

## Cool and Crazy Stuff at Village Vanguard

Japan could easily win the gold medal for inventing completely unnecessary things that are weird and cool and make great gifts. Among the many stores that carry wild and inexplicable stuff, one of the best is Village Vanguard, or Biraban, as it's called by the locals.

Village Vanguard is the type of place that has all manner of things designed to remove money from your wallet. It reminds me of Spencer's Gifts or Hot Topic, only with way more stuff of every kind.

You can easily find something for just about anyone:

Skater clothes such as hats, shirts, sweatshirts, and backpacks from brands like HUF, Skate and Destroy, and OBEY.

Star Wars gear for your favorite Star Wars Otaku. Shirts, mugs, hats, books, bags, figurines, and lightsabers. Everything you need to join the rebellion.

Heaps of manga of every genre as far as I can tell. I don't know much about manga, but I saw tons of them here.

Marvel and DC comics that are translated into Japanese. Great if you want to practice reading Japanese.

A small bookstore area that has books ranging from how to fix your Yamaha motorcycle, to an analysis of Steve McQueen's style, to travel guides for overseas travel, to how to be a hippie (as if you need a guidebook for that), and so many more.

Lots of American brand clothes and gear including Ben Davis, Levis, and Manhattan Portage. Japan really does Americana and vintage American clothes well.

Tons of B-Side Label stickers.

Many Lomography cameras so you can take funky arty photos while visiting Japan.

Gifts that are sure to make your friend who has everything smile... like a toilet-shaped curry bowl (plastic-shaped poop not included) in classic ceramic or gilded gold! –or funky coasters of dogs dressed as your favorite rock star.

How about a pair of slippers that are also a mop, so you can have fun sliding around your house and cleaning at the same time? These should just be given to every kid at a certain age.

Also, Trader Joe's bags are a thing in Japan. I was told this by a friend, so I brought some over from L.A. as omiyage (gifts), only to discover I could buy all of them here. They are cool bags after all.

Need some Minecraft stuff for your kids or niece or nephew? They've got tons.

Maybe your little ones aren't into Minecraft and prefer Minions, well you can grab a handful of Minions just as easily.

Cat people are well represented. You can get just about anything cat here. Cat books, cat bags, cat cleaning slippers (I guess I already mentioned those), cat stuffed animals, cat bento boxes, cat mugs, cat cups, and cat figurines.

Dog people will also find plenty of goodies to buy, as will sumo fans, gnome fans, and Andy Warhol fans. Seriously, this place has something that should appeal to just about anyone.

There are Village Vanguard all over Japan and if you're in one of the bigger cities, save some time in your itinerary to check one out.