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## Living in High-Tech Tokyo

*Even the toilets have controls*

By Kat Avila | Web Published 8.29.2003

It's 3 o'clock in the morning, and I'm hunkered down in a 24-hour Internet cafe in Tokyo, Japan, trying to stay on top of my e-mail and surfing the web for work and another place to live. It's not too hard to stay awake. I can refresh my coffee cup as often as I like since drinks are free (except for the beer). Right now I'm having an early breakfast - ham and eggs - which I ordered from the snack menu.

Out of the corner of my eye, I notice a couple of guys have dozed off while playing video games. No doubt in their dreams they're still blasting away at alien invaders or trying to pull themselves out of an aerial death spiral.

At the cafe, I scan the Los Angeles Times, Orange County Register, and LatinoLA for news about what's going on back home in California. Perhaps I should go see our next governor's latest movie. Headphones plugged into the hard drive, I listen to Billboard Radio. Today I might swim into my file manager to update my Chicano/Asian-American theatre web site, which I originally built using work and school computers because I didn't own a PC (personal computer).

When the need arises, I will make my way to the women's restroom. It



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is equipped with "shower" toilets. One button releases a refreshing spray of warm water against your private parts. Another button turns on the dryer. I think you have to be a woman to fully appreciate the convenience.

Later, I will check my mobile phone to see if I have any voice mail. I'm not a big fan of telephones, finding their ringing and buzzing to be assassins of the little peace and quiet I enjoy. Yet, after a friend showed me concert photographs and video she had taken with her mobile phone, after my eyes had popped back into their sockets, I bought myself a ball-and-chain, I mean a mobile phone, in order to keep up with the Joneses.

Though I asked for the cheapest phone, it is not only capable of taking photographs (a camera-phone vs. a video-phone), but I can immediately e-mail those shots to friends by using i-mode. With i-mode, I have joined the global wireless Internet revolution. I can access information, buy and sell (m-commerce, or mobile commerce), and play games with a machine that fits in the palm of my hand.

For a little more money, I could have had a phone where I could see the person I was talking with, provided he or she had the same type of phone. Beam me up, Scotty!

In a few hours, to get home, I will be shuffling onto one of the high-speed and anally on-time trains Japan is known for. This low-tech body is going to be feeling the need for sleep.

I suppose somebody somewhere is working on an upgrade.

*Kat Avila*  
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*needs to cut back on her coffee  
consumption and get more sleep.*

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