

## **Tokyo Travel Guide for Families: Best Things to Do in Tokyo and Around**

Tokyo is a place of contrasts. One moment you're standing under a centuries-old temple gate. The next, you're watching giant robots or stepping into a glowing arcade. I know how magical that sounds... but I also understand planning can be overwhelming, especially with kids.

I've been through it all: the long lines, tired legs, and confusing train maps. Over time, I've learned what really works. That's why I created a five-day plan that mixes culture, play, and plenty of downtime, so the kids stay happy and you can enjoy yourself too. Every stop comes from real family trips I've tested and researched, helping you avoid tourist traps, overpriced meals, and exhausting back-and-forth travel.

By the end, you'll have a ready-to-use itinerary that's balanced, memorable, and easy to follow. And somewhere in these five days is a hidden gem most visitors walk right past, but for kids, it often becomes their favorite memory of the trip.

Let's start with the one thing that sets the tone for your whole trip: how you get around.

### **Section 1 – Logistics First**

#### **Getting Around Tokyo**

The way you move through Tokyo will make or break your trip. The city is big, but it's also one of the easiest to navigate if you set things right before you land.

Start with a Suica or Pasma IC card for trains, subways, and even convenience store snacks. While there were some periods when cards were hard to find, as of today, you can once again purchase a standard Suica or Pasma card from the vending machines at stations.

Alternatively, if you'd like a card specifically for tourists, you can get the Welcome Suica at JR East Travel Service Centers in the airport. It's valid for 28 days, has no deposit, and works on almost every metro line.

You can also save yourself the hassle of a physical card entirely and set up a mobile Suica on your phone before you even arrive.

For navigation, skip paper maps. Get a pocket Wi-Fi or a reliable SIM card at the airport. Pocket Wi-Fi works best for families because you can connect multiple devices and check train routes without burning through mobile data.

Strollers are welcome on trains, but older stations sometimes have only one elevator, and it might be on the far end of the platform. If you're traveling with a toddler, budget extra time for transfers.

And yes, Tokyo's taxis are spotless, air-conditioned, and stroller-friendly. But they're pricey for long trips. Keep them as your "backup plan" for tired kids or late nights.

## **Where to Stay**

The right neighborhood makes the difference between smooth mornings and dragging kids across the city before breakfast. For first-time families, I recommend **Shinjuku** (central connections), **Shibuya** (fun shopping and kid-friendly cafes), or **Asakusa** (temple district with old Tokyo charm). If you prefer quiet evenings, **Ueno** is a strong choice — parks, museums, and quick train access.

If you land in the morning, book a hotel that offers **early check-in** or at least luggage drop. Nothing sets a bad tone faster than roaming the streets with jet-lagged kids and suitcases. Some hotels will even let you pre-pay for guaranteed early check-in if you ask ahead.

## **Airport Arrival Tips**

Narita and Haneda both connect directly to central Tokyo, but the choice matters. Haneda is closer, about 30 minutes by train, so it's far easier after a long flight with kids. Narita takes around an hour on the Narita Express.

Avoid arriving or traveling during **rush hour** (7:30–9:30 a.m. and 5–7 p.m.). Trains are packed shoulder-to-shoulder, and navigating that with a stroller is... let's just say I learned the hard way.

## Section 2: Day-by-Day Family Itinerary

### Day 1 – Magical Start

I always like to start with something unforgettable, because it sets the tone for the whole trip. For Tokyo, that means choosing between **Tokyo Disneyland** and **Tokyo DisneySea**.

Families often pick based only on the name, and end up in the wrong park for their kids' ages. If your kids are under 8, Disneyland's gentler rides and familiar characters will keep them smiling all day. If they're 8 or older, or if you want something unique to Japan, DisneySea has themed "ports of call" you won't find anywhere else, from the Mysterious Island to the Mediterranean Harbor.

**Time management matters here.** Popular rides like Toy Story Mania or Journey to the Center of the Earth can hit two-hour waits by mid-morning. Book tickets online in advance, download the **Tokyo Disney Resort App**, and aim to enter before the official opening; this is called "rope dropping." With the app, you can grab Disney Premier Access passes for the biggest rides, enter lotteries for shows, and order meals to skip lunchtime lines.

For families with toddlers, renting a stroller at the entrance is easy; ¥1,000 per day. If you've got older kids, use the **Child Swap** system so adults can still enjoy thrill rides without leaving anyone out.

You could spend from 9 a.m. to closing here, but I've learned that kids fade fast after dark. I recommend leaving after the evening parade, skip the crush of the closing crowd, and head for a light dinner near the hotel.

### Day 2 – Animals and Open Space

After a high-energy first day, Day 2 slows the pace while keeping it fun. My go-to is Ueno Zoo in the morning, then Ueno Park in the afternoon.

Tokyo has many zoos and aquariums, but Ueno's giant pandas are the star attraction, and the lines for them can stretch into the hundreds.

Head straight to the panda enclosure as soon as the gates open at 9:30 a.m. You'll still have time to explore gorilla woods, tiger forests, and elephant baths without feeling rushed.

If your kids' attention starts to fade, the zoo's location inside Ueno Park means you can pivot instantly. Spread a picnic blanket under the trees, or rent a swan boat on Shinobazu Pond. The park's wide paths are stroller-friendly, and there's enough space for kids to run without weaving through crowds.

By late afternoon, you can choose to either visit the **National Museum of Nature and Science** for dinosaurs and hands-on exhibits. Or simply stay in the park and let the kids play until dinner.

For dinner, keep it easy. There are family-friendly spots just outside the park's entrances, and Ameyoko Market is a short walk if you want to try street food.

Day 3 is about sating indoors, but in a way that kids can touch, splash, and climb through the art, with one small clothing rule you'll need to know before you go.

### **Day 3 – Indoor Wonder & Interactive Play**

After two days of outdoor energy, I like to shift indoors, but in Tokyo, "indoors" doesn't mean static displays.

Many families book **teamLab Planets** because the photos look incredible... but some parents don't realize it involves wading barefoot through knee-deep water, and that toddlers may need to be carried through darker areas.

That's why I always set expectations up front: it's best for kids six and up. Tickets sell out fast, so book online well before the trip. If you can, choose the first slot of the day or the last two hours before closing to avoid peak crowds. Wear shorts or pants you can roll above the knee, and avoid skirts unless you have shorts underneath; some floors are mirrored. Lockers are included in the ticket price, and towels are provided after the water rooms.

If your kids are younger, swap teamLab for **Little Planet**, an interactive digital playground. Pricing depends on age and weekday/weekend, but it's easier for toddlers to enjoy, and you won't have to manage water rooms or dark transitions.

**As for the afternoon options** you have two options:

**Asobono**, a huge indoor playground with active and quiet zones.

**Tokyo Toy Museum** over 10,000 toys made from wood and natural materials, plus hands-on play areas for all ages.

For dinner, keep it close to the play spot; less transit, fewer tired meltdowns.

**Day 4** starts with a place where kids "go to work", but only if you book the right language day.

#### **Day 4 – Learning & Views**

Start Day 4 at **Kidzania Tokyo**, an indoor city where kids role-play as adults; doctors, chefs, firefighters, even pilots.

It's magical for kids... but there are only two English-speaking days each week. If you go on a Japanese-only day and your kids don't speak the language, the experience will be limited.

Always check the schedule on Kidzania's site before booking. Arriving early is crucial since school groups often fill the best job slots.

From here, shift to **Tokyo Skytree** for a change in pace. It's not just an observation tower, it's the tallest structure in Japan at 634 meters, with two decks: the **Tembo Deck** at 350 meters and the **Tembo Galleria** at 450 meters. The Tembo Galleria feels like walking through a glass tube in the sky. If the weather's clear, you can even spot Mount Fuji from the telescopes.

Older kids might love the VR "bungee jump" simulation, while younger ones usually head for the Sorakara-chan character meet-and-greet. At the base is **Tokyo Solamachi**, a shopping and dining complex perfect for dinner.

#### **Day 5 – Slow Down Before Departure**

By your last day, it's best to ease into a slower rhythm so everyone boards the flight rested instead of burnt out.

**In the morning,** Head to **Odaiba**, a man-made island with plenty of open space for the kids to roam. The challenge here is choice; there's so much to do, it's easy to overpack the day and end up rushing. Instead, pick one or two highlights: ride the 115-meter **Daikanransha ferris wheel** for sweeping city views, browse the shops at a relaxed pace, or enjoy lunch at one of the family-friendly restaurants along the waterfront.

**In the afternoon,** make your final stop **Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden**. It's stroller-friendly, with themed gardens and wide lawns that are perfect for a last picnic. This is where the kids can run, you can breathe, and everyone can enjoy one last pocket of calm before the airport.

**In the evening,** keep dinner simple. Choose somewhere near your hotel or along your route to the airport. That way, you avoid any frantic last-minute dashes across the city.

Remember the hidden gem I mentioned at the start? For many families, it isn't the big-ticket attractions, but a quiet hour feeding koi fish in Shinjuku Gyoen, or riding the ferris wheel at sunset, that becomes the most talked-about memory. Sometimes, less really is more.

### **Section 3: Bonus Travel Tips for Families**

Before we wrap up, I want to share a few extra tips that can make the difference between a good trip and a great one.

Before your trip, get the kids excited by introducing them to anime set in Tokyo. Shows like Doraemon or My Neighbor Totoro can make the places you visit feel more magical. Once you're there, **match activities to your kids' ages**. Older kids might love VR gaming hubs in Shibuya, while younger ones may prefer hands-on experiences like Sanrio Puroland.

Set a daily souvenir allowance to avoid constant "Can I get this?" battles. This could mean one UFO catcher attempt at an arcade, a quirky snack from a konbini, or a crispy famichiki from FamilyMart. Framing it as a fun daily ritual makes it feel like a treat instead of a negotiation.

Finally, if you want to dine somewhere specific, especially themed cafés or popular sushi chains, make a reservation. Many restaurants in Tokyo accept online bookings, but some use Japan-only apps. If you can't book ahead, aim to arrive right when they open or be ready for a short wait. With a little planning, you'll avoid hungry, cranky kids staring at plastic food displays wondering why they can't eat yet.

You've now got a full five-day plan that keeps the kids happy and the trip stress-free. But before you start packing, there's one thing we haven't covered; what not to bring. Japan has strict rules on certain everyday items, and I've seen families lose things at the airport they didn't even know were an issue. So before you zip up that suitcase, check out this video on: **Banned Items That Could Get You in Trouble with Japanese Customs!**

And if you enjoyed this guide, please share, like and subscribe for more travel videos that save you hours of research and help you see the best of any destination without the stress, so you can spend your time making memories, not figuring out logistics.