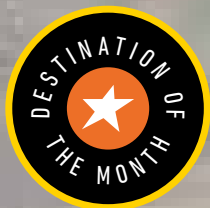
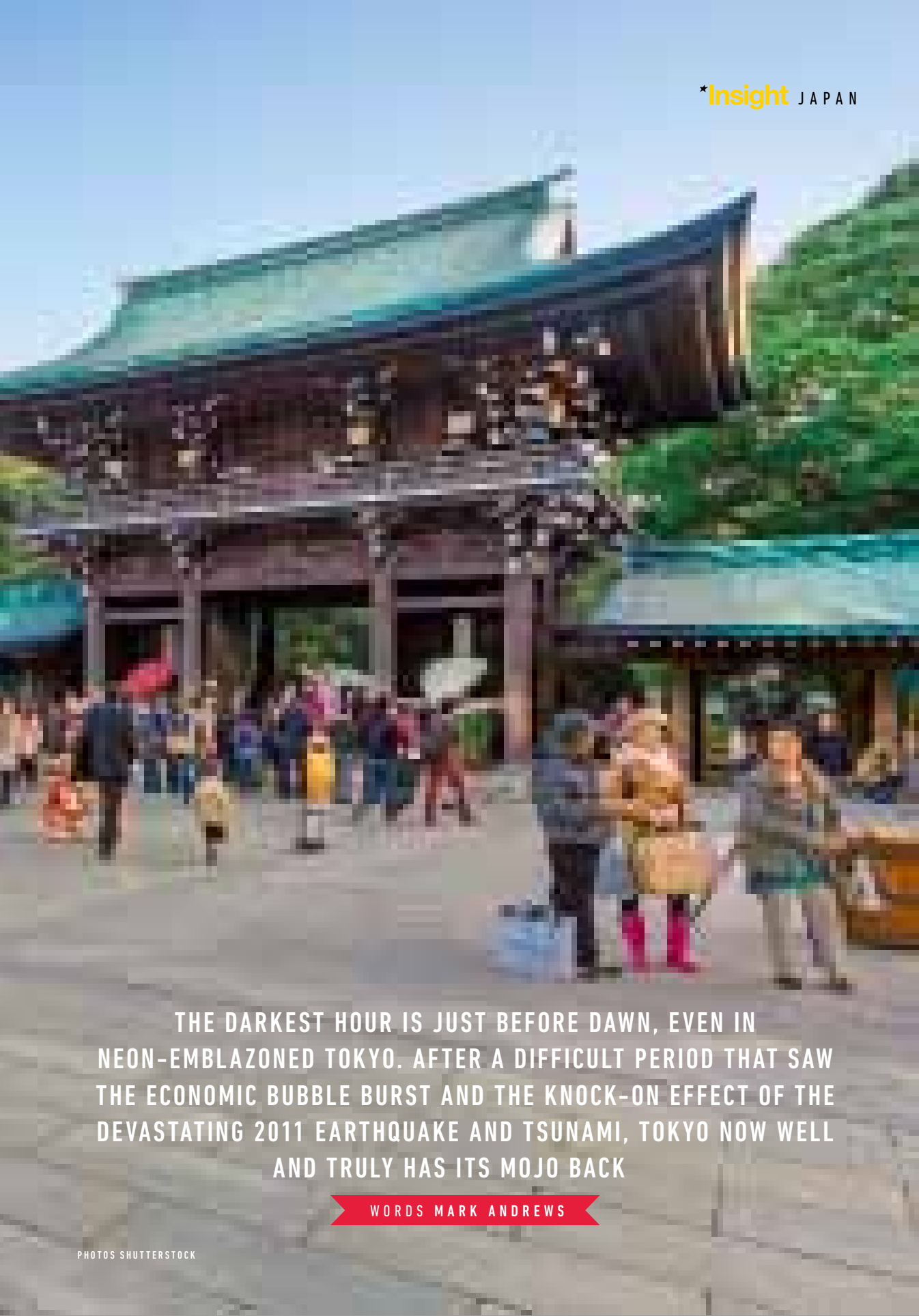


URBAN CALM
Meiji Jingu Shrine
offers a peaceful
pocket of tranquility
amid the full-on
sensory onslaught
of central Tokyo



TOKYO



THE DARKEST HOUR IS JUST BEFORE DAWN, EVEN IN NEON-EMBLAZONED TOKYO. AFTER A DIFFICULT PERIOD THAT SAW THE ECONOMIC BUBBLE BURST AND THE KNOCK-ON EFFECT OF THE DEVASTATING 2011 EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI, TOKYO NOW WELL AND TRULY HAS ITS MOJO BACK

WORDS MARK ANDREWS

Riding a wave of euphoria following the successful bid for the 2020 Olympics,

Tokyo is doing what it does best – reinventing itself. Nowhere says that more than the Skytree, which opened in 2012. At 634m, it's currently the world's tallest freestanding communications tower. While you'll find most things of interest in Tokyo on or near the Yamanote Line, the JR railway line that loops its way round the centre, the tower is actually a bit to the east.

Looking out, you realise how surprisingly low-rise Tokyo really is. Few buildings reach over 200m and on a clear day you can see up to 75km away from the higher of the two viewing platforms, which also features a glass walkway around the side from where the lift drops off visitors to the Sorakara ("from sky") Point. At 451m, this is the highest point in the building you can reach.

Nihonbashi, literally "Japan bridge", is the geographical centre of the city. It is from this point, or more precisely the middle of the bridge, that distances between Tokyo and the rest of Japan were, and still are, measured. It is a good place to jump on a river cruise to see what remains of the bustling heart of old Tokyo. It is also home to many famous stores, where you can buy authentic Japanese souvenirs. Kiya was founded in 1792 and sells top-quality kitchen knives. Yamamoto Noriten, on the other hand, sells nori, a seaweed product – a lot more airport security check friendly.

Think Japan is organised, orderly and polite? Prepare for the sensory



BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY
The Tokyo skyline at night – arguably the world's prettiest megalopolis

onslaught of Tsukiji Fish Market, one of the world's most bizarre tourist attractions. Catch it while you still can as it's set to close by March 2016. Motorised carts career past and trucks rush to take out the day's catch to the city's restaurants; housewives arrive at first light to get the freshest fish for their salaryman husbands' dinner. Be sure to arrive early in the morning and grab a sushi breakfast – you can be assured of eating some of the best.

Shibuya is a strong drawcard for young people as it offers shopping, restaurants and entertainment. Its pedestrian crossing is one of the enduring symbols of Tokyo. About 2,500 pedestrians cross each time the "walk" sign flashes. Look out for the Hachiko statue just outside the station. This is a tribute to a faithful Akita dog who would meet his master here, and who continued to show up each day for 10 years after his master died. ➡



SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

Dog

B1F, 3-23-3 Jingumae;
dog-hjk.com

KitKat Chocolatory

Seibu department store,
1-28-1, Minami-ikebukuro;
www.sogo-seibu.jp.e.ld.hp.transer.com/foreign/en/index.html

Kiya

Coredo-Muromachi 1F, 2-2-1
Nihonbashi-Muromachi;
kiya-hamono.co.jp

Yamamoto Noriten

1-6-3 Nihonbashi-Muromachi;
yamamoto-noriten.co.jp



Harajuku, technically still part of Shibuya, remains a bastion of street fashion. Takeshita-dori puts the k into *kawaii* (“cute”) with many stores selling clothes and accessories ranging from the saccharine to the disturbing. Check out the nearby Dog store, which apparently boasts a certain Lady Gaga as a customer. Top-end boutiques line Omotesando, which leads up to the entrance of Yoyogi Park and Meiji Jingu. If there is only one shrine or temple you visit while in Tokyo, Meiji should be it. Built to commemorate the first monarch after restoration of

The crossing at Shibuya is one of the world’s busiest

power to the emperor, it is an oasis of calm in central Tokyo. Yoyogi Park, next door, is best visited at weekends when you are likely to catch various subgroups, such as rockabillies and various cosplay enthusiasts.

Department-store basements usually have a wide array of weird and wonderful foods. Seibu’s Ikebukuro branch is home to the world’s first KitKat Chocolatory.

At times Tokyo can become bewildering, with its almost complete disregard for street names and numbering. However, go with the flow and its magic will reveal itself. ★



Park Hyatt Tokyo



Thanks to *Lost in Translation*, the Park Hyatt Tokyo in Shinjuku is the place to stay for its panoramic windows, taking in almost endless high-rise views. With guest rooms starting from the 41st floor, it has a commanding city outlook yet cocoons visitors away from the bustle and pampers them with top-notch

service. Rooms are luxurious, and spacious by Tokyo standards. Have a drink at the New York Bar, just like Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson did.

DID YOU KNOW? Jetstar Holidays has some great deals on accommodation at the Park Hyatt Tokyo. Check out Jetstar.com/hotels or call 1300 360 520.



Travel info ↓



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