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Design sponge tokyo guide

Japanese Studio Schemata Architects has designed a lightweight table that can also be used as a room divider, which it claims is so light that a woman can easily wear it by herself (slideshow). Designed for the 21 21 Design Sight Museum in Tokyo, the Sponge table is available in two parts: the lightweight table and a set of removable wooden feet. To make the room as light as possible, Schemata Architects created the table from a layer of sponge sandwiched between thin wooden placagenaries - one side is natural wood, while the other side has a white finish. It weighs only 8.8 kilograms. The table is so light that a woman can easily wear it on her own, the architects said. In addition, it is easily foldable and portable, serving as an effective tool for making full use of space. To transform the sponge table into a room partition, the lightweight surface is simply lifted from its support wooden legs and placed vertically on two blocky stands. Schemata Architects was founded in 1998 by Jo Nagasaka. The studio has carried out numerous interior design and furniture projects, including a collection of spongy seats inspired by erotic bondage techniques, a Tokyo rice mill filled with boxy plywood fittings and an artist's workshop with an indoor garden. Schemata is by no means the first studio to experiment with light furniture. Among the other designers who have developed easy-to-carry tables, opposite Benjamin Hubert, whose design weighs only nine kilograms. But German designer Ruben Beckers managed to bring down his kleingleich5 table to just 4.5 kilograms using a grid of thin strips of wood. The photograph is by Takumi Ota. Switch to the main content Tea is essential in Japanese life. One of my favorite cafes is Kosoan, located in a traditional house built more than a century ago - the antique furniture adds to the refined décor. Busy Tokyo feels a world away as you contemplate the beautiful Japanese garden. It's a soothing stop for a bowl of matcha. Also try Cha Cha No Ma in Harajuku, where Yoshi Watada sleeper tea serves teas from all over Japan, accompanied by homemade sweets (chachanoma.com). If you want to buy candy, visit Mizuho in the same area; it sells two things: mame daifuku, mochi rice cake stuffed with red bean paste, and monaka, wafers filled with bean paste. Kosoan, 1-24-23 Jiyugaoka, Meguro-ku, kosoan.co.jp Gardens and temples Manganji Temple Todoroki Fudoston. Photo: Koji Ishikawa Tokyo is a hectic city, but there are plenty of temples, shrines and gardens to offer refuge from the crowds and neon. Hamarikyū Gardens, near Ginza (1-1 Hamarikyū Teien), belonged to a feudal lord during the Edo period and is protected a historic site. The water that runs through the garden comes directly from the sea, so you can even spot the jellyfish. Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden in Shinjuku-ku (11 Naitomachi) is an ideal place all year round, with cherry blossoms in spring, crape myrtles in summer, red leaves and gold in autumn, and plum blossom at the end. Among the most beautiful temples are Manganji Temple Todoroki Fudoston, in Setagaya-ku near the Gorge of Todoroki Keikoku, with more than 150 cherry trees in the park. Shopping Pass-the-Baton. Photo: Koji Ishikawa Tokyo is an amazing place to shop - from cool designer clothing stores to pretty stationery emporiums. You can find a good vintage too, however - I like Pass the Baton, which has branches in Marunouchi Brick Square and Omotesando. It sells pre-loved and upcycled clothes and accessories. Much of the stock used to belong to people in the fashion industry. To reduce, modern Japanese women's fashion tries HYPE in Shinjuku, launched by two local designers in 2013: there's a lot of khaki and black but it's never boring. The men were able to travel to Studios in the Harajuku region, which stores only Tokyo-branded clothing, including Miyahara Yasuhiro and Undercover, as well as emerging designers. The depachika dining rooms are well worth a visit; they sell everything from bento varieties to beautifully packaged cookies and Japanese sweets like dorayaki (small pancakes with bean paste). Tokyu Norengai, opened in 1951, was the first, although the location has changed slightly (tokyu-dept.co.jp). Manga haunts Photo: Alamy/DICE Ikebukuro in Toshima-ku is the largest manga kissa - similar to an Internet café - in Tokyo. They store about 180,000 manga titles over eight floors (1-11-11 Higashi-Ikebukuro, diskcity.co.jp). You pay an hourly rate, and there are PCs, shower rooms and bars. There's even an ice machine and karaoke. Nakano Broadway (5-52 Nakano, Nakano-ku) is a must if you want to experience the subculture of Tokyo. You'll find newly published manga and rare first editions, as well as numbers and trading cards. You can find collectibles from anime characters that you watched on TV when you were a child. It can be expensive. Fukube sake bar Photo: Koji Ishikawa While this izakaya (Japanese-style pub) in Marunouchi, in the heart of the city, has been in business for more than 80 years, its selection of sake has not changed much since its inception. They serve about 40 brands of sake (a ochoko - a small cup - is about 600 yen or 4 pounds). In Japan, people eat while they drink, so food is just as important as the quality of drinks in a bar. The owner goes to the Tsukiji Fish Market every day to buy the catch of the day, and the varied menu includes grilled fish and oden (a type of potted dish). Other good options include Kuri, a small bar in Chuo-ko (6-4-15 Ginza) that serves up to 100 sake brands and 20 brands of shochu, and Utou in the upscale Nishi-Ogikubo (3-31-10 Nishiogi-Kita), says serve the best hot sake in all the The oden with a ginger and miso paste are also excellent. You can visit Koyama Shuzo, a sake brewery in Kita-ku founded in 1879, to learn more about the brewing process. Photo: Koji Ishikawa To enjoy the and the madness of Tokyo, see it from above. There are several large free viewing platforms. In Shinjuku, the observation decks of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building on the 45th floor offer stunning views of Tokyo from 202 meters (2-9-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, metro.tokyo.jp). It is open on weekends even if the offices are closed. Nearby is Yebisu Garden Place Tower Sky Lounge, in a complex of commercial buildings on the site of a former beer brewery (gardenplace.jp). The lounge is on the 38th and 39th floors - on a clear day, you might even be able to spot spot Mount Fuji. Lunches of a piece Dogenzaka Isari. Photo: Koji Ishikawa It's possible to have a cheap meal in Tokyo - look for a one-piece menu (500 yen or about 3.50 euros). At Shibuya Dogenzaka, Isari's (1-6-5 Dogenzaka) offers Isari Don, his signature dish, a bowl of rice topped with sashimi marinated in a soy sauce, served with miso soup and pickles. The other lunch menus are a little more expensive but still affordable. In Ebisu is Ichiyoshi (1-4-1 Ebisu), an izakaya that offers a 500 yen lunch of mushitori no yakumi kake (steamed chicken topped with relish and aromatic vegetables). Kintaro in Shinjuku (5-18-16 Shinjuku-ku) has a set meal of sukiyaki (finely cooked sliced beef in sauce) for 500 yen. It comes with miso soup, salad, pickles and a bowl of rice. Quality and price mean it's always packed during lunch hour. 21 21 Design Sight Photograph: Koji Ishikawa Pritzker Award-winning Tadao Ando is one of Japan's most influential architects and visitors can spot its buildings around the city. 21-21 Design Sight in Tokyo Midtown is a design museum created with fashion designer Issey Miyake with several galleries and a striking concrete and steel exterior. The Tokyo Museum of Art is another example of his work, on what is known as Sengawa Ando Street, which has several buildings designed by Ando as part of an urban planning project in Sengawa. Among the other small museums (and not by Ando), my favorite is Taro Okamoto Memorial Museum in Minato-ku. It is the home and workshop of the avant-garde painter and sculptor - his best known work is the Tower of the Sun in Osaka - which died in 1996. There is also an excellent café 2121designsight.jp. tokyoartmuseum.com; taro-okamoto.or.jp Bars to Kabukicho Tachibana Shinryoshitsu. Photo: Koji Ishikawa It may seem strange, but the concept of Tachibana Shinsatsushitsu, a bar in Shinjuku-ku (1-1-8 Kabukicho), is a hospital waiting room. Staff wear nurse's uniforms and cocktails have names related to the hospital. If you don't understand Japanese, ask the nurse. But beware, some names are rather racy! Bar Uramen (1-1-7 Kabukicho), a character otaku bar (a Japanese term for people obsessive interests, often in anime and manga), is also in the region. Here you'll find a collection of electrical appliances and digital gadgets as well as retro games. Enjoy drinks with a game - they have about 600 FamiCom cassettes - while listening to some cool music. Sushi Restaurants Photo: Alexander Spatar/Getty Images For good cheap sushi (about 2000 yen, excluding drinks), try Roppo Sushi, near Jinbocho metro station (1-11-8 Kanda Jinbocho Chiyoda-ku). The pickles they serve between dishes are just as delicious, and you can watch the chefs work while you eat. There are only 12 counter seats, so it can be very busy very quickly. Alternatively, Sushi No Midori is one of the most popular sushi restaurants in Tokyo, with branches in Shibuya, Ginza and elsewhere. Its signature Ganso Anago is an entire freeze eel on top of the rice. Check in online so you don't have to wait in line (sushinomidori.co.jp). Or try 468 at Taite-ku (3-23-14 Nishi-Asakusa). Their name is pronounced yo-roppa, the Japanese word for Europe. This small sushi restaurant has only six seats and serves bo-sushi or bread sushi, prepared by layering fish and rice in a long, thin wooden box. You can also order takeaways over the phone. This is an excerpt from Yukiko Tajima's The 500 Hidden Secrets of Tokyo (published by Luster Publications, €16.95) Way to Getting go there British Airways, Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways fly directly to Tokyo from Heathrow from about 600 euros return. Indirect flights via Europe or, for example Hong Kong, may be cheaper. Tokyo has two major airports: Narita (45 miles from downtown) and Haneda (16 miles). When to travel Avoid Golden Week (late April/early May) when prices rise dramatically. The cherry blossom season (mid-April) is spectacular but prices are also rising - but more so in Kyoto than in Tokyo. Instead, visit in mid-March to catch the other highlight of spring, the plum blossom. The rainy season (mid-June to mid-July) is cheaper and less congested. August is the warmest month with average peaks of 29C. January and December are the driest months with rain over three days, but the average peaks are about 10C and the lows are 2C. Exchange rate - £1 - 149 Beer (pint) from about £4

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