



Life-size Tokyo: Ueno and Ameyoko

Route : Ikebukuro / 池袋 (JR Yamanote Line / JR 山手線) →Ueno / 上野 < approx. 15 minutes >

Ueno has many faces. It has a concentration of Museums and Art Galleries, and also the Tokyo University of the Arts, which is the greatest art university in Japan. Moreover, it is within walking distance of the University of Tokyo, the highest educational institute in Japan. It is not only an area limited to the arts and academia, however. A few minutes' walk will take you to "Ame-Yoko", a feverish shopping district which dates back to the black market during the post-WW2 period, and last but not least, the Ueno Zoo with its popular pandas. This tour will introduce you to the many aspects of Ueno.



①UENO Park / 上野公園

Ueno Park is famous for the many museums found on its grounds. It also includes the Ueno Zoo, Japan's first zoological garden.

The park grounds originally belonged to Kaneiji Temple, which used to be one of the city's largest and wealthiest temples, being the family temple of the ruling Tokugawa clan during the Edo Period. Kaneiji stood in the northeast of the capital to protect the city from evil, much like the Enryakuji Temple in Kyoto. During the Boshin Civil War, which followed the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Kaneiji suffered a nearly complete destruction in a battle between the victorious forces of the new Meiji government and loyalists of the overthrown shogunate.

After the battle, the temple grounds were converted into one of Japan's first Western style parks and opened to the public in 1873.

A statue of Saigo Takamori,

one of the generals who fought in the Battle of Ueno, stands near the park's southern entrance.



②Shinobazunoike / 不忍池

Shinobazu Pond, one of many reminders of Kaneiji Temple's former grandeur. On an island in the middle of the pond stands Bentendo, a temple hall dedicated to the goddess of Benten.



③YUSHIMA Shrine / 湯島天神

Established in 1355 to worship Michizane Sugawara, known to be the "God of academics". Numerous students nationwide visit this temple and write down their wishes on the "ema"s (pieces of wood in the shape of a pentagon) before taking their entrance examinations.



④Ameyoko / アメ横

Ameyoko is a busy market street along the Yamanote Line tracks between Okachimachi and Ueno Stations. The name "Ameyoko" is a short form for "Ameya Yokocho" (candy store alley), as candies were traditionally sold there. Alternatively, "Ame" also stands for "America", because a lot of American products used to be available there when the street was used for the black market in the years following World War Two.

Today, various products such as clothes, bags, cosmetics, fresh fish, dried food and spices are sold along Ameyoko. Opening hours and closing days depend on individual stores, but stores typically open around 10:00 and close around 19:00. Many stores remain closed on selected Wednesdays.

