

# Away from tourist crowds, an older section of Tokyo beckons

By Linda Lombardi  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — Explore Tokyo beyond the crowded tourist highlights and you'll find many older parts of the city with a different look and slower pace. One of these, the area around the Metro station Kiyosumi-Shirakawa, is a convenient side trip if you're visiting the Tokyo Skytree, which is four stops away. There's a charming local history museum, public garden, coffee shops, and a contemporary art museum. The neighborhood may not be picturesque in the conventional sense, but there's a lot to see if you have an eye for detail and an appreciation for the charm of urban and slightly shabby locales.

## Fukagawa Edo Museum

From the Metro station, head south and turn right onto an old shopping street marked by two small decorative towers. On your right you'll see an old-fashioned candy shop where the proprietor dresses in garb from the Edo period (including an entirely unconvincing wig of a top-knot hairstyle). Farther along on the left is the Fukagawa Edo Museum.

Most tourists with any interest in history end up at the Edo Tokyo Museum with its indoor re-creations of historic buildings from the Edo era, which began in the 1600s.

The Fukagawa museum, which predates the Edo Tokyo Museum, is much smaller and more charming, with a life-size Edo-period town recreated on its lower level. Be prepared to take your shoes off to go inside the little shops and homes, and a guide with adequate or better English will show you how the old-fashioned locks work and how ropes pull a skylight open over a stove. You can even try a rice-pounding device.

The guide will also explain how to tell the difference between a nice but tiny house for someone well-off (note the *tatami*-covered floor) versus a poor person's home with a mostly bare wood floor and just a couple of rice straw mats. Lighting sets the mood through 15-minute day-and-



**OFF THE BEATEN PATH.** An old-fashioned candy shop in the neighborhood around the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa Metro station in Tokyo is seen in this file photo. The area has a different look and slower pace than parts of the city where tourists typically head to see major attractions, but it offers a number of things to see and do, including a local history museum, public garden, and contemporary art museum. (Linda Lombardi via AP, File)

night cycles with recordings of birds, merchants calling, and the cry of the animatronic cat on a rooftop.

## Coffee, the universal language

Walk the small streets and alleys around the museum and you'll encounter a mix of residences, shops, small businesses, and light industrial spaces. You'll find much that is rather old-time Japanese, like restaurants selling the local specialty of rice with clams. But the neighborhood is also something of a hot spot for coffee shops.

Don't think in terms of grabbing a morning cup of joe. Some of these don't even open until later in the day, and they're more about relaxing and making a ritual of it. Some are quite small and the menus may be limited. The one I visited, aside from coffee and tea, had just two cakes and two flavors of small cookies, chocolate and sesame, but the cookies were exquisite.

There also was an outpost of a U.S. chain, Blue Bottle, that caused something of a stir when it opened, with lines reported to be two hours long. Its conspicuous modern building with an industrial vibe and

huge coffee-roasting machinery was far calmer on a recent weekday, but it's still not a place to camp out with your laptop, though people did seem to stay to chat.

## Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

If you're willing to walk a bit farther you can also have a completely modern experience in this old neighborhood at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Two exhibits that just opened are running through May 29: "Loose Lips Save Ships," exploring freedom of expression, and "Pixar: 30 Years of Animation."

## Kiyosumi Gardens

Kiyosumi Gardens is easy to find on your way to or from the Metro, visible across the main street opposite the entrance to the shopping street near the Fukagawa Edo Museum. It's a beautiful typical Japanese garden laid out around a large pond, first opened for company use by the founder of Mitsubishi in 1880 (Mitsubishi was a shipping firm at the time), then donated to the city and opened as a public park in 1932. The garden is nice to stroll around or find a bench to gaze at the pond.

# China: No plan for couples to have as many kids as they want

**BEIJING (AP)** — China has no plans to allow couples to have as many kids as they want after changing the rules to allow all couples to have two children rather than one, according to a health official.

China's population reached 1.375 billion last year and it has to consider its large population and stress on resources when making decisions, said Li Bin, director of the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

Starting this year, China has relaxed its decades-old family-planning policy to allow all married couples to have two children. Before, it limited most urban couples to one child and rural couples to two if their first was a girl.

"We don't have a specific timetable" to abolish the family-planning policy, "a basic state policy," Li told reporters at a news conference during an annual meeting of China's legislature.



**CAP ON CHILDREN.** A woman carries a child near government propaganda promoting filial piety on the streets of Beijing, China. China has no plans to allow couples to have as many kids as they want after changing its family-planning policy. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

## Lights out: Cities worldwide mark the 10th annual Earth Hour

**SEOUL (AP)** — Cities around the world turned out the lights this past Saturday evening to mark the 10th annual Earth Hour, a global movement dedicated to protecting the planet and highlighting the effects of climate change.

As night came on, the lights went out in cities from South Korea to the United States in what the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) describes as a moment of solidarity for climate action. The group sponsors the event and says people in 178 countries and territories participate.

Lights went out for the hourlong event — from 8:30pm to 9:30pm local time — in Beijing, Moscow, Beirut, Cairo, Athens, Rome, and Paris. The lights atop the Empire State Building in New York were dimmed, and some

billboards in Times Square also went dark.

In Seoul, the glass-covered City Hall was among several public buildings where officials switched off the lights inside and out. Lights illuminating landmarks such as the massive COEX shopping mall, the city's main railway station, and several bridges on the Han River were all either turned off or dimmed.

In Beijing, Chinese actress Li Bingbing showed up at the iconic Temple of Confucius, which was shut dark for an hour while municipal government officials announced that the city's energy conservation slogan would be "Consume less, consume wisely."

The Taipei 101 skyscraper was among the buildings to

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