

Greater Akiba

Akihabara, Kanda & Jimbocho walking map

Radio Kaikan
Don Quijote Bldg. & AKB48 Theater
Junk Street
Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library
Jimbocho used book district

Old Tokyo Walking Guide No.2 English



Edo-era newsmonger at Akihabara (bottom right)

Edo and Tokyo's information crossroads

Entertainment and media town

Greater Akiba is part of “Old Tokyo”, an area of northeast Tokyo that contains much of the city’s richest cultural heritage from feudal, modern, and contemporary times. Many subculture fans refer to Akihabara by the nickname “Akiba.” In fact, Akihabara’s media and entertainment culture has always been closely connected to the nearby neighborhoods in Kanda and Jimbocho.

Akiba subculture’s historical roots

Today Akihabara is known worldwide as the center of Japan’s iconic subcultures. The context of why this 21st-century town emerged here can be found among the ever-changing cultural trends and fads that flourished at the intersection of goods and information. Take a walk through postwar Tokyo’s electric town, the kaleidoscope of anime, video games and other “otaku” (geek) subcultures, and the manga and book culture of Surugadai and Jimbocho.



Greater Akiba Route

Walk between the market districts of Akihabara and Jimbocho

Depart from Akihabara Station in search of the roots of today’s Akiba culture. After peeking at the figurine and anime shops of the Radio Kaikan building, continue to the theater of the iconic idol group AKB48, both symbols of contemporary Akiba “otaku” culture. Next wander through Akihabara’s electric town from the used computer shops of Junk Street to the small stalls of the Radio Department built after the war. From Akihabara, continue west to the bustling student area of Ochanomizu and the manga collection of the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library. Finally, explore the vast vintage book offerings of Jimbocho. Be sure to rest as you climb the large hill between Akihabara and Ochanomizu.

Greater Akiba Route

Distance: around 3 km
Time needed: around 1.5 hours
Transportation available at starting point Akihabara Station:
JR Yamanote Line, Sobu Line, Keihin Tohoku Line.
Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line
Tsukuba Express
Transportation available at finish point Jimbocho Station:
Toei Mita Line, Shinjuku Line
Tokyo Metro Hanzomon Line



Major festivals

Please check the Internet for specific dates.
Twice per year (Autumn and Spring) Locations around Akihabara

Akihabara Denkigai Festival

Various campaigns and events are held during the festival period at participating establishments.



Mid-May (2019, 2021...) Kanda Shrine, Akihabara, Kanda & Jimbocho

Kanda Festival

Kanda Festival is held every other year in mid-May. One of Tokyo’s largest festivals, Akihabara overflows with people when the parade passes along Chuo Boulevard.



Late October—early November

Locations around Jimbocho

Kanda Used Book Festival

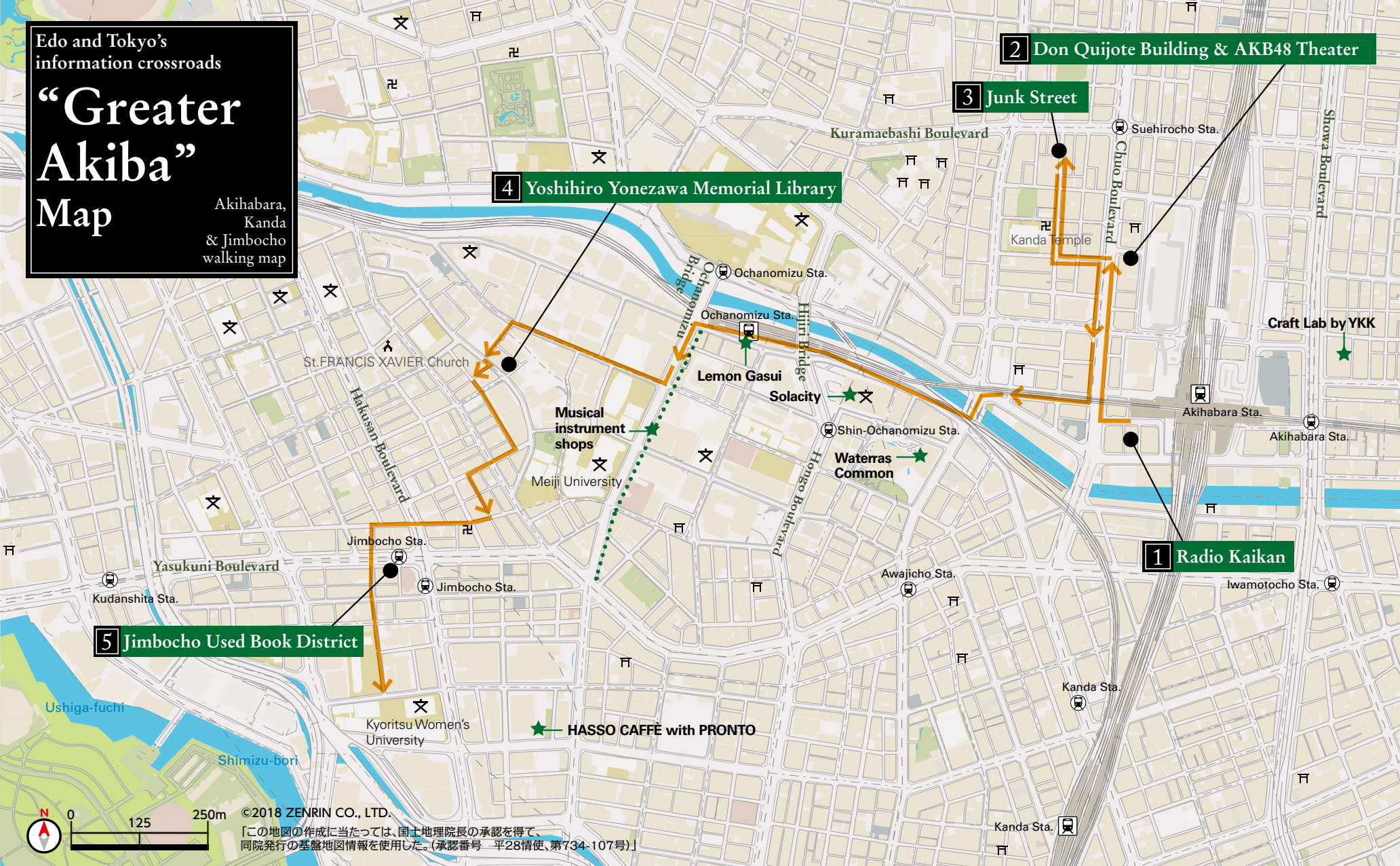
Jimbocho’s biggest festival has been held for more than half a century, when the whole area becomes a lively book market.



Edo and Tokyo's information crossroads

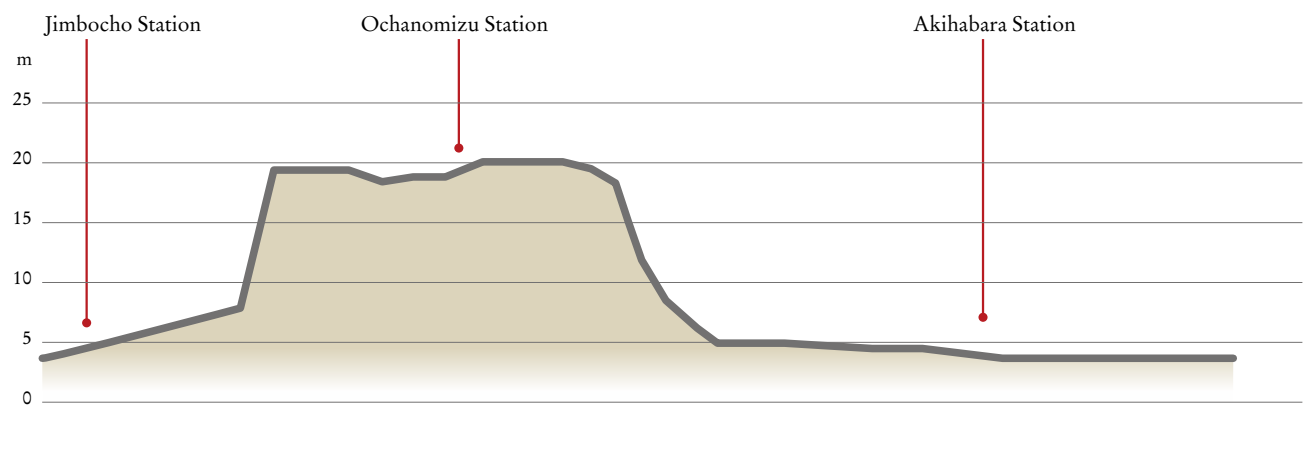
“Greater Akiba” Map

Akihabara, Kanda & Jimbocho walking map



Over Suruga Hill

In between Akihabara and Jimbocho lies Suruga Hill. Home to numerous universities, and bordered to the north by the Kanda River, it was originally the southern end of Hongo Hill. The Kanda River was dug in the 17th century as part of Edo Castle’s outer moat. The lowlands around Akihabara and Jimbocho were bustling commoner districts that became market districts.



Locations introduced in this guide

Radio Kaikan

Address...1-15-16 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021
Hours...10:00~20:00
WEB...http://www.akihabaradiokaikan.co.jp/

Don Quijote Building & AKB48 Theater

Address...4-3-3 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021
Phone...03-5298-5411
Hours...9:00~5:00 (next day)

Junk Street

Address...3 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021, 7 minutes by foot from the Electric Town Exit of Akihabara Station

Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library

Address...1-7-1 Kanda Sarugakucho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0064
Phone...03-3296-4554
Admission...1F exhibition space free, 2F reading room from ¥300~ (registration required)
WEB...http://www.meiji.ac.jp/manga/yonezawa_lib/

Jimbocho Used Book District

Address...Around 1 Kanda Jimbocho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0051, Outside Jimbocho Station Exit A1.



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Explore Old Tokyo

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance (TCHA) brings together business, academic, and government bodies to promote the rich and varied cultural heritage located in north-central Tokyo (“Old Tokyo”) and bring new cultural vitality to the area (launched in April 2015). This pamphlet was produced as part of a series to introduce visitors to a unique route that ties together the area’s varied cultural heritage.

“Old Tokyo” Walking Guide #2: Edo-Tokyo’s Information Crossroads: Akihabara, Kanda, and Jimbocho

Publisher and contact: the Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance

[Address] 2-1 Kanda Nishikicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0054

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Greater Akiba Episodes

From a news crossroads in Edo to radio and book markets, and today’s subculture Mecca

Akiba’s origins as a crossroads

► **Where people travel, news follows**
In the Edo Period, the busy Nakasendo Highway to Kyoto, the road linking Edo Castle and Kaneiji Temple in Ueno, and the Kanda River converged near Akihabara. The Kanda

An Edo-era newsmonger set up shop near present-day Akihabara (From Kiichiro Kikuchi, “Edo funai ehon”).

Akihabara (upper left) was an empty field in this 1888 photograph, to prevent the spread of fire

area to the south was home to many craftsmen whose wares were essential to life in the city. At this time, many of the warehouses, wholesalers and markets that formed the basis for the city’s economy were located in “Outer Kanda” (Sotokanda), the area around what is now Akihabara. It was not just goods that transited this area. In a stall along the Onari Street (near today’s Chuo Boulevard), a commoner by the name of Yoshizo Sudo made his living in the early 19th century as a newsmonger, collecting information on the happenings and rumors in Edo and selling it along to the travelers passing through on their way between Edo and the regions. “Outer Kanda” got its name from being outside the gate to Edo Castle, but the name Akihabara only dates back to the Meiji Period. Fires were common in the wooden city of the 19th century, and after a major fire in the northeast of the city, the Tokyo government left a large field between Kanda and Okachimachi to serve as a firebreak. A shrine to the god Akiha, known to protect against fire, was built in the field, which came to be known as Akiha-no-hara (“Field of Akiha”), and later as Akihabara.

► **A freight station and produce market before the war**
As the city’s development progressed, in 1890 the empty field became a railroad freight terminal, where goods could be transferred to and from the Kanda River. After the major earthquake in 1923, the produce market that stood on the south side of the river was relocated to the northeast corner of the station (now UDX), and Akihabara grew into even more of a center for commerce.

Consolidation of informal shops under the tracks sparked the growth of Akihabara’s electric town

The remnants of Akihabara’s postwar electric town

► **Origins as a radio parts market**
As Kanda emerged from the devastating air raids of 1945, informal stalls selling radio parts appeared along Yasukuni Boulevard in Ogawamachi. Old military-use electronic and radio parts were gathered from across the city, and shops employed students from the nearby Tokyo Denki University to assemble radios. In contrast with most black markets that centered on food items, this market became known as the place in Tokyo to buy electrical parts.

► **Electric town moves to Akihabara**
The remnants of this postwar market can be found in the Radio Department Store, under the tracks to the west of Akihabara Station. This famous symbol of Akihabara’s electric town was opened when many vendors relocated after the outdoor market was ordered closed in 1949. Even now the corridors are lined with small electrical and audio part stores. Later in the 1950s, electrical wholesalers began to cluster in this area and soon began to sell appliances directly to consumers, making Akihabara well known as an “electric town” by the 1960s. Akihabara changed along with consumer trends. From the Radio Department Store, cross Chuo Boulevard to the area known as “Junk Street.” This area’s shops sell used PCs and related goods, which became Akihabara’s major product in the 1990s. Today, tourists visit the street to peek inside the computer shops and more recent anime concept cafes.

Beyond the electric town

► **“Akiba” subculture along Chuo Boulevard**
From Junk Street, head back towards the station along Akihabara’s main drag, Chuo Boulevard. Nearly every store along the street offers goods related to different otaku subcultures. Here you can also find the home of Akihabara’s most famous ambassadors, the idol group AKB48. Even as this group became a global symbol of Japanese popular culture and expanded across the country, their home theater remains located above the Don Quijote Akihabara store. Akiba neophytes should visit the Akihabara Radio Kaikan, opened in 1962 next to the station, for a subculture primer. Beginning in the late 1990s, figurine and model shops such as Kaiyodo began to move in, and today the 10-story building is filled with stores selling figurines, trading cards, dojinshi fan magazines, video games, and gifts.

Surugadai, the intersection of subculture and publishing

► **Tokyo’s largest student district**
Let’s leave central Akihabara and cross south of the Kanda River, where Akihabara’s electric town first began. The hill of Surugadai is the birthplace of Japan’s modern universities and still the city’s largest student district. For decades, these students’ creative energy has supported businesses such as the venerable art supply store Lemon Gasui and the many instrument shops located next to Ochanomizu Station.

Along the Kanda River, the former Mansebash Station is now a retail center

► **A seedbed for otaku culture**
The students here have gone to Akihabara to work in its electrical shops and buy its goods for decades, but Surugadai has also been a seedbed for new subculture. As a student at Meiji University in the 1970s, Yoshihiro Yonezawa produced dojinshi amateur manga magazines and later founded the Comiket comic market, helping dojinshi to become a central feature of otaku culture. Today, the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library is located behind the campus of Meiji University. The library contains the immense body of works collected

The many music shops located near Ochanomizu Station specialize in guitars, violins, drums and other instruments.

Akihabara evolved along with consumer desire for electrical appliances, PCs, and otaku culture

by Yonezawa during his career as Comiket founder and manga critic, as well as other otaku subculture-related items.

Used book district of Jimbocho

► **The book district at another crossroads**
Manga publishers including the giant Shogakukan are scattered throughout Surugadai and Jimbocho. At the crossroads of the Jimbocho intersection, the many specialty book shops laying out their wares, the smell of curry in the air, and the bustling energy of the city resemble Akihabara in many ways. Just like Akihabara, Jimbocho’s location at an important intersection caused it to grow into a book shop district. However, unlike Akihabara, where the products have shifted from radio components to appliances, PCs, and now otaku culture, Jimbocho has always remained the primary publishing and old book district in Japan since the 19th century.

► **Trend-setting Akiba, nostalgic Jimbocho**
At long-running merchants including Hara Shobo and Isseido Book Store, browse through ukiyo-e woodblock prints, which were a thriving popular culture in Edo. The

images of people and landscapes in the centuries-old prints are similar to some modern manga. It is easy to lose oneself wandering amid the many specialty shops stocking old Edo-period books, foreign medical texts, literature or philosophy. Manga can also be found at some stores such as the Jimbocho Old Book Center. The slow pace of Jimbocho’s booksellers and its nostalgic cafe parlors may seem like the opposite of Akihabara’s ever-changing subcultures. But Akihabara and Jimbocho are connected by more than their origins as market crossroads, as places where contemporary culture is born.

Books at a shop outside Jimbocho Station

Spot 1 A symbol of Akihabara's changing times

Radio Kaikan

Address: 1-15-16 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021

Akihabara Radio Kaikan opened in 1962. The 8-story building made headlines as Akihabara's first high-rise building. As its name suggests, it was first home to numerous businesses that sold radio parts, but in 1976, Bit-INN, regarded as the birthplace of the Japanese PC, was opened on the seventh floor. This shop became a bustling center for PC-lovers, as a service center and showroom for NEC microcomputers.

Spot Figurine shops

Kaiyodo and Box, shops selling models and figurines, opened in Radio Kaikan in 1998, leading to the appearance of numerous other figurine shops in Akihabara.

A display at a figurine shop



Radio Kaikan, once a shopping center for electronics, now home to subculture stores

Spot Rental showcases

Many stores in Radio Kaikan contain rental showcases, a unique part of otaku culture. Individuals borrow a small showcase and put their own selection of figurines, trading cards, and other goods that reflect their hobbies on display for sale. Peer into these miniature subculture worlds.

Spot Appearance in anime

Akihabara Radio Kaikan makes an appearance in the 2009 video game and anime series Steins;Gate. In the story, a satellite crashes into the building, a scene that was later recreated in real life for a 2011 promotion.

The anime scene was recreated in real life (Recreation of satellite crashing into Radio Kaikan© Hazumit 2011 http://flic.kr/type/ue/6290696503/ Licence at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)



Showcases are subculture microcosms



Spot 2 Home base of famed idols AKB48

Don Quijote Building & AKB48 Theater

Address: 4-3-3 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021 Phone: 03-5298-5411

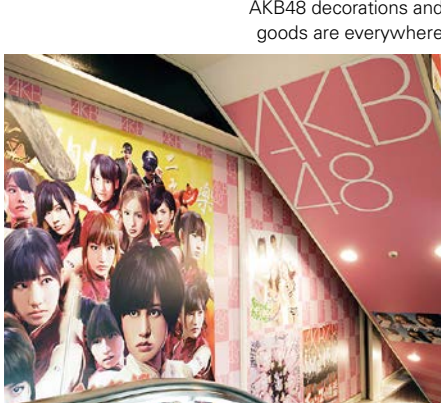
The discount store Don Quijote opened in the mid-2000s in a large building on Chuo Boulevard. Soon after, the AKB48 Theater was opened on the 8th floor, and the group's popularity made them the most visible symbol of Akihabara culture. This building has changed through the years but has long been a central presence in Akihabara. Originally built as the headquarters for an electronics company, It held the Minami Electric appliance store, which was known as the largest appliance store in Akihabara. After 2000, Asobitcity opened in the building, selling games, CDs, DVDs, software and hobby goods, and made headlines as the largest hobby store in Japan at the time.

Spot AKB48 Theater

The AKB48 idol group, which was formed in 2005, now has sister groups around the country and fans around the world, many of whom make pilgrimages to their home theater on



The "Don Quijote Building" stands apart from its neighbors in Akihabara



AKB48 decorations and goods are everywhere

the 8th floor.

Spot Maid cafe

@ home cafe moved into the 5th floor of the building in 2004, even before AKB48. Maid cafes, like idols, are now central to Akihabara culture.

Spot Don Quijote

The Don Quijote store on floors 2-5 includes a special array of Akiba goods, such as gifts, cosplay outfits, and other goods.

Spot 3 Go fishing for old PC parts on

Junk Street

Address: 3 Sotokanda, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0021, 7 minutes by foot from the Electric Town Exit of Akihabara Station

This street was originally home to numerous shops that sell so-called junk computer parts—broken or out-of-warranty parts—where the pleasure of shopping is in “fishing” for a good find, or browsing the unusual and random goods sold at many shops. Today, as the custom PC boom came to an end and e-commerce has grown, some of the shops have been replaced with maid cafes and other concept cafes.

Spot Junk parts shop

Search through classic models and suspicious junk parts for the rare treasure. Your hunting skills will be put to the test.

Used parts shop sells old-model PC goods



Spot Akiba fast food

Junk Street is also known for restaurants catering to Akihabara's main customer base—men by themselves. Restaurants serving ramen, beef bowls, and Turkish kebabs are easy to drop in alone after hunting for parts. Some might call this junk food, but it has filled stomachs on Junk Street for years.

Spot Subculture spreads

As custom PC hobbyists have faded in recent years, anime shops, trading cards, and concept cafes have begun to spread from Chuo Boulevard to Junk Street.



Left: Turkish restaurant famous for kebab Right: Vending machines sell cans of hot oden soup

Beef bowl restaurant Sanbo has been in Akihabara since the days of the produce market



Spot 4 Enjoy exhibits on manga, anime, and video game subcultures at

Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library

The Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library is located behind Meiji University.

Address: 1-7-1 Kanda Sarugakucho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0064
Phone: 03-3296-4554



The Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library, founded in 2009, contains some 140,000 items of manga, magazines, books, and other subculture publications, including the collection of the late Comiket comic market founder and manga critic, Yoshihiro Yonezawa. The first floor holds exhibitions, while the second floor is a reading room.

Spot Diverse collection

The memorial library contains a wide variety of items such as manga, books, amateur comics, and subculture magazines, mostly published after WWII. The reading room may be used by those who register beginning at 300 yen. Please see the home page for details.

Members may browse a large collection



Spot Gallery

Exhibitions on manga and other subcultures are held in the first-floor gallery, which has free admission.

Spot 5 Get lost in Tokyo's biggest

Old book district

Address: Around 1 Kanda Jimbocho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0051, Outside Jimbocho Station Exit A1.

Jimbocho is home to some 180 old book shops, and is famed as one of the world's largest bookselling districts. Even if you don't read Japanese, peruse the stores full of rare books from past eras, and absorb the nostalgic atmosphere of Jimbocho. Numerous shops sell woodblock prints, traditional Japanese karuta playing cards, other goods. And at the end of a long walk, relaxing in one of the many famous Japanese cafes is a classic Jimbocho experience.

Spot Shadows of ukiyo-e in manga?

Venerable shops such as Hara Shobo, Yamada Shoten and Ohya Shobo carry ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Prints were a thriving popular culture in Edo, and have certainly inspired many later manga artists. You may also buy a wide selection of affordable postcards and other artistic goods at the Kyoto Benrido shop.

Spot Cafes

Jimbocho is all about bookstores and old-fashioned cafes (kissaten). Standing on quiet alleyways and hidden in basements or on upper floors of buildings, these spaces are tailored to the often curious tastes of their owners.



Milonga originally opened as a tango cafe in 1953



The Kanda Used Book Festival attracts many visitors each year

Spots to rest or shop

Explore more of Greater Akiba

► Each spot is marked on the map with a ★

Lemon Gasui

Art supply store opened in 1923, when European-style paints and model supplies were still rare in Japan. It has been a fixture at the heart of the Ochanomizu student district ever since.



Address: 2-6-12 Kanda Surugadai, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0062
Open hours: Weekdays 10:00–20:00, Weekends & holidays: 11:00–19:00
Website: <http://lemongasui.co.jp/>

Solacity Ocha Navi Walker Station

The Walker Station at Ocha Navi is an indispensable resource for visitors to the Ochanomizu area. Local area info covers the walls, and profiles of more than 250 spots in the Ochanomizu area can be viewed on touch panels and printed onto a custom map.



Address: Ochanomizu Solacity underground plaza, 4-6 Kanda Surugadai, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0062
Open hours: Weekdays 11:00–19:00, Weekends 10:30–18:30
Closed: Tuesday
Website: <http://ocha-navi.solacity.jp>

Musical instrument shops

The dozens of musical shops located between Ochanomizu and Jimbocho in front of Meiji University sell every type of musical instrument, used and new. Find the instrument of your dreams, or duck into one of the area's many live houses and jazz bars. Just outside Ochanomizu Station.



Waterras Common Gallery

The Waterras development is a community-focused development that draws on the rich traditions of Kanda. The gallery space on the second floor of Waterras Common, with several large tables and a wide selection of books, may be used as a free space when no events or exhibitions are being held.



Address: 2-101 Kanda Awajicho, Chiyoda, Tokyo, 101-0063
Open hours: 11:00–20:00
Website: <https://www.waterras.com/common/>

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Global Gallery, National Museum of Nature and Science

Client: National Museum of Nature and Science
Services: Exhibition planning, design, layout, production and construction
*A joint project with Nomura Co., Ltd.
Photography: Forward Stroke/Cooperation from National Museum of Nature and Science

Terrance Square: Beautifully preserving a historical building

Terrace Square is just a short distance from Jimbocho, and is noticeable for the restored two-story facade of the former Hakuodo headquarters building. The inviting neo-classical facade was designed by architect Shinichiro Okada, also known for the Meiji Life Building, and completed in 1930. The HASSO CAFFÈ with PRONTO is located inside, and offers a space for creative thinking as a “crossroads of ideas.”



Photograph: SS Tokyo

HASSO CAFFÈ with PRONTO
Address ● 1st Fl., 3-22 Kanda Nishikicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0054 Tel ● 03-6273-7775
Hours ● Weekdays 7:00–22:00 Saturdays 11:00–17:00
Closed ● Sunday, holidays
URL ● <http://hasso-caffe.jp/> Cooperation from Hakuodo Inc.

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Experience the pleasure of craftsmanship at
〈Craft Lab by YKK〉

Located east of Akihabara Station in Kanda Izumicho, the Craft Lab by YKK is a community space where people of many backgrounds can interact through “monozukuri” craftsmanship. The four-story space hosts various events and craft workshops, as well as fastener and button exhibitions. Why not take a rest from walking the town and enjoy some crafts?



Craft Lab by YKK
Address ● YKK Izumi Bldg., 1-1 Kanda Izumicho, Chiyoda, Tokyo 101-0024 TEL ● 03-3864-2110 Open hours ● 10:00–17:00
Closed ● Sunday, holidays, end of year
URL ● <https://monozukuri.ykkfastening.com/>

ZENRIN

Stationary for the city walker “mati mati” series

Map-themed stationary is a nice accessory for any city lover. Maps include spots related to the character of each area, such as historic buildings in Marunouchi, or fashion shops in Omotesando. The mati mati series is sure to give walkers a new perspective on the city.



Clear file with multi-layer maps, ¥380 + tax
Notebook that doubles as wrapping paper, ¥380 + tax
Masking tape with road for messages, ¥430 + tax
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See shop list on homepage for retail locations.
<http://www.zenrin.co.jp/goods/matimati/>