see that Tokyo’s layout is built on top of the old Edo layout. Expressways were constructed above the water channels, which were filled in. Sections of railway and subway lines follow the castle’s outer moat. The wide swaths of land once occupied by daimyo residences are now used for other purposes, such as government buildings, schools and parks.

Meiji Jingu Shrine and the Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden were also daimyo residential lands at one time. Many of the high buildings crowding the city center were built on land where daimyo residences once stood. Ambitious urban developments, such as those of the Marunouchi and Roppongi districts, also trace their roots back to those times.

What was once an undeveloped settlement on the seashore was transformed over a period of 400 years into one of the world’s largest metropolises. The groundwork for it all was the city of Edo, based on Tokugawa Ieyasu’s vision. Stroll around Tokyo today, and you can still find traces of Edo history in many places.
Time Travel with *Ukiyoe* Woodblock Prints and Photos of Tokyo

The citizens of old Tokyo in the 18th century were outgoing. When they found some free time, they would take off to enjoy themselves. Blossom viewing, festivals, gorgeous scenic spots, tourist attractions—there were plenty of places to have a good time. Tokyo today is much the same. These *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints by Utagawa Hiroshige show some of the places which have remained most popular over the years.

![Kameido, Ueno, Ryogoku and Ochanomizu *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints: Courtesy of Hagi Urugami Museum, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Asakusa print: Courtesy of Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library).](image1)

Kameido

亀戸

Plum blossoms bloom here in spring, while in full bloom are cherry and plum flowers. Kameido Tenjin-sha Shrine has long been a popular spot for strolling flowers. Among its many floral varieties, the strawberries of early summer here were said to be the best in town. With purple petals adorning the banks of the pond, people would sit on the benches and revel in the area. This shrine is also famous as the home of “the god of learning,” so many students visit before taking their entrance exams.

![Utagawa Hiroshige, “Kameido Tenjin Kutsu”](image2)

Ueno

上野

The Ueno Park of today was once land belonging to Kanei-ji Temple, the family temple of the shoguns who were the military leaders of Japan until the middle of the 19th century. In one corner of the park overlooking Shinobazu-no-ike Pond stood the Tsuki-no-Matsu (Moon Pine Tree). The delightful circular branch was the work of horticulturists. People of taste might have imagined that it resembled a full moon, fancying they were viewing a beautiful moon at night.

![Utagawa Hiroshige, “Uenosannai Tsuki no Matsu”](image3)

Asakusa

浅草

Senso-ji Temple is the oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo, with a history of almost 1,400 years. These views take the eye through Kami-nari-mon (“Thunder Gate”) to Nio-mon (the Hozo-mon, or “Treasure House Gate”). It was a boisterous place of entertainment for city dwellers during the Edo period (17th-19th century). Today, the alley is still one of Tokyo’s most popular spots, with plenty of sightseers.


Ochanomizu

御茶の水

In the foreground is Shohei-Bridge, a crossing point that today can be found near Ochanomizu Station on the Chuo Line. If you were to climb the slope to the right you would come to a Confucian temple that was called Sode (nowadays called Yushima Seido). The hilly area around here was cut to make a new channel for Kanda River. The steeply walled valley created by human engineering was a popular place to enjoy nature without going too far from the city center.

![Utagawa Hiroshige, “Ryogoku Hanabi” Ochanomizu](image5)

Fireworks over the Sumida River celebrate summer in Tokyo. The Sumidagawa Grand Fireworks tradition began in 1733 during the rule of the 8th shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune. In this *ukiyo-e* print, roofed yakata-bune pleasure boats float on the river and sightseers throng about on the banks. Things are just the same today. Yoshimune had cherry trees planted along the banks of the river for city folk to enjoy. Now, almost 300 years later, the riverside is one of the best places in Tokyo to enjoy cherry blossoms.

![Utagawa Hiroshige, “Ryogoku Hanabi”](image6)
A particular kind of monsho (crest) is handed down from one generation to the next within Japan. They are icon-like designs representing the status and lineage of the family, symbols printed on kimono and personal accessories. Monsho uwa-e are crest illustrations drawn by hand on kimono. Hatoba Shoryu is a third-generation artisan in this craft, following the path started by his grandfather. He is keen to try out new approaches, using crest designs for interior furnishings, product logos and more. One of his innovations was to use a computer as a design tool.

“Crest lines are basically composed of arcs,” he explains. “It’s all very mathematically based, and a computer is suitable for that.”

On the computer screen, circles combine with innumerable other circles, creating lines never seen before. Although he uses advanced technology, his crests still show a true appreciation for Japan’s traditional sense of beauty. “When tradition and innovation merge, what interaction will occur? I enjoy thinking about that.”

For the Japanese of today, family crests have a somewhat formal image. Hatoba wants to bring crests into the contemporary mainstream of daily life. His challenge is to carry on an old tradition while seeking ways for family crests to find their place in today’s world.

Worktables are lined up neatly in the atelier, where white is the predominant interior color. Horiguchi Toru is sitting at one of the tables, pressing a cup against a spinning grindstone. As soon as the cup touches the grindstone, its colored surface is shaved off and sparkling clear light comes through the glass from inside.

Edo kiriko is one type of cut glass, a traditional craft passed down from generation to generation in Tokyo. It is known for its bright colors and gorgeous patterns. Among the many varieties, Horiguchi’s work is especially remarkable—the form is not particularly decorative and appears simple at first glance, but behind that is an astonishingly delicate accuracy. Place one of his glasses in your hands and the attention-to-detail will astound you.

Horiguchi’s refined style is highly praised even among those not involved in the cut glass market. He tackles many projects unrelated to glassware, like interior furnishings for hotels and accessories.

Presenting works that go beyond the boundaries of Edo kiriko, Horiguchi has brought a breath of fresh air to his craft. And yet, his artistic perspective is surprisingly focused on tradition.

“If you really want to know the soul of something, you have to study its history. If I get enough time someday, I want to research the Edo kiriko made many years ago.”

With youthful energy, this artisan is etching new traditions into glass.

Traditional Skills Live On, from Generation to Generation

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Edo Kiriko

The various elements of the lounge interior create a motif defined conclusively by kiriko cut glass. Note the light-and-shade effect achieved by the intricate shapes on the cup at right. Top right: The lights above the lounge counter are made of glass, each one carved individually by Horiguchi Toru. (Kiriko Lounge, Tokyo; photo: Okawa & Partners Inc.) Bottom right: Cups, decorated with a low relief (traditional) chrysanthemum crest, placed on the counter. Place one of the tumblers in your hands, or pour in some liquid, or let light shine through—each lifestyle situation creates its own effect.

Horiguchi Toru was born in Tokyo in 1976. He is active in the foreign exhibition scene as well. “I really want more people to discover the charm of Edo kiriko cut glass.”

Hatoba Shoryu draws a crest, using a bun-mawashi compass specially made from bamboo. His workshop combines intricate handcrafting from another era with highly advanced digital technology.
Shibuya has always generated new fashions and trends, and it is now one of the most sought-after office locations in the metropolis and home to many IT companies. To the many faces of the district, new ones are now being added—seven development projects, including four skyscrapers planned for completion by 2020. People eager to set up new businesses and promote new trends are attracted to Shibuya, bringing even more energy to Japan’s creative industries.

One of the major changes will affect pedestrian traffic in the station area. Today, trains on nine different railway and subway lines use the station, with platforms scattered from the fifth underground floor to the third floor above ground. The station interior is basically a maze. The platforms of these various lines will be brought closer together—no more than a few hundred meters apart—to make it easy for passengers to transfer from one line to another. Pedestrian circulation between floors deep underground and buildings above ground will be dramatically improved, offering space that is safe and hassle-free even for the elderly and people with small children.

Many other districts in Tokyo offer their own attractions, but the purpose of these redevelopment projects is to make Shibuya the place in Japan that people want to visit most. Tokyu Corporation has taken the lead in Shibuya’s development since the mid-20th century. Yamaguchi Kantaro of the company’s Urban Development Business Unit explains, “Places like Harajuku, Aoyama, Daikanyama and Ebisu, which are all popular among the young and trendy, are within one or two train stops. It will also be fun to walk to those places on promenades built along the Shibuya River. In addition, public spaces are being constructed partway between those places and Shibuya for people to rest and relax. We’re promoting plans for large open areas where people can appreciate both Shibuya and its surroundings.” The idea is to make Shibuya a destination where people want to be, a place for enjoying water, greenery and strolling about—in other words, to make it more than just a district of towering architecture. The idea is to shift the focus from buildings to people. Visitors of different ages, nationalities and occupations, with different interests, will be keen to come to Shibuya—a place where different ideas will be welcome, and new lifestyles, businesses and industries will evolve.

As it moves forward into the next hundred years, Shibuya will become a magnet for new energy. Shibuya’s future is already in sight.
Shibuya’s unique flood prevention plan

To bring back waterscapes and greenery, Shibuya is promoting development along the Shibuya River. The district lies at the bottom of a shallow valley, so there is an urgent need for water control measures. The last few years have seen the occurrence of what is called “guerrilla heavy rain,” with more than 5 centimeters of rain falling in a single hour. Each time this has occurred, the station area at the bottom of the valley has been badly affected.

As a countermeasure, a subterranean emergency water storage tank is being constructed under the east exit of the station; it will prevent flooding during a heavy downpour. At Tokyo’s Urban Development Business Unit, Mori Masahiro is supervising construction of the storage tank, and he describes the project in a nutshell: “Our first step is to redirect the flow of the Shibuya River, which currently flows under an area in front of the station, and construct an underground concourse. Then, under this, at the deepest point some 25 meters below ground, we are constructing a storage tank that will be able to hold about 4,000m³ of rainwater. There, surrounded by subway lines, the river and buildings, the tank will store rainwater during a heavy downpour, preventing flood damage.”

More than three million people use Shibuya Station every day, and the construction is moving ahead without interfering with regular station operations. In some places, the work can proceed for only two hours at a stretch between the last night train and the first morning train. So precise planning is required. Construction continues apace, not constrained as one might expect in a busy place that is one of the largest rail terminals in the world.

The intermediate goal of the redevelopment project time-frame is the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, with everything scheduled for final completion in 2027. By that time, Shibuya will no doubt have become an urban center attracting admiration from around the world.

Rediscovering a Local Community

This page invites you to a residential district where, even today, you can see wooden houses from another era. Walk into a certain alleyway and you will be greeted by a scene from yesteryear—three old houses, beautifully restored, and locals relaxing around a communal well. Opened a few years ago, this small complex is known as Ueno Sakuragi Atari.

Atari is a fluid word that can mean “neighborhood” or “surroundings.” The houses, built in the Japanese traditional style, were constructed in 1938. They have been repurposed as shops and event spaces, creating a refreshing sense of community.

Although much of Tokyo was burned to the ground during the aerial bombardments of World War II, this area miraculously escaped the flames and is still dotted with wood-built shops, houses, and temples.

The shop, workshop and home that make up Ueno Sakuragi Atari, taking advantage of a traditional architectural style, open their front rooms onto a laneway, letting both locals and visitors who are out for a walk share the same indoor and outdoor spaces. Here, people organize events like an open-air markets and classes for tea ceremony and yoga to promote the arts of eating and living, which are so closely tied to life itself. Day in, day out, new ways to connect with others continue to evolve.
Tokyo: Metropolis and Economic Magnet

Tokyo, the capital of Japan, has more people than any other metropolis in the world. It is a center for the convergence of people, things, information and so much more, and the pulse of its mighty economy beats strong, day in, day out.

Urban Economic Magnets of the World: How They Rank

Population of the World's Largest Megacities: A Comparison

Livability Ranking

Urban safety

Safest City in the World

Source: Monocle July/August 2017, Site Eastnet Asia

Number of koban (police boxes) in Tokyo metropolitan area

No. 1, three years in a row

Source: Tokyo City, Japan 2015 E Government

Number of koban (police boxes)

(including residential police boxes)

Source: Table 7, Strategic City, Strategic Police Department Statistics, 2015

Average Number of People Using Shinjuku Station on a Weekday

Source: Economic Growth Robotics

No. 1

Source: Monocle July/August 2017

Number of Eating and Drinking Establishments in Tokyo Metropolitan Area

Approx. 84,000

Source: Guinness World Records

Number of eating and drinking establishments

Source: 2014 Economic Census: Basic Survey, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Life in Tokyo: Convenient and Safe

A dense rail network with tentacles spreading out in all directions, and stations within walking distance to just about anywhere in the urban center—yet another description of Tokyo. Research institutes in other countries give high marks to the city’s safety record, listing Japan’s unique koban (police boxes), where policemen work under a 24-hour shift system, as one factor ensuring law and order. Tokyo was placed at the top of the list of most livable cities by the UK magazine Monocle for three years in a row, and France’s Michelin Guide says Tokyo comes first in the world for the number of restaurants awarded stars.

Livedability Ranking

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Urban safety

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Source: Safe Cities Index 2015, Economist Intelligence Unit

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Prefectural Showrooms in Tokyo

You can see and examine local products from throughout Japan without leaving Tokyo, thanks to shops promoted by the country's prefectures. Come take a stroll in Tokyo on this magical trip through Japan.

Aomori Prefecture
Tsugaru-nuri Lacquerware
Aomori Hokusai-kan
Tsugaru-nuri features ornate, intricate patterns drawn on a shiny lacquered surface. The appearance is gorgeous, and the objects themselves are durable and practical. They are a real favorite as everyday dinnerware.

Iwate Prefecture
Nambu-tekki Cast Ironware
Iwate Ginga Plaza
Nambu-tekki cast ironware is admired for its flawlessly beautiful black finish. Many pieces are embossed with patterns and precision designs. Water boiled in a Nambu-tekki iron kettle is said to leave a pleasantly smooth sensation in the mouth.

Akita Prefecture
Odate Mage-wappa Bentwood Containers
Akita Furusato-kan
Thin sheets of cedar wood are bent to make wappa wooden boxes. These containers are both beautiful and very practical, as they even help combat bacteria and keep humidity levels near optimum. When used as a bento lunch box, a wappa is sure to make lunch look delicious.

Fukushima Prefecture
Aizu Erosoku Illustrated Candles
Ishikawa Hyakumangoku Monogatari, Edo Honten
The ornate, colorful illustrations are the main appeal of Kutani-yaki porcelain. Red, yellow, green, scarlet and dark blue are the five main tones in the palette, giving a strikingly vibrant impression. Kutani-yaki adds zest to everyday life.

Shimane Prefecture
Washi Temari Balls
Hagi-yaki Ceramics
Hagi-yaki was developed to supply tea ceremony teacups. Pale colors, especially light orange and beige, are a special feature. Over time, the delicate cracks in the glazing add to the charm of the cups.

Shimane Prefecture
Hagi-yaki Ceramics
Oldnace Yamaguchi-kan
Hagi-yaki was developed to supply tea ceremony teacups. Pale colors, especially light orange and beige, are a special feature. Oldnace has a long history and loves to let people know about their origins. The shape favored today was born in 1735 in Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture.

Kagawa Prefecture
Marugame Uchiwa Fans
Tokushima/Kagawa Tomomi ichiba
The materials used in these fans are all from Shikoku, one of the four main islands of Japan, located southwest of Tokyo. The bamboo is from Ehime Prefecture, the washi paper from Kochi Prefecture, and the glue from Tokushima Prefecture. The artist fans methodically through all the steps to make sure the uchiwa will yield the most refreshing breeze, indispensable for summer in Japan.

Kyoto Prefecture
Nishijin-ori Woven Cloth
Nishijin-ori comes in many different types, each depending on the thread and weave used.

Hiroshima Prefecture
Kendama Cup and Ball Game
Hiroshima Brand Shop TAU
Kendama have attracted an avid following worldwide, especially among the young. Kendama fans are at home all over the world, and are popular about their origin. The shape favored today was born in 1919 in Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture.

Marugame Uchiwa Fans
Tokushima/Kagawa Tomomi ichiba
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In rankings of the best dishes in Japanese cuisine, **sukiyaki** inevitably comes in either first or second. Although some variations are made with pork, chicken or fish, traditional **sukiyaki** features loin or round beef sliced into thin strips. The chance to indulge the taste buds with the sumptuous flavors of **wagyu** beef is the secret to the dish’s popularity in Japan.

**Sukiyaki** is a one-pot meal eaten from an iron pot as it cooks over a burner on the table, but the style of preparation differs depending on the region. In Japan’s eastern Kanto region, a seasoned broth called **wari-shita** is prepared first, while in the western Kansai region, the beef is first boiled then simmered in sugar and soy sauce. Wherever you are in Japan, preparing the main ingredient, the beef, is the crucial first step.

Once the beef slices are cooked to preference, they are lightly dipped in beaten raw egg before they are eaten. Vegetables and tofu (bean curd) are placed in the pot after the broth has been infused with the fat from the cooked beef, soaking up the fat and broth, for an even more exquisite taste.

Some say the difference in how people eat **sukiyaki** comes down to a difference in how **sukiyaki** originated in the two regions. Kansai-style **sukiyaki** began as a dish cooked in the field using a spade (**suki**) to hold wild fowl and animal meat as it roasted (**yaki**) over a fire. By contrast, Kanto-style **sukiyaki** is thought to have been brought in through Yokohama as **gyu-nabe** (beef pot) after Japan opened its doors to the rest of the world at the end of the Edo period (mid-19th century). However it originated, beef was not a common part of the diet for most Japanese people until after the Meiji period (a period of Westernization that began in the late 19th century), and the beef **sukiyaki** known and loved today was not seen until the end of the Taisho period (beginning of the 20th century).

After a history of almost 150 years, **sukiyaki** still reigns supreme among lovers of Japanese cuisine thanks to Japan’s cattle farmers, who have worked hard to deliver the most delicious **wagyu** beef to the table. **Sukiyaki** is a sophisticated way of bringing out the best of Japanese beef’s rich taste.

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**To make sukiyaki:**

1. Pour **warishita**, a seasoned broth made with soy sauce, sugar, soup stock, etc., into an iron pot. Bring the **wari-shita** to a boil and add beef slices.

2. Cook beef to preferred taste and remove. Add vegetables such as green onions, **shiitake** mushrooms, **shirataki** noodles, tofu and other ingredients.

3. Allow to simmer before adding more beef slices. Eat as ingredients are made, adding more ingredients as space allows.

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**Chef Aoki Katsutoshi** explains, “It is important for the beef to be fresh, as well. We prepare the beef not in advance, but just before serving it to our customers.”

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Above: Vegetable ingredients are added to one side of the pot, and the remaining space is filled with additional beef. **Warishita** broth is added to the pot with each addition of beef.

*Left:* The popularity of a **sukiyaki** restaurant is determined by the quality of the **wagyu** it serves. Top-grade sirloin is preferred by connoisseurs. The photograph shows the serving for two people.

*Opposite page:* Remove the meat from the pot before it is overcooked. Dipping the meat in a bowl of beaten raw egg is popular in Japan, though the meat is delicious undipped, as well.
A Paradise of Nature — Experience Another Side of Tokyo At Its "Big Island"

Oshima Island

The Tokyo Metropolis is on Honshu, but it also includes 13 inhabited islands, including the Izu Islands and Ogasawara Islands, in the Pacific Ocean. The biggest of these islands is Oshima, a treasure trove of nature crowned by Mt. Mihara, an active volcano. It takes only one hour and 45 minutes by high-speed ferry to experience a whole different side of Tokyo.

Photos: Kohara Takahiro
The ferry races under Rainbow Bridge, skimming over the water. After it passes Yokosuka Port and the Boso Peninsula, an onboard announcement tells us we have entered the natural habitat of large ocean mammals. Here, migrating dolphins can be seen, and we learn we might have a chance to spot a sperm whale.

Oshima is the largest of the Izu Islands, although it measures only about 9 kilometers east to west and about 15 kilometers north to south. It takes less than two hours to drive around the island. The 8,300 people who live on Oshima tend to take life easy, except when the regularly scheduled boats arrive in the harbor. Then the pace quickens as tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locals and businesspeople alike. Visitors are especially numerous in the summer, when the sea is a big draw for tourists, locally made camellia-based products, including the bottled oil, camellia flower jam and soap shown here, are popular as souvenirs.

The last few years have seen a growing number of tourists attracted by the abundant nature on this aptly nicknamed “Active Volcano Island.” Since ancient times the islanders have venerated Mt. Mihara as a kind of god, and today highland hiking is one way for tourists to complete their island experience.

The trail around the crater opened in 1998, and in 2010 the area was designated as one of the Japanese Geoparks, natural parks highlighting geological heritage. Join a group led by a certified geoguide to enhance your tour with information on the volcano, lava and local plants and animals. From the mountain lookout, which is accessible by car and located at the trailhead to the summit, you will see Mt. Mihara and part of the large caldera that was formed about 1,700 years ago. Turn around and look northwest—when the weather cooperates, Mt. Fuji is visible across the ocean. If you go further, for about 45 minutes on foot, you will come to an awesome crater measuring about 300 meters across and plummeting about 200 meters down. To the south lie the Izu Islands, to the northeast the Boso Peninsula, and to the northwest the Izu Peninsula with Mt. Fuji beyond it. The hike with all these in view is a memorable experience that makes you feel you have set out to explore the planet.

To appreciate the charms of the island even more, how about cycling around it? Close to the southern tip is a beach of black volcanic sand, sheer cliffs showing layers of lava, and other features formed through volcanic activity. Here too you will see proof that you are standing on a volcanic island.

Bicycle road races have been held for a few years now, attracting racers from Japan and abroad. A growing number of them are ace cyclists with their own bicycles, eager to test their muscles on the circumferential road with vertical differences of more than 400 meters. If you want a more leisurely ride along the coast on a rental bike, pedaling on a bike path is enjoyable as well. After working up a sweat, various lodgings and the municipally operated hot spring await you.

One type of tree that you’ll see everywhere on the island is camellia japonica. Camellia groves once played an important role in the lives of the islanders, protecting them from the wind and providing oil extracted from its seeds. Records from the Tenpo era (1830–1844) in the Edo period list camellia oil as a special product of the island. Today about three million camellia trees are said to grow in their natural state on Oshima. When the flowers bloom in winter their red petals color the land. Camellia oil contains more healthful oleic acid than olive oil, and this has created something of a revival in interest over the last few years. Two common uses for the oil are for deep-frying tempura and as a dressing for angelica herb salad.

And then, of course, there are the various types of fresh seafood brought by the Kuroshio Current to grace the table in their own season. Sashimi flavored with soy sauce steeped in spicy shina tsukudani red peppers is a traditional delicacy of the Izu Islands.

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Left and above: Bekko-udon is a soba noodle with fish roe, a dish that is flavored in white paper packs (left red pepper sauce). The sauce seems to be handed down from shop to shop and family to family in secret. Today’s catch was lapamone butterflyfish. “We’re using fresh ones just off the boat, so we don’t keep them long in ice,” says the owner of the Minato Zushi restaurant.

Top right: From around the mid-1920s to the mid-1960s, Habu Port was crowded with tourists and fishing boats. Today, the history of those days can be felt quite clearly by travelers.

Right: Marinated redfish unlaiden from fishing boats are prepared for quick delivery.

Far left: Carefully selected camellia leaves are crushed to extract camellia oil.

Left: Camellia japonica is native to Japan.

Right: These two women are wearing the traditional costume for picking camellia flowers.

Below: Locally made camellia-based products, including the bottled oil, camellia flower jam and soap shown here, are popular as souvenirs.
To feel cool and refreshed in summer, the Japanese have long employed various strategies. One of these is the *fuurin* summer wind chimes, a small bell that rings when it sways in a gentle breeze. It is suspended under the eaves of a house and tinkles softly when its strip of colored paper catches the wind.

These chimes apparently go back to the time when tiny versions of bronze hanging bells were first hung under the four corners of the roofs of Buddhist temples and pagodas to keep misfortune away. Later, it became customary for everyday folk to hang them outside their homes.

Found throughout the country are various types of *fuurin* that incorporate some aspect of a popular local craft. Those made of iron in Iwate Prefecture, which are shaped like a hanging bell, ring out a soothing, lingering tone. Another iron type, made in Shizuoka Prefecture, is housed within a bamboo cage. Its appearance alone has a cooling effect. And then there is the version handmade in Tokyo, called Edo-fuurin, which is a blown “bubble” of glass featuring a cute, hand-drawn illustration. Other examples include the ceramic ones made in Okayama Prefecture and the porcelain ones from Saga Prefecture.

Still much loved today, *fuurin* help soothe our minds with their soft tinkling.