

## Traveling in Japan

Tokyo has three of the busiest train stations in the world, Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukuro. When taking the train to scheduled activities, make sure you give yourself extra time to get to your destination. We found it took longer to get to places than expected. We made the mistake



in taking the train from Shinjuku station during rush hour, if you are in any way claustrophobic, I would not recommend this. People say NYC rush hour is bad, but it doesn't even come close to rush hour in Tokyo. While this experience was in a way fun, it was something I only did once. Afterwards, I was much more aware of the time and make sure to avoid the rush hour mayhem.

In Tokyo I booked two tours, a private tour of the Tsukiji Fish Market and a group tour on Japanese architecture in districts of Harajuku, Omotesando, and Roppongi.

**Tsukiji Fish Market:** This is a great tour for anyone who loves food. Our guide had a background in archaeology and gave a lot of historical context to what we were seeing. We did not see the Tuna auction, but the true gem of the Tsukiji Fish Market I think is the outer market. Because we added a sample tasting we were able to try a wide variety of amazing foods from Sake to Daifuku (stuffed flavored rice cakes) to the best Sushi I have ever had in my entire life.



**Japanese Architectural Tour:** This was a group tour through the districts of Harajuku, Omotesando, and Roppongi in Tokyo. Our guide used to work for an architectural design firm and gave us a lot of insight about the contemporary buildings in the area as well as the cultural significance of more traditional buildings like Meiji Jingu Shrine.

At both tours the guides were more than willing to answer any and all questions we had about Japan. The tours felt very personal and will be customized to the travelers' interests. Even with the group tour of (max of 6 people) each tour felt very intimate.

**Sightseeing:** the Japanese National Tourist Organization provides wonderful walking guides showcasing famous shrines and temples in Kyoto. These walking guides allow you to explore the city without missing any cultural highlights. Some of my favorite stops were Fushimi Inari best recognized by the seemingly endless red Torii Gates, Arashiyama, an amazing bamboo forest on the west side of the city and the Philosophers path, a tranquil walking path connecting Ginkakuji and Nanzenji, Kyoto became by my favorite city to explore.

