



## Tokyo, Japan

Some of us visited Japan in 2001 and 2003 – but we stayed by the airport and only visited Tokyo on a half day trip. We did the trip independently. This conference is different! We are holding this conference in the heart of Tokyo in conjunction with Waseda University (<https://www.waseda.jp/top/en>).

Tokyo, the capital city of the parliamentary democratic monarchy of Japan, is also home to the Emperor's Palace and the seat of Government and Parliament. In East-Central Honshu, the largest of Japan's main islands, this heavily populated city is well worth exploring. One of the world's most modern cities in terms of its infrastructure and design – due largely to the 1923 earthquake and the devastation of WWII – Tokyo also holds the title of the world's most expensive city in which to live (it's also one of the easiest to get around thanks to its superb rail and subway networks). The cultural side of Tokyo combines the old and the new. It's famous for its numerous museums; theaters; festivals; internationally noted cuisine; and professional sports clubs, including baseball and traditional Japanese pursuits like Sumo Wrestling. It's also a city rich in music and theater, with numerous venues featuring everything from Japanese to modern dramas, symphony orchestras, and pop and rock concerts.

The chief attraction of Tokyo's Marunouchi district is the Imperial Palace with its beautiful 17th-century parks surrounded by walls and moats. Still in use by the Imperial family, the Imperial Palace stands on the site where, in 1457, the Feudal Lord Ota Dokan built the first fortress, the focal point from which the city of Tokyo (or Edo, as it was then) gradually spread. As famous as the palace is the Nijubashi Bridge leading to its interior, a structure that takes its name ("double bridge") from its reflection in the water.

The Ginza is Tokyo's busiest shopping area and is as iconic as Times Square, and much older: it's been the commercial center of the country for centuries, and is where five ancient roads connecting Japan's major cities all met. Lined by exclusive shops and imposing palatial stores, the Ginza district is also fun to simply wander around or, better still, sit in one of its many tea and coffee shops or restaurants while watching the world rush past. At weekends, when everything is open, it's a shopper's paradise as traffic is barred, making it one of the world's largest pedestrian zones; come nightfall, gigantic advertising panels on its many buildings bathe Ginza in bright neon light.

In the Asakusa district of Tokyo, the exquisite Sensō-ji Temple – the city's most famous shrine – stands at the end of a long street of shops where masks, carvings, combs made of ebony and wood, toys, kimonos, fabrics, and precious paper goods are on sale. Dedicated to Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of compassion, the temple was established in AD 645 and retains its original appearance despite having been rebuilt numerous times.