

What to See at Ameyoko

Ameyoko is one of Tokyo's greatest street markets, where you can dig for finds, buy an entire picnic meal, or just observe energetic merchants in action. First-time visitors may want to start by walking the length of the 600-meter shopping street, which runs along the railway tracks between Ueno and Okachimachi stations and is lined with shops and stalls dealing in fresh seafood, fruit and vegetables, chocolate and other snacks, cosmetics, clothing, and much more.

Particularly interesting stores facing the main street or located just off it include Nakata Shoten, Americaya, and Okuma Shokai. Nakata Shoten is one of the longest-standing businesses here: it was founded in the 1950s, when many Ameyoko merchants specialized in merchandise procured from the U.S. military, and still trades mainly in surplus military gear such as boots, jackets, and bags. Americaya, as the name gives away, sells wear and gear associated with the U.S.A., although today many of the blue jeans for which the shop is famous are of the artisanal Japanese variety. Okuma Shokai, another store with well over half a century of history, specializes in *sukajan*—the “souvenir jackets” embroidered with stereotyped symbols of Japanese culture and first worn by American soldiers stationed in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, after World War II.

Directly underneath the tracks is the indoor Ueno Center Mall, also part of Ameyoko and home to dozens of small shops selling souvenirs, clothes, cameras, shoes, belts, perfume, and more. Another indoor destination is the Ameyoko Center Building, a triangular structure near the Ueno side entrance to Ameyoko. The Center Building's basement houses a variety of grocery stores, including several selling Chinese and Southeast Asian foodstuffs, while the upper floors are occupied mainly by clothing and hobby shops.