

Tokyo Tales

A stranger in the metropolis of 100
villages



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Chapter:

Introduction:	17
Arrival in Tokyo	23
Preparing for Culture Shocks	31
Navigating Tokyo's Public Transportation System	43
<i>The Tokyo Metro: A Symphony of Underground Travel</i>	43
<i>The Yamanote Line: The Circular Route to Tokyo's Heart</i>	44
<i>The Shinkansen: Speeding Through Time and Space</i>	44
<i>Beyond the Rails: Exploring Tokyo by Bus and Ferry</i>	45
<i>Navigating with Technology: Apps, IC Cards, and More</i>	46
Tokyo, the City of a Hundred Villages	61
Tokyo - The City of Contrasts	87
The Workplace in Tokyo	95
Tokyo's Nightlife	107
Tokyo's Lost Kids	116
Exploring Tokyo's Street Food Scene	129
<i>The Iconic Ramen Stalls:</i>	129
<i>The Dazzling Yakitori Stands:</i>	130
<i>The Enchanting Sushi Counters:</i>	130

<i>The Captivating Tempura Stalls:</i>	131
<i>The Irresistible Okonomiyaki Stands:</i>	131
<i>The Alluring Takoyaki Stalls:</i>	132
<i>The Tempting Gyoza Stands:</i>	132
<i>The Sweet Delights of Taiyaki:</i>	133
<i>The Captivating Crepes:</i>	134
<i>The Allure of Melonpan:</i>	134
<i>The Whimsical World of Cotton Candy:</i>	135
<i>The Tempting Treats of Taiyaki Ice Cream:</i>	136
<i>The Exquisite Flavors of Matcha:</i>	137
<i>The Unforgettable Experience of Monjayaki:</i>	137
<i>The Mystique of Shibuya's Nighttime Street Food:</i>	138
<i>The Serenity of Tea Ceremonies:</i>	138
<i>The Joyful Melodies of Taiyaki Music Boxes:</i>	139
<i>The Artistry of Fruit Parfaits:</i>	140
<i>The Tempting Aromas of Yakitori:</i>	140
<i>The Enchanting World of Kakigori:</i>	141
<i>The Nostalgia of Dagashi:</i>	141
<i>The Allure of Okonomiyaki:</i>	142
<i>The Comfort of Oden:</i>	143
<i>The Delicacy of Fugu:</i>	143
<i>The Vibrancy of Japanese Street Markets:</i>	144
As a Guest in a Japanese Family	145

Learning the Japanese Language and Culture	155
Temples and Shrines in Tokyo	161
<i>Senso-ji Temple: A Beacon of Tradition</i>	161
<i>Meiji Shrine: An Oasis of Serenity</i>	161
<i>Zojoji Temple: A Gateway to the Afterlife</i>	162
<i>Nezu Shrine: A Celestial Garden</i>	162
<i>Hie Shrine: A Sanctuary in the City</i>	163
<i>Yasukuni Shrine: A Contemplation of History</i>	163
<i>Tsukiji Honganji Temple: A Fusion of East and West</i>	164
<i>Kanda Myojin Shrine: Embracing Tradition and Modernity</i>	164
<i>Ikegami Honmonji Temple: The Path to Enlightenment</i>	165
<i>Sengakuji Temple: The Legacy of the 47 Ronin</i>	165
The Beautiful Gardens in Tokyo	177
<i>Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden</i>	177
<i>Koishikawa Korakuen Garden</i>	178
<i>Rikugien Garden</i>	178
<i>Hama-rikyu Gardens</i>	179
<i>Meiji Jingu Inner Garden</i>	179
<i>Kyu-Furukawa Gardens</i>	180
<i>Hamarikyu Gardens</i>	180
<i>Sankeien Garden</i>	181
<i>Kiyosumi Teien Garden</i>	181

<i>Nezu Museum Garden</i>	182
<i>Kiyosumi Garden</i>	182
<i>Kyu-Iwasaki-tei Garden</i>	183
<i>Kyu-Shiba-rikyu Garden</i>	184
<i>Showa Kinen Park</i>	184
<i>Chinzanso Garden</i>	185
<i>Institute for Nature Study</i>	185
<i>Katsushika Yamamoto-Tei</i>	186
<i>Arisugawa-no-miya Memorial Park</i>	186
<i>Roppongi Hills Mori Garden</i>	187
<i>Hibiya Park</i>	187
<i>Toshimaen Niwa-no-Mori</i>	188
<i>Omiya Bonsai Village</i>	188
<i>Akasaka Palace Garden</i>	189
<i>Jindai Botanical Garden</i>	189
<i>Kiyose Sunflower Festival</i>	190
Tokyo and his Museums and Exhibitions	197
<i>Famous Museums in Tokyo</i>	199
<i>Famous Art Galleries in Tokyo</i>	202
<i>Famous Artist from Tokyo</i>	204
<i>Famous Architect in Tokyo</i>	208
<i>Famous Fashion Designers in Tokyo</i>	211
Shopping in Tokyo's Trendy Districts	215

<i>Harajuku: A Fashion Wonderland</i>	215
<i>Shibuya: Where Trends Take Center Stage</i>	216
<i>Ginza: Luxury Redefined</i>	216
<i>Omotesando: The Avenue of Elegance</i>	217
Shopping in Tokyo - From Art to Knickknacks	221
<i>Artisanal Delights</i>	221
<i>Quirky Knickknacks</i>	222
<i>Antique Treasures</i>	223
<i>Market Adventures</i>	223
<i>Flea Markets: Unearthing Hidden Gems</i>	226
<i>Secret Boutiques: Unveiling Treasures</i>	228
<i>Indie Boutiques: A World of Creativity</i>	229
<i>The Art of Pottery: A Haven of Clay</i>	230
<i>Textile Marvels: Weaving Dreams</i>	231
<i>Woodworking Wonders: Crafting Timeless Beauty</i>	231
Tokyo's Art and Fashion Scene	235
<i>The Cosplay Fever</i>	247
<i>Laquer Fashion in Harajuku</i>	249
<i>The Gothic scene in Harajuku</i>	251
Take a Break at Tokyo's Teahouses	257
Sightseeing - Discovering Tokyo's Hidden Places beyond touristic Paths	273

Celebrating Festivals in Tokyo 295

The Cherry Blossom Festival: A Symphony of Fragrance and Beauty 295

Sumo Festival: The Clash of Titans 296

Hanami Night Festival: Illuminating the Night 296

The Matsuri Parade: A Colorful Carnival 297

The Floating Lantern Festival: Guiding Spirits 297

The Taiko Drum Festival: The Rhythm of Unity 297

The Tsukiji Fish Market Festival: A Gastronomic Delight 298

The Hachiko Festival: A Tale of Loyalty and Love 298

The Asakusa Samba Carnival: A Fusion of Cultures 299

10. *The Setsubun Festival: Driving Away Evil Spirits* 299

The Kanda Matsuri: A Historical Spectacle 300

The Tori-no-Ichi Festival: Wishes and Prosperity 300

The Sanno Matsuri: Imperial Splendor 301

The Tokyo International Film Festival: A Cinematic Extravaganza 301

The Oeshiki Festival: Illuminating the Night 302

The Tokyo Game Show: Where Imagination Takes Flight 302

The Bunkyo Azalea Festival: A Floral Symphony 303

The Tokyo International Jazz Festival: A Melodic Fusion 304

Some Day Trips from Tokyo 309

Hakone: Embracing Serenity and Mount Fuji's Majesty 309

<i>Nikko: A Journey Through Time and Spiritual Splendor</i>	310
<i>Kamakura: Where Nature and History Unite</i>	310
<i>Kawagoe: Stepping Back in Time to Edo Period</i>	311
<i>Enoshima: A Coastal Haven of Beauty and Tranquility</i>	311
<i>Izu Peninsula: Where Nature's Splendor Unfolds</i>	312
<i>Yokohama: Where Modernity and Tradition Collide</i>	313
Coping with Natural Disasters in Tokyo	320
<i>Tokyo's Geographical Vulnerabilities</i>	320
<i>Earthquake Preparedness and Response</i>	321
<i>Typhoon Preparedness and Response</i>	321
<i>Emotional Resilience and Community Support</i>	322
<i>Innovations and Adaptations</i>	324
<i>Mental Health Support and Healing</i>	325
<i>Continual Learning and Collaboration</i>	326
Saying Goodbye to Tokyo	331
Conclusion	341
A personal word from the Author	344



Introduction

There is a place where the ordinary becomes extraordinary, where dreams come to life amidst a symphony of sights, sounds, and sensations. It is a city that pulses with energy, where tradition dances with innovation, and where every street corner holds a story waiting to be told. Welcome to Tokyo, a metropolis unlike any other, where life unfolds with breathtaking intensity.

As I step onto the bustling streets of this vibrant city, a wave of excitement washes over me. Tokyo, a name that resonates with anticipation and wonder, is a tapestry of colors, contrasts, and contradictions. It is a place where ancient temples stand shoulder to shoulder with futuristic skyscrapers, and where the scent of incense mingles with the aroma of sizzling street food.

The heart of Tokyo beats strongest in its people, an intricate web of diverse individuals who shape the city's character. From the salarymen meticulously navigating their daily routines to the geishas who embody elegance and grace, each person adds a brushstroke to the captivating portrait of this bustling metropolis.

In the vibrant district of Shibuya, the youthful energy of Tokyo thrives. Here, amidst a sea of neon lights and towering billboards, a new generation carves out its identity. Harajuku, with its avant-garde fashion and eccentric street styles, is a testament to the boundless creativity that flourishes within these streets. And as night falls, the world-famous Shibuya Crossing transforms into a mesmerizing spectacle, as thousands of pedestrians

converge in a symphony of movement, a visual symphony that captures the essence of Tokyo's kinetic spirit.

Yet Tokyo's charm extends beyond its modern facades. In the serene gardens of the Imperial Palace, time seems to stand still. As I stroll through the meticulously manicured landscapes, surrounded by ancient stone walls and tranquil moats, I am transported to a different era, where the whispers of history echo in every breeze. Here, amidst the cherry blossom trees in bloom, I am reminded of the fleeting beauty that graces this city each spring, painting the landscape in delicate shades of pink.

But Tokyo is not just a city of dreams and beauty; it is a place of resilience and strength. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the devastation of World War II, and the more recent challenges faced after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami-all have tested the spirit of Tokyo and its people. Yet, time and again, this metropolis has risen from the ashes, rebuilding and reinventing itself with a determination that is awe-inspiring.

To truly understand Tokyo, one must venture beyond its well-trodden paths. The historic district of Asakusa, with its centuries-old Senso-ji Temple, offers a glimpse into the city's past, a reminder of the traditions that have withstood the test of time. A boat ride along the Sumida River reveals a different perspective, as the city's modern skyline gives way to a tapestry of old wooden houses and hidden gems.

And then there is the food, a culinary odyssey that tantalizes the taste buds and ignites the senses. From savoring the delicate artistry of sushi at Tsukiji Fish Market to indulging in a bowl of piping hot ramen in a narrow

Shinjuku alley, Tokyo's food scene is a journey in itself. It is here, amidst the bustling izakayas and hidden gems tucked away in the backstreets, that one truly experiences the heart and soul of this city.

In this book, Tokyo Tales: As a stranger in the metropolis of 100 villages, I invite you to join me on a journey through the beating heart of Tokyo. Together, we will peel back the layers of the city, delving deeper into its hidden corners and unearthing the stories that lie beneath the surface. We will meet the unsung heroes, the tireless artisans who dedicate their lives to preserving traditional crafts, from delicate pottery in the workshops of Setagaya to the meticulous art of swordsmithing in the old district of Bunkyo.

Every neighborhood we explore will reveal a new facet of Tokyo's personality. In the electric streets of Akihabara, we will witness the fusion of technology and pop culture, where anime enthusiasts gather in maid cafes and the latest gadgets beckon from towering electronics stores. In Yanaka, a neighborhood frozen in time, we will wander through narrow alleys lined with wooden houses and discover the charms of a bygone era.

But amidst the whirlwind of activity, Tokyo offers moments of quiet contemplation. The serenity of Meiji Shrine, surrounded by a tranquil forest, provides a sanctuary for reflection and spiritual connection. The Tokyo National Museum, with its vast collection of art and artifacts, invites us to delve into Japan's rich cultural heritage, gaining insight into the traditions that have shaped this nation.

Tokyo's vibrant cultural scene extends beyond its museums and galleries. From the breathtaking performances of Kabuki and Noh theater to the captivating melodies of taiko drumming and traditional shamisen music, the city is a stage for artistic expression. The bustling theaters of Ginza and the underground live houses of Shimokitazawa come alive with the passionate performances of actors, musicians, and dancers who infuse their art with raw emotion.

To truly understand Tokyo's heartbeat, we must also listen to the voices of its inhabitants. We will meet the Tokyoites who navigate the city's bustling streets with ease, their resilience and adaptability shining through. The street vendors of Ameya-Yokocho Market, with their warm smiles and tempting wares, share tales of hard work and dreams pursued. The elderly residents of the quiet neighborhoods, ever ready with a friendly greeting, offer glimpses into a simpler way of life.

But Tokyo Tales is not just a collection of individual stories; it is a tapestry that weaves them together, illustrating the interconnectedness of this vibrant metropolis. The stories of a salaryman navigating the maze of corporate life, a chef mastering the art of sushi, and a train conductor ensuring the seamless operation of the city's vast transportation network-all intertwine to form the intricate fabric of Tokyo's daily existence.

As we embark on this journey, I invite you to open your heart and mind to the wonders of Tokyo. Let its energy engulf you, its stories captivate you, and its people inspire you. From the early morning hustle and bustle of Tsukiji Fish Market to the tranquil evenings spent strolling along