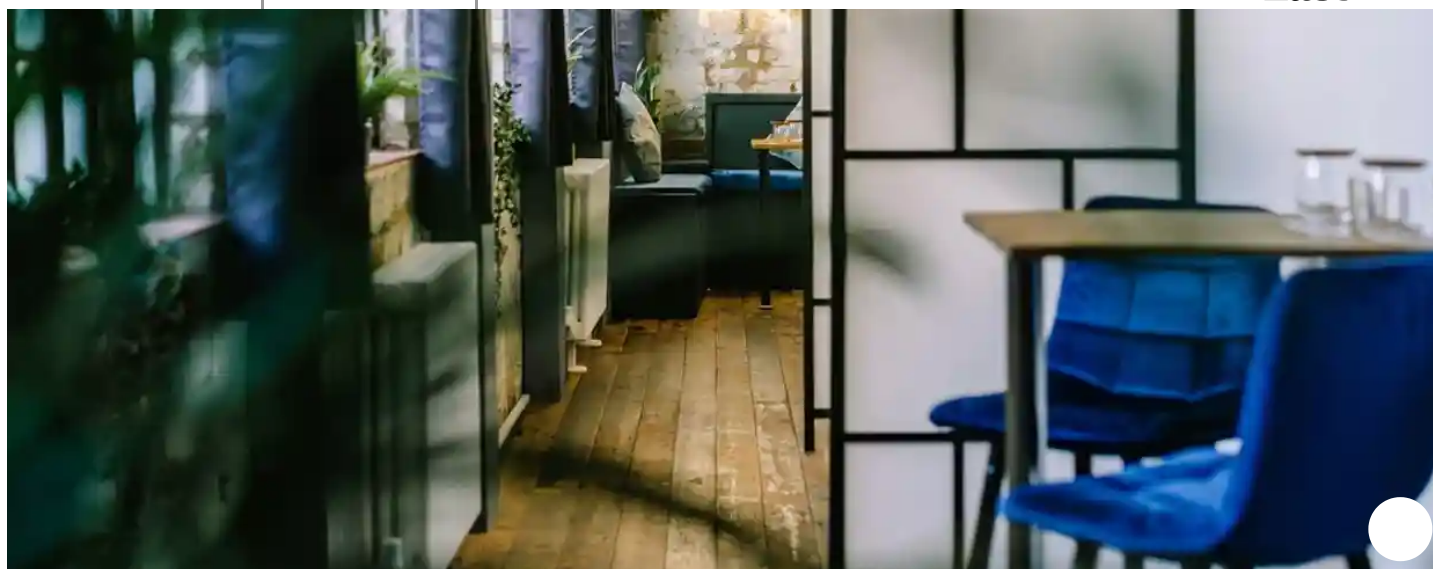


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**The
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The Japanese craft gin

Kanpai to that! Seven Japanese bars to explore in the UK

From trendy subterranean spaces that would fit right into Shibuya, to laid-back lounges inspired by Tokyo's after-hours scene, these seven bars offer an authentic Japanese drinking experience without you having to cross the planet

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About this content

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Botanicals sourced from all over Japan, along with more than a century of distilling tradition make Roku Gin an ode to Japanese craftsmanship. This gin was meant to be enjoyed amid the buzz of a Tokyo *izakaya*, a kind of Japanese tapas bar, or the quiet hum of a Kyoto soba restaurant with glowing lanterns out front and shoes left at the door.

Luckily, you don't have to hop on an 11-hour flight to indulge in Japanese craft gin in the way it was intended. Over the past few years, Japanese bars embracing the spirit of the

Over the past few years, Japanese bars embracing the spirit of the izakaya have cropped up across the UK. Here are seven of the best ...

Mikaku, Glasgow

Glowing red and white lanterns and a waterfall of pink cherry blossoms welcome you to Mikaku – a bar in central Glasgow styled around late-night Japanese eating and drinking. The fizz of neon lights in the darkness creates the kind of futuristic, neo-Tokyo feel of the opening scenes of Blade Runner. Inside, a solid menu of *izakaya* staples, such as yakitori skewers served like they would be down Shinjuku's Omoide Yokocho, sit alongside warming bowls of ramen. This combined with the electric lychee cocktail, featuring Roku Gin and plum sake transports you straight to Tokyo's side streets.

Koi No Yokan, Cardiff

Newly opened Koi No Yokan in Cardiff serves up small dishes and bento boxes alongside a huge array of Japanese drinks. An ink-black bar, red lanterns and lacquer dragons create that undeniable feeling of being in a late-night dining spot in one of Japan's bustling cities. The owner, Alexander Taylor, has embraced his desire to provide "delicious, modern, naughty, Japanese-inspired food" and, indeed, dishes like the nori fries are the perfect accompaniment to a round of gin-driven cocktails.

Shochu Lounge, London

In the subterranean space beneath the acclaimed London restaurant Roka, in Fitzrovia, Shochu Lounge serves up sea-fresh sushi and *robatayaki* ("fireside dishes") cooked on the grill, to be enjoyed alongside lavish Japanese cocktails. Powder-pink cherry blossom adorns the ceiling, vibrant against ink-black walls. The cocktail selection is a celebration of Japanese flavours – yuzu, ponzu and ginger. Sipping a refreshing Roku Gin G&T here, you could easily be in the high-end lounges of Ginza or Roppongi.





📷 Shibuya Underground serves drinks with a story

Shibuya Underground, Birmingham

In Birmingham's Great Western Arcade, Shibuya Underground – styled on the intimate bars of Tokyo's Golden Gai – has a feeling of secrecy about it. Sake barrels stacked up against the exposed brick walls let you know all about this place's real passion: sake. The owner, Samuel Boltoun, is a certified sake expert. But the drinks menu features plenty for the gin connoisseur too – a matcha-infused gimlet that's an ode to the tea ceremonies of Kyoto, and, of course, Roku Gin in the house G&Ts. Each mixed drink is served as a "story", so you can hear all about the tea ceremonies of Kyoto as you sip on that matcha gimlet.

Zuma, London

It may be a global brand now, but the original Zuma, in the heart of Knightsbridge, west London, still combines that undeniable buzz of casual izakaya dining with its refined small plates. Sashimi platters on ice and soft-shell crab with wasabi mayonnaise accompany the array of cocktails. Just as with Roku Gin, the ethos of Zuma is to produce something undeniably contemporary, while respecting the traditions of the past. It's all

about the finest Japanese produce here; the freshest yellowfin tuna and perfectly marbled wagyu beef. Zuma's gin choice doesn't deviate from the message, with Roku Gin served in the G&Ts as standard.

Ikigai, Birmingham

Ikigai sits in the trendy surrounds of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. Raw wood, white walls and calligraphy-black accents are pure zen, and the vibe is again inspired by Japanese izakaya culture – in this instance, the laid-back chatter of post-work drinks in wooden hole-in-the-wall restaurants between the towering skyscrapers of Tokyo. It's certainly fitting for the centre of Birmingham. Each cocktail on the menu is themed, and Ikigai's signature mix features the citrus tang of yuzu and the nutty vanilla sweetness of ube. Or, rather than choosing from the list, opt for the *omakase* ("I leave it up to you") and the knowledgeable staff can pair your Roku Gin with Japanese flavours that bring out the subtle sakura, spice of sancho pepper and zing of yuzu peel, catering to your preferred palate. As they say in Japan, *kanpai*!



📷 Chotto Matte blends Japanese and Peruvian flavours

Chotto Matte, London

Japanese cuisine is loved throughout the world, but there are few countries where its flavours have merged so effectively with the local food culture as in Peru. The resulting fusion of flare and flavour is known as Nikkei cuisine. This oh-so-of-the-moment style is the inspiration behind London's Chotto Matte in Soho, a warehouse-sized bar that aims to replicate the feeling of the hipper end of both Tokyo's and Lima's dining scenes. Perhaps the finest example of this fusion is the wabi-sabi cocktail, where Peruvian pisco vies with Roku Gin for attention.

Roku is available to purchase from Sainsburys

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