

Tokyo

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TOKYO
METROPOLITAN
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Connecting You with Tomorrow



Vertical farming strawberry plants at Oishii Farm. Photo: courtesy of Oishii Farm

TECHNOLOGY

Sustainability Through Vertical Farming

With the costs of farming rising and concerns about environmental impact, Oishii Farm pursues vertical farming as an alternative to conventional agriculture.

Vertical farming optimizes growing conditions by using stacked layers of trays in a controlled environment to grow fresh crops year-round, regardless of climate or location. Because vertical farms do not require agricultural land, they can be constructed in locations where you would not normally expect farming to be possible.

Oishii Farm's closed-loop system also allows for efficient water recycling and energy conservation, eliminating the need for pesticides. Their farms operate independently of external environmental conditions, enabling farmers to grow fresh fruits and vegetables all year, anywhere in the world.



Chief of Staff Maehara joined Oishii Farm in 2024.

Taste Comes First: Starting with Strawberries

After founding Oishii Farm in 2016, CEO Koga Hiroki quickly realized that the potential of vertical farming technology would mean nothing without a marketable product to attract consumers. Drawing on memories of his childhood in Tokyo, he decided that the answer lay in strawberries.

Not only are they considered a treat, but in terms of marketing, consumers tend to prefer certain brands of strawberries based on taste and appearance. As a new company, becoming known for particularly delicious strawberries was a great way to establish brand recognition within a competitive market.

At first, Oishii Farm focused on the luxury sector, growing their berries at a vertical farm in New Jersey and selling them primarily to Michelin-starred restaurants

and celebrities. In 2022, they expanded their sales to prime grocery locations and soon gained attention in the United States, even making an appearance on television.

While this initial focus on high-end strawberries was crucial to increase brand awareness, Oishii Farm has since endeavored to make its fruit more affordable to the average consumer. Proving that vertical farming can provide delicious but affordable food is their main goal, and demonstrating that this business model can work is the key to encouraging the expansion of sustainable agriculture.

Promoting Japanese Agriculture and Technology to the World

In addition to its business in the United States, Oishii Farm has registered its Japanese subsidiary in Tokyo. Japan's capital is not only a global leader in sustainable agricultural research and development but also a hotbed of innovation in many other fields important to vertical farming, such as robotics, automation, water recycling, and monitoring systems.

One major hurdle facing closed-loop farming systems has long been the need for pollination. While pollinating flowers with brush-wielding humans or robots is possible, it is inefficient and expensive. Oishii Farm became the first company to achieve large-scale, stable, and natural pollination using bees within a closed-loop farming system.

At a deeper level, the company takes an active role in promoting Japanese agriculture and technology around the world. The CEO gave a TED Talk and was a session speaker at the SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024 Global Startup Program, a global startup and innovation conference hosted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The company also attended SusHi Tech Global in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where they experienced positive feedback about Japan, its food, and Japanese farming.

Through sharing their food, as well as the technology that makes food more sustainable and accessible for all, they believe it is possible to forge deeper connections that cross national boundaries.



Oishii Farm's signature Koyo Berry, grown in vertical farms.



An example of how Oishii Farm integrates innovative technology, such as robotics, into farming. Photo: courtesy of Oishii Farm



SusHi Tech Tokyo, short for Sustainable High City Tech Tokyo, is a Tokyo-based concept that leverages high technology to help create a sustainable city, delivering messages at home and abroad showcasing Tokyo's comprehensive attractiveness, and the challenges of resolving urban issues.

Sharing Traditional Edo Culture Through AI

A Tokyo-based startup has developed AI models that accurately represent traditional Japanese culture, aiming to help people understand and connect with it.

The optical character recognition (OCR) model miwo can translate traditional handwritten text into modern Japanese.

From business and research to personal use, AI is rapidly being incorporated into a wide range of fields. However, AI tools versed in local contexts and cultures remain limited. In Japan, the Tokyo-based startup Sakana AI aims to address this gap.

Beginning its activities in January 2024, Sakana AI's team includes a mix of Japanese and international members. They share a vision for creating smaller-scale, flexible AI models based on the ideas of evolution and collective intelligence.



Clanuwat and the team at Sakana AI aim to develop AI models that deeply understand Japanese context.

"We want to build AI models that actually understand Japanese context: Japanese culture, Japanese society," says Tarin Clanuwat, a research scientist with Sakana AI.

Generating Interest in Traditional Art and Literature

Clanuwat, who grew up in Thailand and earned a PhD in classical Japanese literature in Tokyo, loved traditional Japanese culture from a young age. However, she worries that interest in classical literature is falling, in part because it is seen as intricate. Indeed, many today have difficulty reading the traditional Japanese handwritten script.

In her work at Sakana AI, she is developing AI tools to make classical Japanese literature and traditional culture more accessible and interesting.

First, Clanuwat created miwo, an optical character recognition (OCR) model that scans traditional handwritten text—called *kuzushiji*—and converts it



Images generated by Evo-Ukiyoe v2 (under development), which was developed by Sakana AI.

to modern Japanese. She hopes to continue developing miwo to be able to process a wider range of documents, translate into other languages, and even answer questions about the text.

With its app already downloaded over 200,000 times, miwo is a great boon for researchers. "I want to make the AI able to access minor works that have not yet received significant, if any, scholarship. I really want to make the books that no one has read accessible," Clanuwat says.

Another of Clanuwat's AI creations is a chatbot called Karamaru, which communicates using vocabulary and a perspective representative of Japan's Edo period (1603–1868). Trained on 2,500 Edo-period books, Karamaru aims "to prove that we can use historical texts to train a model to actually understand historical context," Clanuwat says.

In addition to text, Clanuwat has collaborated with Ritsumeikan University's Art Research Center to develop an AI tool called Evo-Ukiyoe that can accurately produce images in the style of ukiyo-e, a genre of woodblock prints popular during the Edo period. A sister tool, Evo-Nishikie, can colorize woodblock prints from books. The models were trained on the 24,000 ukiyo-e prints in Ritsumeikan's collection.

Discovering Edo in Tokyo

Clanuwat is far from the only AI developer who feels the pull of Tokyo. She says Sakana AI receives many applications from developers overseas. "They think, 'Oh, I want to live in Tokyo once in my life,'" she explains.

For herself, Clanuwat hopes more people, whether they were raised in Japan or overseas, develop



an interest in traditional Japanese culture.

Tokyo is fertile ground for nurturing such an interest. The Jimbocho neighborhood, for example, is well known for its second-hand bookstores and galleries, some offering ukiyo-e prints and texts from bygone eras. Long-established shops are another link to the past: Clanuwat has found stores listed in city guides published during the Edo period that are still in business today.



Clanuwat hopes her AI model miwo will help scholars and others access little-studied classical Japanese texts.

"There are many places in Tokyo where you can actually touch the real Edo," she says. Even the physical books themselves can offer a glimpse into life back then—from between the pages of her Edo-period copy of *The Tale of Genji*, a classic Japanese novel, Clanuwat pulls a dried leaf, inserted by a previous owner to ward off paper-eating insects.

Clanuwat praises the people of Japan for carefully preserving documents and art across hundreds of years, passing on valuable knowledge to the people of today. With the help of AI, she believes, we will not let their efforts go to waste.

Soaking in Tokyo's Rich Sento Culture

Amid blazing summer days, the capital's public baths offer both a unique cultural experience and a chance to reset.

For centuries, *sento*—public bathhouses—played a vital role in neighborhoods across Tokyo, providing a space for a scrub and soak before bathing at home became the norm. Today, *sento* are still valued as an affordable opportunity to refresh both body and mind.

Although public baths have existed in Japan for over 1,000 years, *sento* first became widespread in the capital during the Edo period (1603–1868). At the time, it was forbidden for private homes to heat bath water, to protect the densely packed city from fires.

An architectural style often used for Tokyo's *sento* is *miyazukuri*, a style similar to that of Japan's shrines and temples. This is said to be because carpenters who specialized in those types of structures helped rebuild the capital's bathhouses after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.

Sento bear some similarities to *onsen*, hot springs historically valued for their health benefits; however,

there are also key differences. While to be officially recognized as *onsen* a facility must use water that is at least 25°C at the source or which contains certain designated minerals, *sento* are free to fill their baths from the public water supply, and thus are more likely to be found in local neighborhoods.

In Tokyo, *sento* use peaked in the 1960s but began declining as more homes and apartments became equipped with baths. As such, the number of *sento* has gradually declined since then, and roughly 430 remain as of December 2024.

In the modern day, *sento* have gained a new raison d'être as a place to relax amid bustling city life. They may also help urbanites make it through Tokyo's steamy summer months, as research has found that hot baths can help the body acclimatize to heat. In particular, carbonated baths are said to be effective in helping people get used to heat.



The *sento* Kodakara-yu exhibited at the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum, exemplifies the *miyazukuri* style. *This is a reconstructed building and is not open for bathing. Photo: courtesy of the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum

Tokyo's Charming Sento

In Tokyo, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of *sento*: some retro, some modern, and some with additional facilities alongside their baths. The following are a few examples.

1. Myohoyu

Established in the 1920s, Myohoyu is located by Shiinamachi Station. Among its various baths, Myohoyu was the first *sento* in Japan to introduce a "silky, soft-water carbonated bath."



Myohoyu's "silky, soft-water carbonated bath." Photo: courtesy of Myohoyu

2. Hasunuma Onsen

Located near Kamata Station, Hasunuma Onsen first opened its doors in 1944, and boasts a retro design based on Japan's Taisho era (1912–1926).



The retro interior is based on Dogo Onsen, one of Japan's three oldest hot springs. Photo: courtesy of Hasunuma Onsen

3. Nakanobu-onsen Matsunoyu

Established in 1948, Matsunoyu is close to Nakanobu Station. The facility boasts a traditional, Tokyo-style *sento* design complete with a painting of Mt. Fuji and open-air baths with natural hot spring water.



Nakanobu-onsen Matsunoyu boasts a traditional *sento* atmosphere with a painting of Mt. Fuji. Photo: courtesy of Nakanobu-onsen Matsunoyu

4. Komaeyu

Located by Komae Station, Komaeyu was established in 1955 and renovated in 2023 under the direction of architect Jo Nagasaka, Schemata Architects. The *sento* offers a light, retro-modern atmosphere alongside its high-concentration carbonated spring water and other baths.



The bath at Komaeyu. Photo: courtesy of Komaeyu

5. Hisamatsuyu

Near Sakuradai Station, Hisamatsuyu has been in operation since 1956. Its elegant interior and exterior follow a design concept of "a *sento* amid light, wind, and forest" and its bath area even features projection mapping.



The baths at Hisamatsuyu. Photo: courtesy of Hisamatsuyu

A Cultural Experience

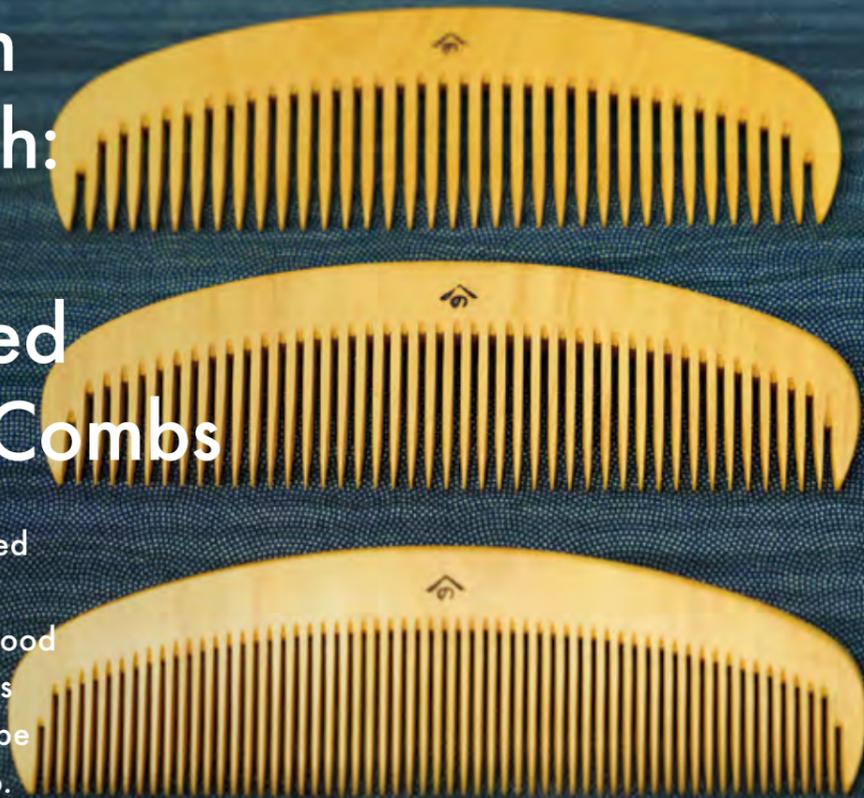
Not all countries have a public bathing culture, so some visitors may initially feel hesitant to enter a *sento*. Although a handful of hot spring resorts do allow swimwear in the bath, visitors should not expect the same at a *sento*.

Sento may be more accessible than *onsen* for some: While most *onsen* will not allow guests with tattoos to enter the baths, *sento* are generally more tolerant. They welcome international visitors in the same way as locals, without special treatment nor particular warnings.

Going forward, *sento* will continue to play a role in Tokyo neighborhoods, helping residents and visitors alike relax and refresh themselves.

Tradition in Every Tooth: Yonoya's Handcrafted Boxwood Combs

Gentle on hair and steeped in history, Yonoya Comb Shop's handcrafted boxwood combs reveal how timeless tradition continues to shape modern self-care in Tokyo.



A display of handcrafted boxwood combs, each polished and finished with camellia oil at Yonoya Comb Shop in Asakusa.

Founded in 1717 during the Edo period (1603–1868), Yonoya began as a small craft shop in what is now Tokyo's Bunkyo City. By the early 1900s, the family had relocated to Denboin Dori street in Asakusa and adopted the name Yonoya Kushiho (Yonoya Comb Shop).

In the beginning, combs were not everyday items but tools for professional hairdressers and stylists. That changed when Japan entered the Meiji era (1868–1912) and Western hairstyles replaced samurai top-knots. People began styling their own hair, and Yonoya's combs shifted from wholesale goods for barbers to everyday tools for ordinary households.

The Art of Boxwood

At the heart of Yonoya's craft lies Satsuma boxwood, sourced from

Kagoshima Prefecture in Southern Japan. Hard yet flexible, the wood resists snapping under pressure—ideal for comb teeth that must glide through hair without breaking strands.

Each comb requires years of preparation. The wood is dried and smoked repeatedly before being



Owner-craftsman Saito Yutaka shares Yonoya's 300-year legacy from inside the Asakusa workshop.

shaped, honed, and polished by hand in the Asakusa workshop. The finishing touch: a soak in nourishing camellia oil, which both moisturizes the hair and gives the comb a natural amber glow as it ages.

Care and Beauty Benefits

Yonoya's combs are not only heirloom objects but also practical tools with measurable benefits. Because wood resists static, the combs prevent the hair damage, dryness, and tangles common with plastic. Each tooth is carefully finished to be soft against the scalp, providing a gentle massaging effect that stimulates circulation.

The combs are built to last. With proper care, they can easily serve a lifetime and even be passed down for two or three generations. Regular cleaning with camellia oil preserves both the wood and the hair's gloss.

Passing Down a Name and a Craft

Saito's own path to Yonoya was unexpected. Originally trained as a chef, he entered the family business after the passing of his uncle, who had no heirs. "I was meant to inherit our restaurant," he remembers. "But there was only one comb shop left in Asakusa at the time. Letting it disappear didn't seem right, so I became its successor."

The Yonoya name itself dates to the early 20th century, when Saito's great-grandfather opened the Asakusa storefront and chose the name from his birthplace in Saitama Prefecture's Kumagaya City, north of Tokyo, once part of Yono Province. Since then, the shop has been carried through four generations, with Saito now continuing the legacy as both owner and artisan. Like the combs themselves, the family's story is resilient, flexible, and refined by time.

Old Meets New

While combs were once symbols of elegance in Edo society—the city that later became modern Tokyo—and even tokens of affection exchanged during proposals, they continue to resonate with new generations. "Our customers used to be mostly grandmothers," Saito notes. "Now we see more women in their 20s and 30s, even men. They find us through social media, and they want tools that last."

This shift has been encouraged by the Edo Tokyo Kirari Project, a Tokyo Metropolitan Government

initiative. The goal of this project is to refine the "treasures of Tokyo," including long-established Edo-Tokyo-period craft shops and their traditional skills, and to convey an appreciation of them to the world. Being selected gave Yonoya wider visibility, particularly overseas. "We've welcomed many visitors from Europe," Saito says. "They understand craftsmanship, whether in wine, instruments, or leather. They also share a culture of treasuring wood, so they connect with our work deeply."



Yonoya's small but inviting Asakusa storefront.

Continuity and Creation

For Saito, maintaining Yonoya's reputation means balancing reverence for the past with openness to change. The shop also makes hair accessories in casual styles and accessible price points to appeal to younger customers, without compromising quality. "Preserving tradition isn't passive," he reflects. "It's like creation. Every step—carving, lacquering, finishing—changes subtly with each generation of artisans. My job is to make sure those changes don't blemish the Yonoya name."

Above all, he sees his work as part of a longer conversation across time. "When I polish a comb, I think of my grandfather," he says. "Would he approve, or tell me to do it again? Even now, I feel like he's still teaching me."

Edo Tokyo Kirari Project

The Edo Tokyo Kirari Project introduces representative Tokyo brands, based on the concept of "Old meets New." We have selected enterprises that possess evident quality and beautiful design, and that represent a wellspring of new, inspired approaches to fulfilling contemporary lifestyle needs.



<https://en.edotokyokirari.jp/>

Tokyo Students Find Meaning Through Bonsai

Bonsai, the cultivation of miniature potted trees, is an aesthetically beautiful, culturally important art for hobbyists of any age.

Originating in China around 700 A.D., bonsai was introduced in Japan during the 12th-14th centuries and gradually became popularized nationwide, including in the capital.

At the Tokyo Metropolitan Engei (Horticultural) High School, founded in 1908, members of the bonsai club keep this precious historical art alive and thriving.

The high school houses two bonsai five-needle pine trees, once favored by former shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. Said to pre-date the Edo period (1603–1868), with both trees being around 500 years old, the Nippon Bonsai Association designated them as valuable properties in 1999.

Three times a week after school, club members learn essential bonsai care techniques such as watering, fertilizing, pruning and potting.



Many types of trees can be used for bonsai, including hinoki (Japanese cypress), maple, and several varieties of pine.



From left: Yoshioka Riko, Yoshida Yuichi and Tanaka Rinna from the bonsai club at Tokyo Metropolitan Engei High School.

Overcoming the Fear of Mistakes to Embrace the Joy of Bonsai Care

As they had minimal experience with bonsai prior to joining the club, the students said that the practice involved a steep learning curve. Despite bonsai's daunting nature, however, the students have persevered—therein discovering that pushing past the intimidation has yielded immense rewards.

Yoshioka Riko, one of the club members, previously believed that only master craftspeople could care for bonsai, but was pleasantly surprised to realize that not only could she do it as well, but that it was also great fun.

Sharing the Love of Bonsai with Others While Respecting Its History

The students cited their experience as bonsai instructors at a local park workshop as playing a crucial role in building their confidence to practice the craft.

Seeing workshop participants expressing interest toward bonsai cultivation inspired their own continuing enthusiasm toward the art and desire to share it with others.

Tanaka Rinna says keeping this historic practice going is quite a responsibility, as some trees they care for are over 50 years old and can live up to 1,000 years. As each individual bonsai has its own personality, it is important to cut it in the direction it will likely grow best, so getting to know each tree is essential.

Although in Japan there is a common misconception that it is only a hobby for elderly people, the students show that it is for people of any age, and that they are the ones that must make sure bonsai reach future generations.



Members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Engei High School bonsai club.

Bonsai as a Means for Deepening International Ties

According to the bonsai club students, the artistic practice also has an important role to play in encouraging international connections.

Yoshida Yuichi wants people around the world to experience the type of bonsai workshops the club organized in Tokyo. After high school he plans to travel to Norway for cycling and fishing, as well as backpacking around places such as India, the United States, and Europe—where he also hopes to teach people the art of bonsai.

Other club members want to use social media to introduce bonsai to overseas audiences through evocative photos and videos, while another hopes to see entities such as companies and art museums spearhead bonsai-themed events to help spread interest in the art, both domestically and internationally.

Wise beyond their years, the high school students have found that working with the plants can also help inspire a more natural approach to life. “I now find myself encour-

aging my friends to put down their phones and instead reach for a bonsai to take care of,” says Yoshida. “Amidst today’s digitalized society, I hope that people can find balance in their lives by learning the slow art of bonsai care.”



From left: Yoshida, Tanaka and Yoshioka carefully prune their trees using the knowledge for bonsai care gained through their club lessons.

Green Urban Development
TOKYO GREEN BIZ

Operating on the concept that envisions green urban development for the next 100 years, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is pushing initiatives to protect, cultivate, and utilize Tokyo's greenery.

Japan has achieved great international success in figure skating for both men's and women's singles. By comparison, the couples who represent Japan in pairs and ice dance events sometimes glide under the radar. Two-time Olympic ice dancer Cathy Reed is working to change that, bringing her experience to coaching the next potential champions.

Born in Michigan to a Japanese mother and an American father, Reed began competing in ice dance with her younger brother, Chris. After rising to prominence

by winning the novice division at the 2006 U.S. Championships, the siblings decided to compete for their mother's homeland of Japan at the senior level. They went on to win seven national titles between 2008 and 2015, and represented Japan at two Winter Olympic Games—Vancouver 2010 and Sochi 2014.

For Reed, representing Japan at the Olympic Games was a dream come true.

With family roots in neighboring Saitama Prefecture, Tokyo was a familiar destination for Reed growing up,

HUMAN

From the Olympics to the Next Generation: Shaping Japan's Future on Ice

A new cohort of Japanese ice dancers is gaining ground, supported by an experienced Olympian with a mission to advance the sport.



Reed and her brother Chris perform their free dance in the figure skating team event at the Olympics Winter Games Sochi 2014. Photo: JJI PRESS



Building on Japan's impressive results in singles skating, Reed hopes to see more opportunities for ice dancers to show off their moves.

and her family visited regularly for skating events. "We did all the touristy things as kids—visiting Sensoji Temple in Asakusa and Tokyo Tower."

Creating Space for Japan's Ice Dancers

Ice dance itself is unique within figure skating, emphasizing musicality and intricate footwork performed in close hold, akin to ballroom dancing on ice. Most Japanese skaters begin in the singles discipline, taking advantage of a rich competitive environment and ample opportunities to compete. By contrast, dance and pairs are less developed: fewer couples mean fewer competitions, along with limited training environments not suited to working with a partner.

Reed is currently based at the Kinoshita Academy Kyoto Ice Arena in Uji, Kyoto Prefecture. The Kinoshita Academy has a dedicated figure skating program not only for singles but also for ice dance and pairs. In Japan, as she points out, securing ice time for ice dance teams to practice can often be difficult amid the popularity of singles skating and limited number of ice rinks.

In light of these challenges, there was welcome news in September for Japan's skating community with the opening of the Tokyo Tatsumi Ice Arena, which has an Olympic-sized rink in Koto City. The first year-round ice-skating facility operated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the new arena makes use of the existing infrastructure of the former Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Center.

Continuing a Legacy Through Coaching

For Reed, coaching has been both a way to give back and to carry forward the dreams she shared with her brother Chris, who passed away suddenly from cardiac arrest in 2020. "Losing my brother was so hard because I thought we could work together to promote ice dancing here. But I made a promise to him that I would do this regardless," she says. "Seeing the skaters love what they do out there is the most rewarding

feeling—watching them enjoy their successes, learn from their failures and make this journey their own."

Some of her inspiration comes from outside the rink. Reed often spends time in Tokyo attending stage shows, ballet and kabuki performances. "Tokyo is where you're going to get the most international dance and theater," she notes, adding that these performances help enrich the choreography for her students and broaden her artistic perspective.

Japan's skaters will take to the ice in February at the 2026 Winter Olympics, officially known as Milano Cortina 2026 and jointly hosted by Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo. Reed is also anticipating the performance of her younger sister, Allison, who will compete in ice dance for Lithuania alongside her partner, Saulius Ambrulevičius.

Looking ahead, Reed stresses the importance of giving Japanese ice dancers more international exposure and opportunities to compete. "The judges need to see them, and people need to know that Japan has great ice dance teams. They need those opportunities to grow, to keep skating together and to keep improving at the same time."



Reed at the rink with a young pair of ice dancers.



NATURE

Umi-no-Mori Park: A Transformation from Waste to Forest

For 20 years, corporations and Tokyo citizens have worked together to transform a reclaimed wasteland into the beautiful forest of Umi-no-Mori Park.

Full view of the Umi-no-Mori Park.

the trees in parks and along the streets of Tokyo, making effective use of what would have just been waste to create a resource-recycling forest.

The project members took special measures to counter the strong gusts of salty wind that blow along the waterfront, planting species like Japanese black pine and Japanese bay tree, which are resilient to strong winds and salt damage.

The forest is designed to attract insects, birds, and other wildlife, with tree species that they can use for habitats and food. Insects such as butterflies and dragonflies as well as birds like the Eurasian skylark and bull-headed shrike can already be spotted around the park.

Umi-no-Mori Park offers a fantastic, sweeping view of the metropolis, including Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Skytree, and project members have plans to continue improving this new natural space in Japan's capital. The park also offers a large plaza for picnics and playing ball, an interactive grove for wildlife observation, and a barbecue facility to enjoy with friends and family, allowing visitors to make new discoveries every time they visit.



Nature activities and wildlife watching are available.

The Umi-no-Mori (Sea Forest) Project has been going on since 2005, when a proposal was made to turn a large tract of reclaimed land into a park, with the aim of “creating a forest in collaboration with Tokyo citizens.” Over the following 20 years, saplings were planted on the reclaimed land filled with waste and construction-generated dirt to transform it into a beautiful forest, which was opened to the public in March 2025.

There are very few cases in the world of growing a forest on a waste disposal site built on the sea. Since there were no precedents, a plan was needed to get citizens, corporations, and NPO members to take part in the project from the development stages, so that they could understand the purpose of the project.

Tree-planting days were held every spring and fall between 2007 and 2015, and some of the saplings

that were planted were grown from acorns found in parks around Tokyo, which made the participants feel more connected to the forest.

Circulating and Recycling Limited Resources

The Umi-no-Mori Project has one other important goal, which is “creating a resource-recycling forest.” In order to turn a mound of waste into a forest, it was necessary to create soil that would allow plants to grow.

To overcome the issue of the waste smell, the ground was filled with 12.3 million metric tons of waste and construction dirt in alternating layers. The construction dirt was mixed with compost to create a planting foundation for soil that would allow plants to grow abundantly. The compost was made from leaves and twigs that were pruned from



The park offers events everyone can join, from kids to adults.
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Green Urban Development
TOKYO GREEN BIZ

Operating on the concept that envisions green urban development for the next 100 years, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is pushing initiatives to protect, cultivate, and utilize Tokyo's greenery.

Water Supply Independent of Plumbing

Water-related issues are growing increasingly severe around the world. ENELL is working to create water infrastructure with technology that produces water from the air.

The Representative Director of ENELL, Inc., Akashi Taro, worked with engineers to develop an off-grid, next-generation water dispenser called mugen-sui. It can produce safe drinking water from the air, rainwater, and even river water without using chlorine or other chemicals.

The mugen-sui dispenser can generate water from water vapor in the air, depending on humidity and temperature, without requiring a conventional water source or plumbing. In addition, it incorporates proprietary technologies that can purify and disinfect river water and rainwater to safe drinking water standards without using chemicals. A single mugen-sui unit can generate up to 33 liters of drinking water from the air and purify 600 liters of river water per day.

Conventional water supply infrastructure depends on three factors: rain, chlorine disinfection, and plumbing to deliver water. But these do not address real-world issues like disaster management and aging infrastructure, which can prevent the steady and sustainable delivery of safe water.

ENELL's idea was to create a system that allows anyone to secure safe drinking water anywhere on their own. To put the technology into practical use, Akashi and his team took extensive measures to ensure water quality and safety.

An institute certified by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government tested their tech by pouring water from a river running under a park in Tokyo into mugen-sui every day for a month to purify. A month later, they tested the water and found that it met drinking water standards without the use of chlorine, and there

were no traces of general bacteria or E. coli either. Furthermore, the generated water remained sterile despite being exposed to air in the tank. Even after six months of storage, the water was free of bacterial contamination.



Akashi Taro, Representative Director of ENELL, Inc.

A Last Line of Defense to Provide Water

In Japan, the true potential of ENELL's technologies will be demonstrated in disaster-stricken areas or regions with decreased populations, where existing infrastructure may be struggling to function. The mugen-sui dispenser requires around 350 watts of electricity to produce water from the air, but only 30 watts when purifying and disinfecting river water or rainwater and storing it in a sterilized state. It means the unit can be run on about the same amount of power as charging two smartphones. With a combination of solar panels or rechargeable batteries, it can be operated steadily for an extended period of time, even during blackouts.

The company's products are also starting to be used on Tokyo's remote islands, where they can be



Photo: Pintira - stock.adobe.com/jp

installed in new facilities like trailer hotels. ENELL's off-grid dispensers can serve as a "last line of defense" to provide water.

ENELL's Proprietary Infrastructure Can Help Resolve Environmental Issues

ENELL's technology, which utilizes water vapor in the air, is being recognized as a way to not only secure water resources but also counter climate change. According to the National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan, water vapor contributes significantly to the greenhouse gas effect—more than twice as much as CO₂. Reducing water vapor by removing moisture from the air may help mitigate global warming.

Mugen-sui is starting to be used in smart cities, utilized as a secondary source of water for medical equipment, and installed in facilities like camping cars. ENELL offers the product at a low monthly subscription rate, which includes filter replacement and maintenance, making it easy to adopt.

Technology from Tokyo to the World

ENELL is receiving many inquiries from around the world regarding its technologies. Rather than simply exporting units to regions with underdeveloped water infrastructure, such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, the company wishes to work alongside them to create water production systems tailored to the needs of each country.

In 2024, ENELL won an award of excellence from one of Japan's largest public-private co-creation acceleration programs supported by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, and is striving to grow even further by collaborating with and receiving hands-on support from local governments. ENELL also exhibited at SusHi Tech Tokyo 2025, Asia's largest innovation conference, drawing interest from various countries worldwide.

Akashi believes that addressing the challenges Japan is facing will show a way forward to resolve various water issues occurring worldwide. Very soon, the technologies of this Tokyo-based water infrastructure startup may revolutionize the world's water issues.



SusHi Tech Tokyo, short for Sustainable High City Tech Tokyo, is a Tokyo-based concept that leverages high technology to help create a sustainable city, delivering messages at home and abroad showcasing Tokyo's comprehensive attractiveness, and the challenges of resolving urban issues.

The compact mugen-sui dispenser can generate up to 33 liters of drinking water from the air and purify 600 liters of river water per day.

Unleashing Color: How Art Is Transforming Society in Ginza

In Tokyo's Ginza district, vibrant canvases are reimagining perceptions of difference, proving that art can dissolve boundaries and bring communities together.

Oshioka Marie, CEO of
HERALBONY EUROPE.

HERALBONY is a creative company that works with artists with disabilities, transforming their creations into products, experiences, and spaces.

The impulse is rooted in the story of founders Matsuda Takaya and Fumito, twin brothers who grew up with an older sibling on the autism spectrum. Seeing their brother subjected to prejudice and treated differently, they envisioned a world where he—and others like him—could thrive with pride. The discovery of art became their breakthrough: if these works were admired as stylish and desirable, society's perception of disability itself could change.

Encounters That Reshape Perceptions

In Ginza, HERALBONY operates HERALBONY LABORATORY GINZA, an experimental space designed to decrease social boundaries through art. It is a place where visitors can encounter new values through the creations of artists with disabilities—whether in the form of products, exhibitions, or live artistic activity.

The first floor houses a shop selling art-based goods alongside a gallery that hosts rotating exhibitions with different artists and themes. Upstairs, the

office functions as a workshop for ideas: prototypes are tested and tried, sometimes spilling directly into the gallery as live painting sessions or hands-on workshops. Visitors can watch in real time as new connections are born.

Surrounded by luxury boutiques, the sight is striking—and deliberately unlabeled. Passersby encounter the works first as compelling, contemporary art, before learning about the creators. “The sequence is important,” says Oshioka Marie, CEO of HERALBONY EUROPE, who is leading the company's expansion in Paris. “When people spend not hundreds but thousands of yen on these products, they are saying the art is worth it. That alone reshapes perceptions.”

Respecting Every Artist's Integrity

The company's model is built on respect. Many artists do not communicate verbally, so meaning is understood from their process or community. A single patch of red or yellow might be essential; cropping it out would erase intent. Every use of an artwork requires approval, and partners are asked to design within the integrity of the original.

Equally important, HERALBONY rarely commissions works on deadline. Instead, it licenses existing pieces created in the natural rhythm of daily life. “We never say, ‘please paint something in three weeks,’” Oshioka explains. “The art exists because the artist wanted to create it. That respect is non-negotiable.”

Ginza and the Global Context of Art Brut

“Ginza represents authenticity—you have to be real, because people here can tell,” says Oshioka.



Colorful, vibrant HERALBONY products for everyday use. Photo: courtesy of Kitagawa Kouta

For the company, establishing a presence in this district is a step toward joining Japan's cultural core. But the vision does not stop at home.

Europe—especially Paris—has long been associated with art brut, a term coined by Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s to describe raw, untrained creativity outside academic traditions. By situating its presence in both Ginza and Paris, HERALBONY connects Japan's story with this international lineage, showing that works by artists with disabilities are not marginal, but part of a global cultural conversation.

Toward a Creative Future

Everyday encounters are changing perceptions: children watch live painting, travelers purchase scarves, executives meet artists in person. These moments ripple outward, gradually reshaping how society views difference.

From northern Iwate Prefecture to Tokyo and Paris, HERALBONY has grown from a family story into an international movement. Its mission is clear: to unleash the beauty and integrity of art created by people with disabilities, and to show

that true innovation lies not in machines or patents, but in the human act of creation.

Each work of art carries a new way of seeing. And in every brushstroke, HERALBONY reminds us that inclusion is not a distant goal, but a reality we can choose—here and now.



The first floor of HERALBONY LABORATORY GINZA combines a retail shop and gallery space. Photo: courtesy of Kitagawa Kouta

Kozushima Island: Tokyo's First Dark Sky Park

Around 180 kilometers south of central Tokyo lies the island of Kozushima, which was designated the city's first Dark Sky Park® in December 2020.

From the Takeshiba Passenger Ship Terminal in Tokyo, Kozushima can be reached in just under 4 hours by high-speed jet ferry or around 12 hours by an overnight large passenger ship. Part of the Izu Islands chain, Kozushima has a circumference of roughly 22 kilometers, an area of 18.58 square kilometers and a population of about 1,700.

Lots of fish are caught around the island, even compared to its neighbors, so the fishing industry is thriving. The highest catch is *kinmedai* (splendid alfonso), which can be enjoyed at local restaurants and inns.

The Tako Bay pier, located on the east side of the island, is a popular spot with visitors as Mt. Tenjo, the symbol of Kozushima, can be viewed from there.

At 572 meters tall, with various trail options, it is a beginner-friendly hike with lovely ocean views from the top.

The Island's Ancient Water Myth

Thanks to Mt. Tenjo, Kozushima gets plenty of water, as rain filters through its volcanic rock and earth layers, creating many sources of spring water across the island, including Tako Spring, located close to Tako Bay.

There is such an abundance of water on Kozushima that a myth called "The Legend of Water Sharing" has been passed down among the island residents.

According to legend, the gods of the Izu Islands gathered on Kozushima to discuss how to distribute water, the source of life. However, the meeting grew heated and the gods could not come to an agreement. They decided the water should be distributed the following morning on a first-come, first-served basis. The gods of Mikurajima, Nijima, Hachijojima, Miyakejima and Oshima arrived in that order and were given water for their islands, but the god of Toshima overslept and was late, arriving last. Furious that most of the water was gone, he jumped into

what was left and thrashed around. The water splashed all over Kozushima, which is said to be why so many springs exist today.

Darkness Engulfs the Island to Reveal a Sky Full of Stars

Thanks to its remote location and lack of light pollution, the island's night sky offers magnificent stargazing opportunities. In 2020, Kozushima was designated a Dark Sky Park (Dark Sky Island), an area certified by an international organization that strives to protect and preserve beautiful night skies untouched by light pollution.

All the residents of Kozushima work together to ensure that the night skies remain clear and beautiful. To reduce light pollution, they

switched the streetlights to only shine where light is needed. They also put effort into training local tour guides, so that island residents themselves could expertly explain the stars.

Since most of the island residents live close together in one village, light does not get scattered much at night, allowing the stars to shine brightly overhead.

Yotane Plaza provides particularly great dark-sky conditions and is where most of the stargazing tours take place. Located in an elevated area, it is undisturbed by the light from the streets and houses, and nearby Mt. Tenjo also blocks light from the neighboring islands of Shikinejima and Miyakejima.

On Kozushima, people can sometimes see a star called Canopus, which is rarely seen anywhere on Japan's mainland. Stargazers can also catch the Geminids meteor shower in December, find the Winter Triangle and enjoy unimpeded views of the heavens on clear nights.

Protecting the starry sky has also had the benefit of preserving the natural environment and fauna of the island. Switching to less bright streetlamps has

helped protect the darkness, which allows nature to return to its original rhythms. Locals say it has had a positive impact on wild animals, such as sea turtles laying eggs on the island for the first time in 10 years.

Thanks to unwavering community efforts, visitors and residents alike will be able to marvel at both the beauty of the cosmos and the island's diverse nature and creatures for generations to come.



Starry sky over Kozushima, designated a Dark Sky Park. Photo: courtesy of Kozushima Tourism Association



Mt. Tenjo is located in the middle of Kozushima. Flowers native to the Izu Islands can be found near the summit.



Akasaki Promenade, a famous tourist destination.

From Edo to AI: Safeguarding Tokyo's Waterfront Against the Sea

Tokyo's waterfront has always balanced growth with risk. Today, advanced technologies such as AI and drones are reinforcing its historic seawalls and floodgates.

For centuries, Tokyo has expanded toward the bay, transforming its waterfront into one of Japan's busiest hubs for trade and daily life. Much of the area now lies at low elevation, and "zero-meter zones" are widespread—districts that would flood at high tide without protective infrastructure. Roughly 1.5 million people now live in these zones, where technology and vigilance work hand in hand to keep the city dry.

The city's vigilance is born of experience. Typhoon Kitty in 1949 and the Ise Bay Typhoon in 1959 left a lasting mark, pushing the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) to launch large-scale coastal protection projects. After the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, tsunami preparedness was added to the agenda. Today, a tidal barrier line of floodgates, embankments, and over 60 kilometers of seawall continues that legacy—physical reminders of the city's constant negotiation with the sea.

Harnessing Digital Transformation

Physical defenses remain essential, but Tokyo is now reinforcing them with digital transformation (DX). The initiative integrates new technologies into coastal protection in four key ways.

First, an online Storm Surge Disaster Prevention Information System publishes tide levels, floodgate status, and live camera footage in real time. Second, a Storm Surge Risk Search Service allows residents to enter an address and instantly see how deep flooding could become in a major storm surge.

Third, an AI-based model processes tide and weather data to forecast water-level changes up to 15 hours ahead, supporting floodgate and pump station operations. Finally, TMG officials are building in-house capacity to use drones for rapid, safe inspection of facilities during disasters.

On the Front Line

Tide forecasts once depended on lunar-based tide tables and the on-site experience of TMG officials. Today, digital forecasting systems use real-time data and AI to provide far more precise predictions. For short windows of several hours, accuracy is high, enabling better decisions on when to close gates or activate pumps. While long-term forecasts may still carry a certain margin of error, they now enable more accurate informed decision-making than in the past.



Inside the Storm Surge Management Center in Tatsumi, rows of screens track tide levels and gate positions. Here, the TMG officials interviewed describe how these new tools have changed their work.

Mobile access has also changed daily operations. Where officials once relied on radio updates or workstation terminals, they can now check forecasts in the field by smartphone, ensuring that critical actions are not delayed.

Drones add another dimension, making it possible to assess wide areas quickly and gather information even when it is unsafe for personnel to enter. With safety protocols in place, these inspections give the city both speed and reach in emergency situations.



A beyond-visual-line-of-sight flight test is being conducted, with drones inspecting coastal protection facilities over a wide area.

Sharing Knowledge Beyond Tokyo

Tokyo's approach is also being recognized internationally. In 2025, the city's AI water-level prediction system was presented at the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona. Multilingual features have been added to the information systems so that residents and visitors alike can understand risks and prepare. The message is clear: disaster prevention is not only a local issue, but a shared responsibility.

Looking Ahead

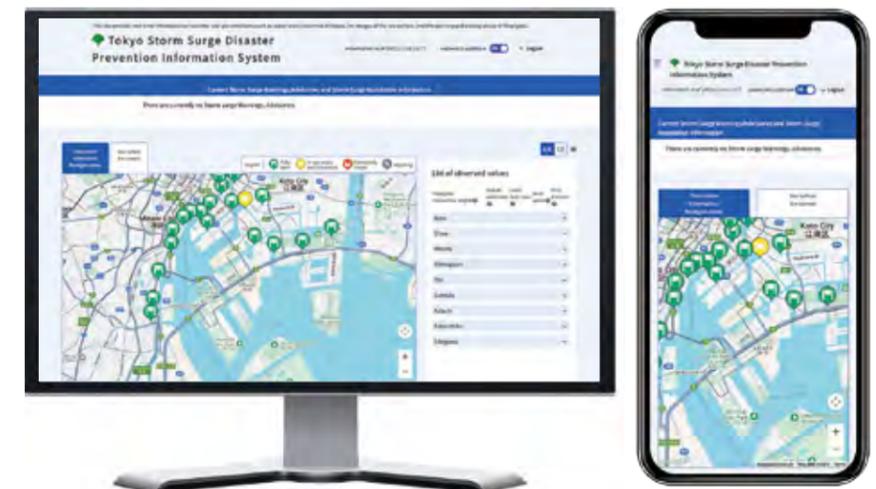
Rising seas, stronger typhoons, and seismic risk continue to shape the city's strategy. By combining hard facilities such as seawalls and floodgates with digital tools powered by AI and drones, TMG is reinforcing its ability to withstand whatever comes next.

From Edo-period land reclamation—beginning around 1600, when engineers transformed tidal flats into new districts that expanded the city's reach and laid the groundwork for modern Tokyo—to twenty-first-century prediction models, the bayfront has always demanded innovation. Today's efforts reflect that balance of tradition and technology, ensuring that Tokyo remains both secure and connected to the sea.



Tatsumi Floodgate in Tokyo's Koto City, one of 15 protecting the Port of Tokyo, with the patrol boat *Kamome II*, which conducts regular safety checks on the water.

The "Tokyo Storm Surge Disaster Prevention Information System" provides real-time information on water levels and sea conditions, helping residents take swift evacuation actions during storm surges.



Funding the Future: Japan's Women-First Startup Fund

A new fund in Japan supports female entrepreneurs and startups advancing women's roles in business, positioning Tokyo as a hub for innovation and growth.

Japan's first women-focused venture fund, WPower Fund I, addresses a stark gap: while women launch about 10% of new startup businesses in Japan, only about 2% of startup investment reaches female founders. Kathy Matsui, a founding General Partner at MPower Partners, calls this "an untapped well of talent and ideas." She adds, "Many women-led startups have brilliant concepts, but funding gaps prevent them from scaling. WPower Fund I is designed to change that."

The fund focuses on early-stage female-founded startups as well as those offering products or services that empower women, and aims to generate both financial returns and measurable social impact.

This is particularly significant in Japan, where structural barriers have long limited women's access to capital and leadership roles. By providing targeted support, WPower Fund I helps talented founders overcome systemic obstacles and accelerate their growth, ensuring that innovation is not stifled by a lack of resources.

Tokyo: Where Innovation Takes Off

Tokyo is not just Japan's capital—it is a global hub for business, finance, and technology. By investing in startups based here, WPower Fund I leverages networks, infrastructure, and international reach to help women founders scale from local ventures to global enterprises.

Matsui emphasizes that capital alone is not enough: "Tokyo provides the perfect launchpad. Access to mentors, peers, and networks is just as important as funding." With the city's concentration of corporate headquarters, research institutions, and accelerator programs, women-led startups have access to the expertise and ecosystem needed to thrive.

The fund is backed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, MUFG Bank, Ltd., Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Shionogi & Co., Ltd., Tokio Marine Holdings, Inc. and MPower Partners, among others, with a target of up to eight billion yen in capital commitments.



Matsui highlights how Tokyo is emerging as a hub for startups advancing women's roles in business.

Anchor investors see supporting women-led ventures as more than just a financial strategy.

Bridging the Gap

Women remain underrepresented in venture capital decision-making—only about 7% of decision-makers are female. Matsui believes WPower Fund I can create ripple effects: "By supporting women founders, we aren't just funding companies. We're helping to diversify the ecosystem itself."

The fund also provides mentorship, knowledge sharing, and strategic guidance, helping women founders navigate structural barriers and connect with the people and resources they need to grow. By tackling both capital and ecosystem gaps simultaneously, WPower Fund I seeks to strengthen Japan's innovation pipeline.

Startups that promote female participation do not just benefit women—they benefit entire economies. Matsui notes, "Investing in women-led businesses brings new ideas and perspectives that can transform industries."

WPower Fund I blends social impact with economic impact, demonstrating that gender-smart investment

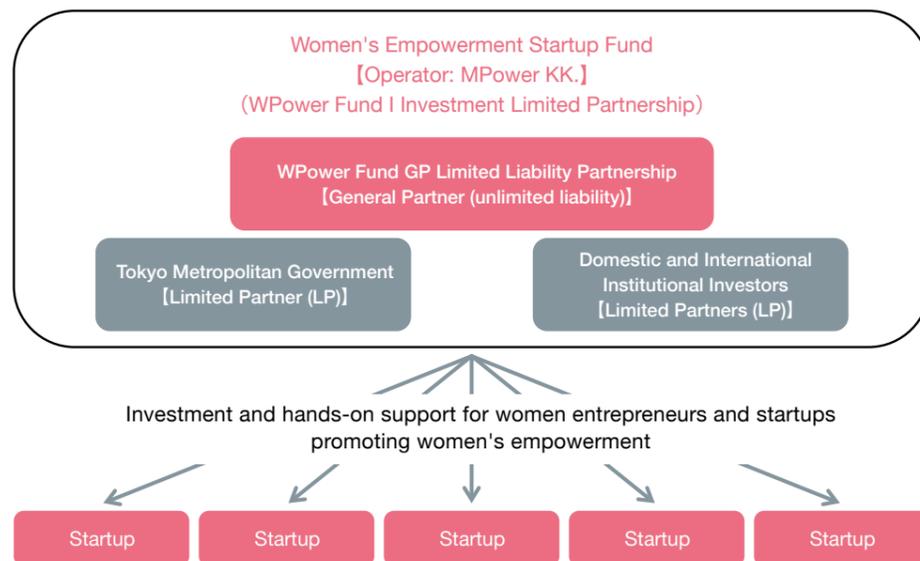
is not just ethical—it is sound business strategy. By explicitly focusing on startups advancing women, the fund aims to maximize both measurable financial returns and societal benefits.

A Supportive Ecosystem to Drive Change

Beyond funding, WPower Fund I fosters an environment where women entrepreneurs can network, share expertise, and learn from mentors and peers. Matsui adds, "We aim to provide the infrastructure and support women founders need to thrive globally."

This ecosystem approach ensures that women-led startups not only survive but scale and succeed internationally, positioning Tokyo as a leading hub for female entrepreneurship. In doing so, the fund also contributes to a broader cultural shift toward inclusive leadership and equitable opportunity in Japanese business.

Investors and partners believe this approach will influence Japan's startup ecosystem for years to come. Matsui reflects, "Supporting women founders helps transform the broader business landscape. We're unlocking innovation potential that has long been overlooked."



Fund Structure Diagram



 女性活躍の輪
Women in Action
The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is working to expand the circle of women's empowerment not only in Tokyo but across Japan. To this end, it has positioned the various initiatives it has promoted to support working women as "Women in Action" (WA) and is building momentum for these efforts.

Photo: maru54-stock.adobe.com/jp

Tokyo Basics

POPULATION

Total Population of Tokyo (2025)

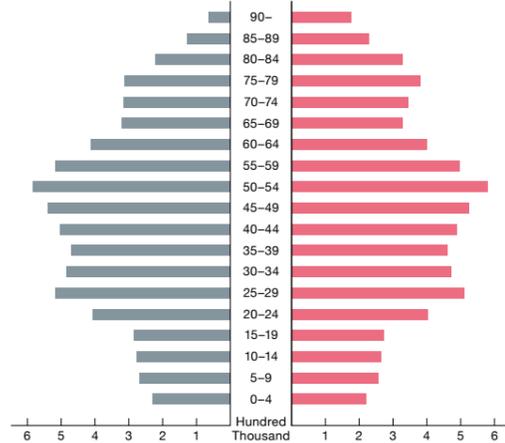
14,273,066

Population Age Structure by Gender (2025)

Men (2025)
6,999,402

Average Life Expectancy (2020)
81.77

Foreign Residents (2025)
772,418



Women (2025)
7,273,664

Average Life Expectancy (2020)
87.86

People Over 100 Years Old (2025)
7,633

LOCATION

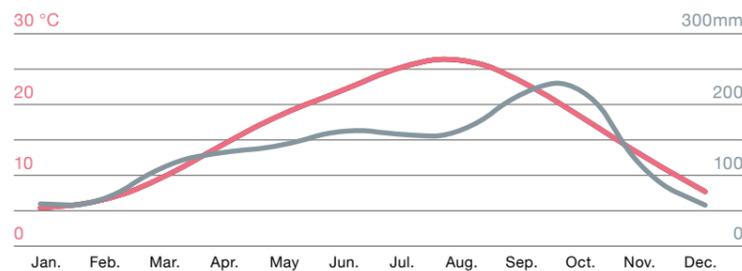


AREA

2,199.94

sq. kilometers

AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL



Source: Japan Meteorological Agency, 1991-2020 ● = Average temperature ☂ = Average rainfall

Average Annual Temperature

15.8°C

(60.4 °F)



Average Annual Rainfall
1,598.2 mm

TOKYO'S GMP¹ (Nominal) as a Share of Japan's GDP (FY2022)



1. GMP: Gross Metropolitan Product 2. US\$889 billion
2022 annual average conversion rate ¥1 = US\$0.0074

TOKYO'S BUDGET (Initial FY2025)

¥17,850

billion*



* US\$116 billion
¥1 = US\$0.0065 (Bloomberg, October 31, 2025)

SISTER AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES / STATES*

- 1 New York (USA)
- 2 Beijing (China)
- 3 Paris (France)
- 4 New South Wales* (Australia)
- 5 Seoul (South Korea)
- 6 Jakarta (Indonesia)
- 7 São Paulo* (Brazil)
- 8 Cairo (Egypt)
- 9 Moscow (Russia)
- 10 Berlin (Germany)
- 11 Rome (Italy)
- 12 London (UK)



ANNUAL FOREIGN TOURISTS (2024)



24.79

million

A 26.9% increase over 2023

SYMBOLS



The *somei yoshino* cherry tree was developed in the late Edo period to early Meiji era (late 1800s) by crossbreeding wild cherry trees. The light-pink blossoms in full bloom and falling petals scattering in the wind are a magnificent sight to behold.



Ginkgo biloba is a deciduous tree with distinctive fan-shaped leaves that change from light green to bright yellow in autumn. The ginkgo tree is commonly found along Tokyo's streets and avenues and is highly resistant to pollution and fire.



The *yurikamome* gull has a vermilion bill and legs. It comes south to Tokyo in late October every year and sojourns at the surrounding ports and rivers until the following April. A favorite theme of poets and painters, it is also called *miyakodori* (bird of the capital).



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www.english.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/

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