

1 Tamuraseihoen Tea Stall, Nara

Not a teahouse, but my first tea stop of the trip – and a reminder that sometimes the simplest places matter most. Tamuraseihoen Tea Stall is a traditional tea shop with gyokuro, genmaicha, sencha, hojicha and one type of matcha. I bought, Sencha (¥500 / 100g), Gyokuro (¥2000 / 100g) and Matcha (¥1500). Modest, local, not touristy. The owner was warm and genuine, the perfect beginning. No pictures allowed so I took a picture of a tea cup from later on my trip.

Address: 18 Shonamicho, Nara, 630-8363, Japan



2 Yumeido, Nara

My first true teahouse stop after hiking the Kumano Kodo. Located near the park and temples of Nara, Yumeido offers a single fixed menu (¥1000): Homemade ume kombucha, bean soup & a bowl of matcha. The matcha gave me goosebumps, both aroma and taste. I am not generally a big matcha fan, yet this felt grounding, almost nostalgic. They also sell pottery and tea accessories, making it a beautiful place to linger.

Address: 2 Kasuganochi, Nara, 630-8212, Japan



3 Salon Naramachi, Nara

Hidden in the back of a store, this serene teahouse offers a traditional tatami experience. Salon Naramachi specialises in matcha ceremonies but also serves sencha and hojicha. I opted for hojicha (¥800) and a hojicha cake with vanilla ice cream (¥600). The aroma was intoxicating, roasted, comforting, deeply Japanese. I went for a refill. If hojicha perfume existed, I would wear it.

Address: 31-1 Ganriincho, Nara, 630-8221, Japan



4 Wasachi, Kyoto

Elegant exterior, spacious and serene interior (only 10 seats). Wasachi focuses on matcha, pure or latte (cow, oat, coconut milk). I chose a classic hot matcha (¥750). Clean, refined and beautifully presented. You can purchase their matcha to take home (¥3700). Minimalist design, calm energy.

Address: 18-5 Yakatacho, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto, 600-8203, Japan



5 7T+, Kyoto

A paradise for collectors. 7T+ carries over 50 teas, primarily from Japan but also Taiwan and China. The in-house drink menu is smaller but focused: matcha (pure or latte), roasted kyobancha, hojicha and more. We had matcha, matcha ice cream and charcoal-roasted kyobancha. I brought home yellow tea and aged gyokuro (10g for ¥1000). Small quantities, high-end pricing, but the quality matches.

Address: 73番地1 Shioyacho, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto, 600-8052, Japan



6 Kan'eidō Flagship Store, Kyoto

Upstairs at Kan'eidō Flagship Store you'll find a small café serving matcha (¥800). A simple yet worthwhile stop while exploring Kyoto. Sometimes all you need is a good bowl and a quiet seat.

Address: 171-3 Hashimotocho, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto, 600-8011, Japan



7 Sabo Maeda, Kyoto

Located inside the gardens of Nijo Castle, Sabo Maeda offers matcha and sencha in a peaceful outdoor setting.

Sitting in the sun with a bowl of matcha (¥1000) was my only outdoor tea moment of the trip, and it was a memorable one.

Address: 541 Nijojocho, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto, 604-8301, Japan



8 Ikehan 分室, Kyoto

Set along the river in Kyoto, Ikehan combines a raw, almost industrial interior with a warm, intimate atmosphere. The menu spans more than 13 teas from Japan, Taiwan and China. Green, yellow, oolong, black and fermented. Each tea (¥2400) comes with a large kettle on a candle flame at your table, allowing unlimited infusions. I chose a deeply roasted Japanese oolong from Fuji and ended up steeping it seven times. The next day, we returned for another Japanese oolong and a 50-year-old puerh. The staff offer to brew the first round for you, a small ritual that elevates the entire experience. High quality, generous pricing and a setting that invites you to slow down completely.

Address: 143-11 Toichicho, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto, 600-8111, Japan



9 Itsu, Tokyo

Possibly the smallest teahouse I have ever visited: five seats at the counter. Itsu offers over 12 teas (green, oolong, black and matcha), priced between ¥1800-¥2400. The menu is only in Japanese, always a promising sign. Went for a green tea from Nagasaki and matcha (preceded by tencha), alongside a sweet included in the price. The owner works with extraordinary precision and patience. No rush, no shortcuts. Cash only, come with time.

Address: Japan, 〒107-0062 Tokyo, Minato City, Minamiaoyama, 3 Chome-14-4 2階

10 Nigihayahi Tea, Tokyo

A concept I hadn't seen before in Japan, they prepare tea like coffee: slow drip extraction and even tea "espresso." Leaves are ground and water drips through with precision. I tried a Kamiyama green tea (¥650) and a black tea rose-water tea espresso. The latter was refined, layered and unlike anything I had tasted before. Floral, concentrated, transcendent. Calm interior blending traditional & Western elements. Around 25 seats. A must-visit for the curious tea drinker.

Address: Japan, 〒150-0047 Tokyo, Shibuya, Kamiyamacho, 12-2 星野ビル 1階



Not enough time to visit them all? Here's our Top 3:

1. Ikehan (Kyoto)
2. Itsu (Tokyo)
3. Salon Naramachi (Nara)

Extra Tips:

Ceramics: Wakabaya Kyoto

Cold Brew & Matcha Ice Cream: Nanaya Aoyama