PRESS KIT

OSAKA

Downtown Japan

OSAKA CONVENTION
& TOURISM BUREAU



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The Downtown of Japan

Osaka, 'the nation's kitchen,' is Japan's friendliest city and the country's top spot to eat, drink, and party. It is also as quirky as a city comes. To the naked eye of a tourist, Osaka is a kaleidoscope of neon lights, kitsch trinket shops, and giant plastic food sculptures, but there are many opportunities to get below the surface and discover more of Osaka's true character and its centuries-long history.

Osaka is many things all at once; a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and personalities, all of which stems from its history as a port city and the gateway of trade in Japan. Osaka was the first capital of Japan, established in the 7th Century. Since then, it continued to play a central role, serving as the key port city through which the finest of goods from around Japan and the world were carried into the later capitals of Nara and Kyoto. Naturally, because of its history as a trade hub, it became a diverse city of different kinds of people from all kinds of places who brought different ideas, values, and treasures with them. Many inventions that were birthed in and around the Osaka region, such as karaoke, conveyor-belt sushi, and cup noodles, have spread throughout the world and become universally popular. It is therefore no surprise that many know Osaka as the Treasure Box City.

Osaka is also known as Japan's capital of entertainment. Many traditional forms of entertainment, such as Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki were developed on the culturally fertile grounds of Osaka. The city is also said to be the birthplace of jazz in Japan. In recent times, *manzai* comedy has been associated with the Osaka region, and *manzai* comedians often speak in the Kansai dialect during their acts. Osaka is heavily embedded in the booming world of Japanese pop culture. Many of the big Japanese-pop-culture trends, such as Gothic Lolita, were born in the underground clubs of Osaka, and made their way onto the streets of Tokyo and subsequently around the world.

Osaka invites visitors from far and wide to venture into the labyrinths of alleyways and backstreets to discover the soul of this city.



FACES of OSAKA



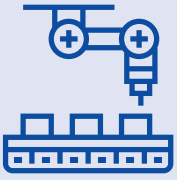
The Nation's Kitchen

With 91 Michelin starred restaurants and 142 awarded a Bib Gourmand, Osaka truly is an epicurean paradise



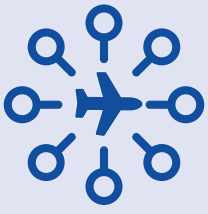
A City of Merchants

Historically the gateway of trade in Japan, the entrepreneurial spirit lives on in Osaka's labyrinth of shopping arcades, markets and the people themselves



A *Monozukuri* Hub

Osaka's traditional manufacturing industries produce everything from traditional steel knives to hi-tech components



The Gateway to West Japan

Osaka is the geographic center and hub of the Kansai area which brings together economy, history, and culture to create a region with diverse appeal



A 24 Hour Destination

Osaka can be accessed and enjoyed at any hour thanks to its 24-hour international airport. KIX handles 1,200 flights per week connecting to 67 cities in 20 countries



The Melting Pot of Japan, and Asia

With communities of people from all kinds of backgrounds and cultures, it is undoubtedly Osaka's diversity that creates its unique charm

Defining the Osaka Spirit

Osakans have their own swagger. Dare to compare them to Tokyoites and they will be quick to point out the differences. "Tokyo people are cool, impersonal and bureaucratic," they might say. "We here in Osaka are warm and friendly."

It is true that Osaka's locals are refreshingly outgoing and colorful, compared with their more reserved counterparts in Tokyo and Kyoto. The theory is that it is because of Osaka's history as a merchant city; Merchants consider everyone a potential customer and they don't want to run the risk of losing anyone's business, so they go out of their way to be friendly. But what else makes them uniquely Osakan? Four people from five different walks of life explain what being a native of Osaka means to them.



Photo: © Celia Polkinghorne

The Chef

Takoyaki vendor

"Osakans are outgoing, down-to-earth, and play by their own rules. That's the best thing about us."

The Baseball Fanatic

Ryuzo Moriyama (Owner of Gosakudon - an izakaya for Hanshin Tigers' fans)

"Despite the rivalry between the Giants and Tigers, there's a lot of love between us as baseball fanatics. Baseball is about camaraderie. Mix that with Osaka, a city I love, and you have something special."



Photo: © Daniel Lee



Photo: © Jason Haidar

The Entrepeneur

MJ, Fedup clothing store

"Hip-hop is about freedom of expression, which mirrors our style here in Amemura. We like the American hip-hop look but give it our own flavor. That's the true Osaka style, showing your individuality."



Photo: © Jason Haidar

The Artist

Grind Pencil

"I saved money any way I could. I used all my spare time and money on creating art. Many Osakans will make huge sacrifices to become great at whatever it is they want to contribute to their community."

Famous Osakans

Hiroshi Ishiguro and **Minoru Asada** are well-known for making android robots. Asada is a Professor in the Department of Adaptive Machine Systems at Osaka University's Graduate School of Engineering. Ishiguro has been developing robots for 12 years at Osaka University, where he is the director of the Intelligent Robotics Laboratory. He has created look-alike versions of celebrities such as storyteller Katsura Beicho and supervised the development of a robot for cross-dressing TV star Matsuko Deluxe.

Godai Tomoatsu (1836–1885) was one of the students smuggled out of Japan's Bakumatsu period in 1865 to study in Great Britain. He returned to become Japan's leading entrepreneur of the early Meiji period. He devoted himself to industrial and trading businesses in order to develop Japan's economy. He founded the **Osaka Chamber of Commerce** in 1880 as well as the **Osaka Stock Exchange**, serving as chairman at both institutions, and also a business school, that later became Osaka University.

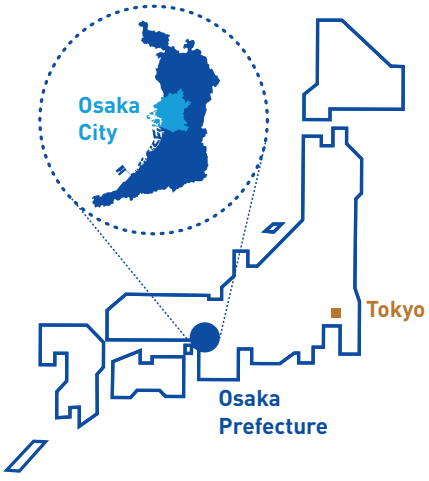
Tadao Ando is a self-taught architect born in Osaka. He has won many awards for his work. His architectural style is described as the "haiku" effect; the use of simple yet complex design and emphasis on empty space to highlight the beauty of simplicity. Tadao Ando works that can be seen in Osaka include the Church of Light, Chikatsu-Asuka Historical Museum, Fukoku Life, and the House in Hamadera.

OSAKA CITY
225.21km²
2,665,314

OSAKA PREFECTURE
1,905km²
8,865,245

TOKYO
2,191km²
13,159,388

JAPAN
377,970km²
128,057,352



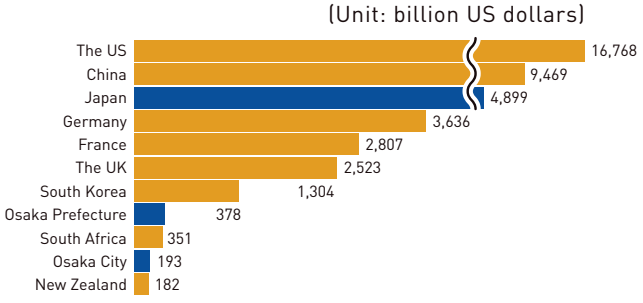
Area & Population

With a municipal area of no more than 0.1% of Japan's land area, the City of Osaka contains the nation's third largest population and the second largest number of employees and business establishments.

Economy

GDP Comparisons:
World's Major Economies / Regions and Osaka

The GRP (Gross Regional Product) of Osaka City totals 18,700 billion yen, accounting for 3.95% of Japan's GDP (FY 2011). Osaka's GRP is comparable with major economies, similar to New Zealand's GDP.



NOTE:
- The Kansai region covers six prefectures: Osaka, Hyogo, Kyoto, Wakayama, Nara and Shiga.
- The figures of Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City are calculated on the assumption that their growth rates in 2011 are the same as the annual growth of the national GDP from 2011 to 2013.

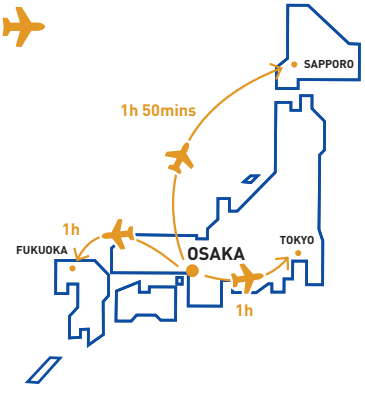
Source: The Outline of Osaka Economy 2015.

Infrastructure

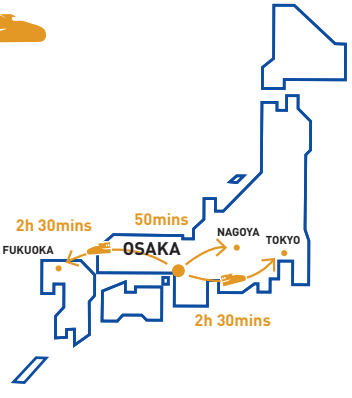
Well-Developed Urban Infrastructure

Located at the center of Japan's land, sea, and air transportation networks, Osaka City provides an ideal environment for business, logistics, and tourism. Its sophisticated transportation infrastructure ensures excellent accessibility to and from not only major domestic cities but also cities in China and the rest of Asia.

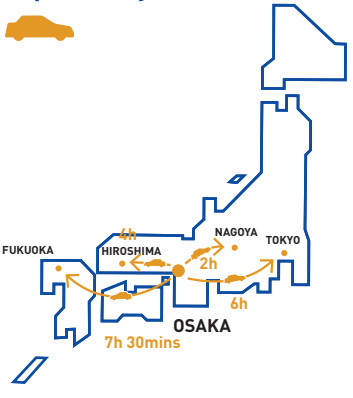
Aviation



Shinkansen



Expressway



Industry

Greenfield
Kansai is one of the largest hubs for the development and production of energy-related industries such as lithium-ion batteries.

Life Sciences
Clustered in Kansai are a large number of pharmaceutical-company headquarters, foreign corporations, and medical-equipment manufacturers.

Monozukuri
Monozukuri is the business of 'making things'. Osaka's traditional manufacturing industries churn out a staggering 11 trillion yen worth of items every year from its 46,716 factories.*

Intellectual Cluster
The Kansai region is home to a great number of world-leading universities, research institutes, and science and technology infrastructures.

**Source: Economic Census, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2009)*
Industrial and Commercial Statistics - Industries, METI (2008)

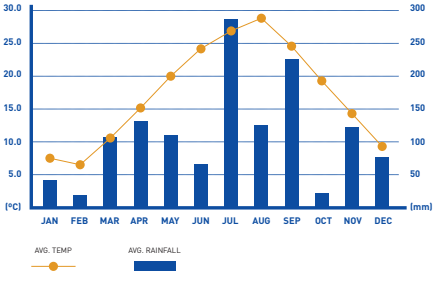
Rankings

No.1 Fastest Growing City
(MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index 2016 – 24.15%)

Top 100 City Destination
(Euromonitor's Annual Top 100 City Destinations Survey 2017 - 55th, based on international tourist arrivals)

3rd Safest City in 2015
(EIU Safe Cities Index 2015: Overall Safety - 3rd Place)

Climate



Symbols & Emblems

Osaka City Emblem
The Miotsukushi was a wooden sign that was placed in the shallow waters of Naniwa-e Bay and was chosen as the city emblem in 1894.

Osaka Prefectural Emblem
A stylized version of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's family crest. The 'O' of Osaka linking with the three circles above it symbolizes hope, prosperity, and harmony.

Flower of Osaka
"Primrose (*Sakuraso*)"

Blossom of Osaka
"Plum (*Ume*)"

Tree of Osaka
"Ginkgo (*Icho*)"

Bird of Osaka
"Shrike (*Mozu*)"

MAP



Tottori

Himeji

Okayama

Kobe

OSA

Kansai International Airport

Hiroshima

Takamatsu

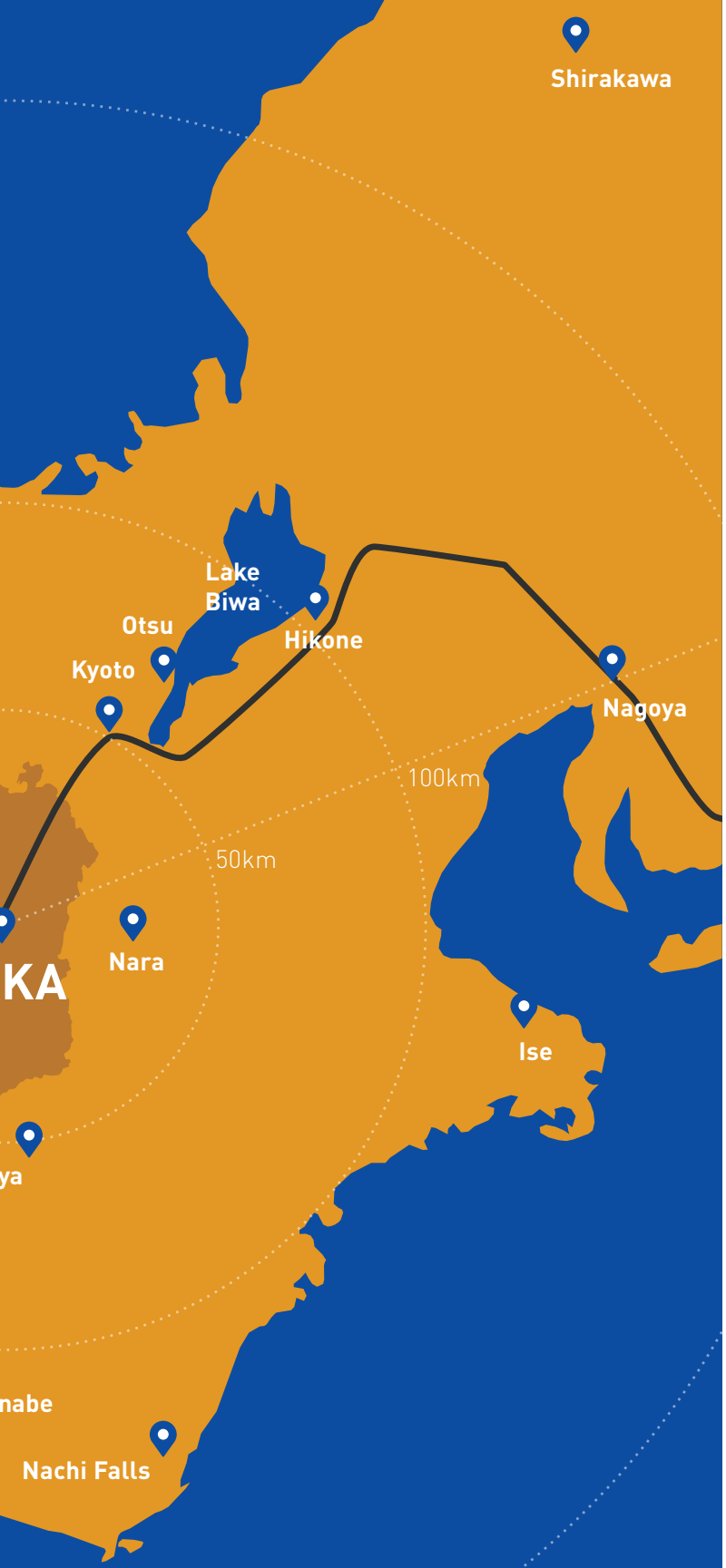
Naruto

Awaji Island

Mt. Ko

Tokushima

Ta



UNESCO World Heritage in Kansai

Kansai has more UNESCO World Heritage Listings and Sites than any other region in Japan, scattered throughout the neighboring prefectures of Kyoto, Nara, Hyogo, and Wakayama. Many of the designated sites are only 30 minutes to an hour by express train from Osaka. Here is the World Heritage list for the Kansai region:

Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)
A total of 17 temples, shrines and gardens are included in Kyoto's World Heritage listing, including the must-see golden pavillion at Kinkaku-ji Temple and the serene Zen garden at Ryoan-ji Temple.

Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara
The ancient capital of Japan between 710 to 784, Nara boasts some maginificent World Heritage sites, including Todai-ji Temple, Horyuji Temple and Kofuku-ji Temple.

Sacred Sites and Piligrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range
The ancient pilgrimage routes that crisscross the Kii mountains in Wakayama are home to some amazing sites, including the stunning Nachi Falls.

Himeji Castle
The iconic 'white egret' castle underwent a massive restoration in 2015 to restore it to its gleaming white glory. If you only see one castle in Japan, make it this one.

Buddhist Monuments in the Horyuji Temple Area
Founded by Prince Shotoku in 607, Horyuji Temple is considered the oldest wooden structure in the world.

Osaka - The Nation's Kitchen

Osaka is a gastronomic gem with an unfathomable variety of eating and drinking establishments to be explored and enjoyed, including 91 Michelin-starred restaurants. With a total of 117 stars awarded, Osaka ranks fourth in the world in the total number of Michelin stars.

Osaka is known as *kui-daore no machi*, 'the town that loves to eat.' *Kui-daore* on its own is a mantra that means "eat yourself bankrupt", or "eat until you drop." During the Edo Period (1601–1867), Osaka became known as "The Nation's Kitchen" because the finest ingredients were sent to Osaka from all over Japan for shipment to other parts of the country. As a gateway of culture and trade, the best of both the land and sea found its way to the city, spawning Osaka's *kuidaore* food culture and paving the way for new styles of dining and entertainment. This turned Osaka into the gastronomic gem that it is today with an unfathomable variety of restaurants and other eating and drinking establishments.

B-Gourmet

Osaka's famous soul foods like *okonomiyaki* (savory pancakes with whatever meat and vegetables you choose to be mixed in), *takoyaki* (balls of *okonomiyaki*-style mixture with a piece of octopus inside), and *kushikatsu* (deep-fried meat and vegetables on sticks) can be found along the streets and in various eateries all across the city. Osakans love their B-kyu (literally "B-class") no-frills dining culture; one-of-a-kind, mom-and-pop style eateries offering everything from *yakitori* (grilled chicken on sticks) to *oden* (meat and vegetables soaked in a delicious broth), to *yakisoba* (fried noodles). The noodle dishes of *soba*, *udon*, and *ramen* are revered in this city and, indeed, throughout



Kushikatsu - skewers of deep-fried meat and vegetables



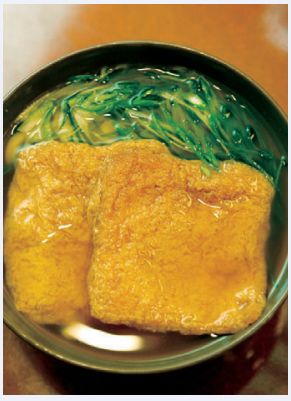






Photo: © Jason Haidar

A staple Osaka dish and favorite of locals and vistors alike - Okonomiyaki

Top: A bowl of udon noodles. The dashi broth in Osaka is much lighter than its Tokyo counterpart
Right: Crab hotpot. Above: A street vendor serving cheap local fare

the country. The simple bowl of soup, noodles and toppings has proven to be a consistently satisfying formula throughout the ages.

Kappou Dining

Those wishing to experience the true culinary magic of Japanese food will also find Osaka a delight, where upper-end dining experiences can be found at various *kappou* restaurants around the city. *Kappou* takes the traditional *kaiseki*-style dining and brings it to the countertop of the restaurant. The locals here don't like the stiff atmosphere of formal dining, preferring to have their meal while they chat to the chef as their next dish is being prepared. In true down-to-earth Osaka style, the chef interacts and converses with customers while preparing local, seasonal foods or the catch of the day to the guest's liking. *Washoku*, or traditional Japanese cuisine, was added to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list at the end of 2013, and the various dishes offered in a *kappou* course will help the inexperienced see exactly why this came to be. Dishes always contain fresh, local, and seasonal ingredients with a fine balance of fish, meat, and vegetables. The *suimono* (a clear broth soup) starter is made with Japanese *dashi* (soup stock), a base ingredient in almost all Japanese foods and the pride of chefs in Osaka, where *dashi* culture is abundant. The *hassun* (second course) dish is laden with a multitude of bite-sized delicacies, which is eventually followed by a "main" dish of meat (*washoku* is not all fish!). The areas of Hozenji-Yokocho in Namba, and Kitashinchi in Umeda, are home to many of Osaka's finest *kappou* restaurants.

It's All About the Dashi

Dashi brings out *umami*, the fifth sense of taste after "sweetness," "sourness," "bitterness," and "saltiness." There are plenty of tasty *dashi*-based foods in Osaka. *Udon* noodles would be a standard, different from the strong, dark Tokyo *udon*. Osaka's *udon* noodles are light in flavor. The soft broth brings out the flavor of the kelp, so you only



need a little soy sauce to enjoy your meal; "light," doesn't mean, "light in flavor." You will find a rich aroma and taste. Those interested in sampling some really delicious *dashi* should check out the following restaurants: **Matsubaya** in Shinsaibashi, **Mimiu** in Hommachi, and **Dotombori Imai** in the Dotombori area.

Osaka Ingredients

Osaka is blessed with an endless supply of fresh, high-quality ingredients, which is the most important factor for success in Japanese cuisine. The abundance of fresh ingredients and the wide range of cooking methods allow Osaka's chefs to serve diners with the best there is to offer. Osaka is lucky to have the pick of the *umi no sachi to yama no sachi* (the bounty of the ocean and the mountains). The area between the Kii Channel and the Seto Inland Sea is rich in seafood such as bonito, flounder, tuna, sea bream, shrimp, squid, and octopus, which fill the fish markets of Osaka every morning.

Staple vegetables used in Osakan cuisine include *shiitake* mushrooms, bamboo shoots, and chestnuts from the mountains; burdock root, *daikon* radish, cabbage, onions, tomatoes, and eggplants from the plains; sweet potatoes from the sandy soils; and aroid and lotus root from the swamp lands. Osaka is also one of the top producers of garland chrysanthemums.

Recently, efforts are being made to revive the growing of some local ingredients that have slowly been disappearing from grocery-store shelves. Growers in the Osaka area are going out of their way to bring back the traditional and unique Naniwa vegetables like Kema cucumbers, Tanabe radish, and Tennoji turnips that were all grown in the area until about 70 years ago, but started disappearing due to global shipments of more common vegetables. These efforts are reflective of the high value food producers and chefs in the area place on local and seasonal ingredients in order to deliver the freshest experience to their customers. This devotion to the production and preparation of food is what makes Osaka the epicurean paradise that it has become.

Michelin-star Dining

In Osaka, diners are spoiled for choice when it comes to first-class fare as there are a plethora of top-quality restaurants. Here, you can find the very best in authentic Japanese and Asian cuisine, and tasty international food. Below are five of the many wonderful options for any visitor seeking a first-class dining experience in Osaka.



Fujiya 1935

For the highest end of Japanese cuisine, don't miss Osaka's three-Michelin-star restaurants Kashiwaya, Koryu, and Taian. Located in Suita, **Kashiwaya** has a well-established reputation for serving top-notch cuisine. Master chef Hideaki Matsuo says his dishes reflect the seasons and Japanese traditions – each dish is thus unique in time and place. Inspiration for the restaurant's design and decor has been drawn from the Kyoto tea ceremony tradition; sliding doors, *tatami* (straw mats), and *shoji* (paper screens). Guests are greeted and served by *kimono*-clad staff, well-trained in the finest Japanese hospitality.

At three-Michelin-star **Koryu**, there are no menus; the chefs create unique Asian cuisine in accordance with what is seasonably available in the local markets, ensuring unbeatable freshness. Head chef, Shintaro Matsuo is always looking for a friendly chat with the diners. This small, exclusive spot has only enough space to seat 12 diners. The interior is simple and sleek, featuring polished wooden tables and flooring. The service is attentive yet unobtrusive, and guests have a chance to learn about Japanese food culture while they enjoy their meal.

Taian specializes in grilled food and founding chef Hitoshi Takahata, who opened this restaurant in 2000, has excelled at what he set out to do: "prepare dishes that leave an impression." The three Michelin stars are evidence of his success. The first thing diners see, after being seated in one of the restaurant's black leather chairs, is the charcoal grill from which they will be treated to grilled seafood and other meats alongside soups and local vegetable dishes. Taian also stocks speciality teas like "Fall In Love" and "Royal Blue Tea," which are served like cocktails. Taian is known to have one of the best "bang-for-your-buck" Michelin experiences in Osaka.

For the best in *sushi*, **Harasho** is a two-Michelin-star sushi restaurant in the Tennoji area of Osaka. Here, they serve an *omakase* ("It's up to the chef") course consisting of seven appetizers, a soup, 10 pieces of sushi, and a *tamago* (sweet egg) roll. The sushi is prepared with the utmost care and precision. Much famed in Japan, guests will need to make reservations, but a little advance planning is worth it for the experience.

In addition to its two Michelin stars, **Fujiya 1935** in Yariyamachi is cited by Diners Club International as being one of the top 50 restaurants in the world. The restaurant serves a seasonal menu of modern Spanish cuisine. The superb selection of Italian and Spanish wines perfectly complements the tasty, imaginative, and immaculately presented dishes.



Osaka's Cultural Heritage: 1,400 Years of Tradition

Since ancient times, Osaka has been a hub of activity. Located at the confluence of a vast web of busy river and sea routes, it naturally grew into a flourishing economic center and became the gateway to Japan for travelers and traders from all over Asia.

Osaka's Origins Go Back to the 5th Century

In the 5th century, Osaka began to flourish as the political and economic center of Japan. Naniwazu Port, the predecessor to the modern port of Osaka, became a gateway into ancient Japan for visitors from Korea, China, and the Asian continent. These visitors brought with them knowledge and artifacts of advanced culture, and new technologies in ceramics, forging, construction, and engineering. They also brought with them a new religion, Buddhism, which very quickly began to spread throughout the rest of the country.

As Buddhism spread, Prince Shotoku constructed Shitennoji Temple in Osaka in 593 A.D., and the city became a base for international exchange with the Asian continent. In 645 A.D., the Emperor Kotoku moved the capital from Asuka (Nara) to Osaka. He built the Naniwanomiya Palace, which is considered to be the oldest palace in Japan. Even though the government has moved the capital many times, finally settling in Edo (Tokyo), Osaka has continued to serve as a sub-capital, and to play a crucial role as a major gateway for foreign culture and trade.

Hideyoshi's Castle Town

In 794, the capital of Japan moved to Heian-kyo (present-day Kyoto). The period that followed, called the Heian Period, saw the construction of numerous exquisite temples around the Kyoto and Osaka areas. Arts, crafts, and literature (such as *A Tale of Genji*) flourished. But by the late 1100s, as the nation entered the Kamakura Period, powerful warlords gained hegemony over the land, and the capital moved to Kamakura, ushering in more than two centuries of civil war.

During the 14th century, Osaka was largely devastated by a series of wars. Then, during the Azuchi and Momoyama Periods (1574–1600), the famous warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi unified Japan from his base in Osaka and built Osaka Castle in 1583. However, in battles that raged between the winter of 1614 and the summer of 1615, the castle town of Osaka was burnt to the ground.

An Economic & Cultural Hub

As Japan entered the Edo Period (1601–1867), when the political capital was moved north to Edo (present-day Tokyo) and the country was completely isolated from the rest of the world, Osaka was restored from the ashes of civil war and quickly grew into a thriving economic hub. It became known as "Japan's Kitchen" because essential goods including rice, the staple food of the East, were sent to Osaka from all over Japan for shipment to other parts of the country.

This economic affluence helped Osaka create its own culture and style. Popular arts bloomed alongside traditional performance arts, such as Joruri puppet theater (the predecessor to today's Bunraku puppet plays), Noh theater, and Osaka's own brand of Kabuki theater. Osaka was also instrumental in the development of Japanese education. One school, the Tekijyuku, was established for the study of Western sciences and medicines. Its students included men instrumental in reforming Japan's government when, in the mid-19th century, the nation began to move out of isolation and into the modern age.



Traditional arts bloomed in Osaka throughout the Edo period

The Commercial Center of Osaka

After the Meiji Restoration (1868), enormous social change, far-reaching reforms to the economic system, and the moving of the capital to Tokyo contributed to a decline in Osaka's prosperity. This caused the city to go through a transformation from a base of trade and finance to a commercial center. Osaka was officially incorporated as a city in 1889. In 1903, the Tennoji area was the site of the 5th National Industrial Exposition, a display of high quality industry and arts, which attracted the country's technological and cultural elite. In this same year, Osaka's first municipal streetcar went into service. By 1925, Osaka was the largest city in Japan in terms of population and area, and the sixth largest in the world.

Devastation During the War

Continuous air raids by American bombers during World War II leveled almost one-third of Osaka, destroying many of its commercial, industrial and public facilities. But after the war, vigorous city planning, and Osaka's positive-thinking citizens, restored the city to an economic prosperity exceeding pre-war levels. Today, the city is home to scores of companies across all sectors of industry, commerce, and business. These have helped make Osaka the economic heart of western Japan.

Osaka is abuzz during the seasonal events and festivals that are extremely popular with locals and visitors alike. Listed below by season are some of the most highly recommended.

Spring

Nippombashi Street Festa
Late March • Den Den Town
Western Japan's largest cosplay festival, held on the third Sunday in March, featuring thousands of cosplayers. Come in costume or camera-in-hand!

Grand Sumo March Tournament
Early March • Namba
Watch these larger-than-life warriors clash for 15 days from early March at the Osaka Prefectural Gymnasium.

Cherry-blossom season
Osaka is at its best in early April when the weather warms up and the cherry blossoms begin to bloom.

Mint cherry-blossom viewing
Early April • Osaka Mint Bureau
The Osaka Mint Bureau is one of the most iconic sites to catch cherry blossoms in Japan in early spring.

Shoryoue (ancient Japanese court music)
April 22 • Shitenno-ji
Witness a 1,200-year-old imperial court performance at the oldest temple in Osaka, Shintennoji.

Nozaki Mairi
May 1–10 • Jigen-ji
Much loved by Osakans, this annual Buddhist festival is held at the temple Jigen-ji, which is a popular pilgrimage destination.



Summer

Otaue Shinji
June 14 • Sumiyoshi Taisha
An ancient rice-planting festival held in the heart of Osaka, complete with paddies tilled by oxen.

Aizome Matsuri (Aizen Festival)
June 30–July 2 • Shoman-in
Osaka's first summer festival is held at the temple Shoman-in, also known as Aizendo. Festival-goers are encouraged to wear *yukata* (summer *kimono*)!

Tanabata (Star Festival)
July 6 & 7
The Star Festival commemorates the romantic legend of Vega and Altair. Hatamono shrine is decorated with bamboo branches and surrounded by street stalls.

Tenjin Matsuri
Jul 24 & 25 • Osaka Tenmangu Shrine and Okawa River area
Big, bold and brash, this festival is an extravagant splurge of historical parades, burning boats, breathtaking fireworks, and thousands of *yukata*-clad revelers.

Sakai Grand Evening Fish Market
July 31 • Ohama Park
This 700-year-old fish auction, Sakai Ouo Yoichi, features the selling of fresh fish in traditional style, via the lively shouts and calls of enthusiastic auctioneers.

Naniwa Yodogawa Fireworks
Beginning of August • Yodogawa River
Running since 1989, this huge and impressive fireworks event attracts half a million spectators every year.

Kamigata Geino Festival in Minami
Mid August • Wahha Kamigata Museum
Costumed actors reenact traditional performances from the *samurai* period such as *rakugo* and other traditional Japanese storytelling.

Gangara Fire Festival
August 24 • Atago Shrine
Giant flaming torches, over four meters high and weighing 100 kilos, are paraded around the neighborhood at this annual summer festival worshipping Mt Atago.





Fall

Danjiri Matsuri

September–October • Kishiwada and other areas

Danjiri festivals, in all their loud drumming, costume-parading, shrine-pulling glory, are some of Japan's most enchanting spectacles. The most revered of them all is held in Kishiwada, Osaka.

Tsukimi Festival

Day of the harvest moon • Mozu Hachimangu Shrine

During this full-moon celebration, when the locals pray for a good harvest, a three-ton, four-meter-high *futondaiko* (portable shrine) is paraded through the streets.

Midosuji Parade

Mid-October • Midosuji Avenue

Osaka's famous main street is open to pedestrians.

Autumn-leaf Viewing

Late November–December • Minoh and other areas

Experience Minoh in all its crimson-orange glory during late November and December and photograph the area at its most picturesque time of year.

Shinno Matsuri

November 22 & 23 • Sukunahikona Shine

The Shinno Festival, also called Tome-no-matsuri (ending festival), marks the end of Osaka's annual events for the calendar year. Collect a paper tiger-shaped amulet here for good health.



Winter

Sembon Zuki (rice cake pounded 1,000 times)

January 2 & 3 • Mizuma-dera

Young men with long pestles pound rice cake to expel evil spirits. The freshly pounded rice cake is then given out to visitors.

Toka Ebisu

January 9–11 • Imamiyaebisu Shrine and elsewhere

At the Toka Ebisu Festival, buy a good-luck bamboo branch and pray to Ebisu, the patron deity of commerce, for success in business.

Doya-Doya

January 14 • Shitennoji Temple

Sometimes called "The Naked Man Festival," men in loincloths charge around the temple in freezing cold temperatures. As with many festival rituals in Japan, it's all for good luck!

Osaka International Women's Marathon

End of January • Yanmar Nagai Stadium

The race starts and finishes at the Yanmar Nagai Stadium located in the south of Osaka, and covers the most scenic and historic areas of Osaka City.

Setsubun

Eve of the Spring Equinox • Abiko Kannon and elsewhere

Setsubun is the Lunar New Year's Eve ceremony where beans are thrown to drive away evil spirits. It takes place at temples and shrines across Japan.

Plum Blossom Viewing

Early February–early March • Osaka Castle Park and other areas

Throughout February and March, the orchards come alive with hues of pink, red and white as the hundreds of varieties of plum trees blossom.

Ichiya Kanjo Matsuri

February 20 • Nozato Sumiyoshi Shrine

Ichiya Kanjo Festival is an annual ceremony for the blessing of good fortune to young girls. There are many shows and parades involving traditional dress, dancing, and music.

48 hours in Osaka

Family fun, vibrant nightlife, traditional culture, historic sites, and gastro delights, Osaka has something for everyone. Here is a recommended whirlwind weekend tour for an unforgettable 48 hours.

Day 1

9am

Take a helicopter ride over the city
Get a bird's-eye view of Osaka with a six-minute **helicopter flight** from the heliport in Maishima. Both daytime and nighttime trips are available.

11am

Awaken your tastebuds at Kuromon Market
Go where the pros go to find the freshest products and see this important market that helped shape Osaka as "The Nation's Kitchen."

1pm

Make plastic sushi at Doguya Suji
Make your own plastic sushi and other food sample items in **Doguya Suji**, a covered shopping arcade historically renowned for selling kitchenware and utensils.

Pick up some pop culture in Nipponbashi
500 stores specializing in all things *otaku* (nerd) — anime, manga, video games, electronics, maid cafes, themed restaurants, and more.

3pm

People-watch in America Mura and Horie
Amemura is famous for its quirky fashion and its vibrant nightlife.

5pm

Stroll around Shinsekai and Shitennoji
Sample some delicious *kushikatsu* (fried meat and vegetables on skewers) in **Shinsekai** before taking a stroll to **Shitennoji Temple**, the oldest temple in Japan.

7pm

Grab a snack from a Dotombori street-food vendor
Dotombori is home to an endless variety of bars and eateries. From local street food, such as *takoyaki*, *okonomiyaki*, and *ramen*, to exotic *kappou* and refined, high-end *kaiseki*.

9pm

Dive into deep Osaka
The **Misono Building**, located in Osaka's central Namba district, is a great place to start for those looking to get off the beaten path with unique small bars.

Grand Front Pub Crawl
If you find yourself at a late night loose end in Umeda, head for the swanky **Grand Front** building. On the 6th floor of the North Wing is the Umekita Floor, where you can hop between any of the 16 bars and restaurants that operate until 4am daily.

4am

Left: Take a morning stroll in Osaka Castle Park

Right: The best way to see this aquapolis is by boat





Day 2

9am

Go for a morning stroll in Osaka Castle Park

Walk through the beautiful Osaka-jo Koen and take the opportunity to photograph one of Japan's most majestic castles.

11am

Check out the Museum of Housing and Living

Go back in time and experience the history of Osaka, from the Edo to the Showa Periods.

Experience Noh Theatre

Get acquainted with the traditional performing art of Noh at the Yamamoto Noh Theatre, the oldest Noh theater in Osaka.

1pm

Stroll along the longest covered shopping arcade in Japan

Selling everything from kitchenware, to second-hand clothes, to delicious snacks, Tenjinbashisuji shopping arcade is a great place to pick up a bargain.

3pm

Explore the retro charms of Nakazakicho

An old-town oasis in the middle of the city. Find trendy cafes, restaurants, and vintage clothing shops in this gentrified area.

5pm

Navigate the Osaka Station Area

Enjoy a moment of peace in the gardens found throughout Osaka Station building before exploring the shopping and dining options at the nearby multi-purpose complex Grand Front - or browse the latest innovations & technologies on display at its Knowledge Capital.

7pm

Watch the sunset from the iconic Umeda Sky Building

One of the city's most recognizable landmarks, the Sky Walk at the top of the Umeda Sky Building offers 360-degree panoramic views.

9pm

Cruise the waterways from Yodoyabashi to Dotombori

Cruise Osaka's waterways from the deck of an open-roofed boat for a fresh perspective and a close-up view of historical and lively Osaka.

Craft Beer and Jazz

Check out one of the growing number of craft beer bars in Osaka then head to one of the many jazz clubs in the city. Osaka is known as the birthplace of jazz in Japan.

4am

Rub shoulders with the locals in Ohatsu Tenjin Ura-Sando

Say "kampai" (cheers) with the locals in an alley filled with a variety of restaurants to enjoy drinks and tapas-like dishes.

Osaka After Dark







Night owls wanting to explore the metropolis and its neon-lit streets after dark will delight in the vast array of restaurants and tourist attractions that are open late and the abundance of after-hours entertainment options. The City of Osaka actively promotes nighttime culture and trains run until late at night, so there's plenty of time to enjoy the evening. Exploring after dark is also extremely safe, with Osaka considered the 3rd safest city in the world.*

**EIU Safe Cities Index 2015: Overall Safety - 3rd Place*

Traditional Arts

Experience the tales of old Japan in one of these unique art forms: *bunraku* (**National Bunraku Theatre**), *kabuki*| (**Osaka Shochiku-za**), *noh* and *kyogen* (**Ohtsuki Noh Theatre**). These classical arts give visitors a window into the entertainment of a bygone era, remaining largely unchanged since their inception.

Comedy

For those looking for a more traditional Western-style comedy show, the award-winning **ROR Comedy Club** holds all-English comedy shows every Friday night. For something different, try Manzai. Originating in Osaka and famous throughout Japan, a Manzai routine is best compared to an Abbott and Costello routine. You can find Manzai performed on the street by up-and-coming artists, or go to the **Yoshimoto Manzai Theater** to see the pros.

Concerts & Live Music

Osaka is a frequent tour stop for concerts by world-renowned rock musicians, and the city also offers a highly diverse mix of classical and contemporary live music. There are many concert halls in Osaka that showcase the best talent in rock, jazz, and classical music. Larger venues such as **Festival Hall** and **Osaka-jo Hall** host the big names. **Symphony Hall** is where many of the world's top classical musicians and soloists perform, and **Billboard Live OSAKA** showcases the finest jazz talent from Japan and abroad.

Opera, Ballet, and Theater

Major opera and ballet companies from Europe and the U.S. regularly present lavish productions at **Festival Hall**. Traveling troupes perform Broadway musicals at Festival Hall or **Osaka Koseinenkin Kaikan**. When **Cirque du Soleil** comes to town, it electrifies crowds at a special tent in Nakanoshima. **Disney on Ice** visits Osaka every summer with dazzling shows at **Osaka-jo Hall**. The **Takarazuka Grand Theater** is the home of the Takarazuka Revue, an all-female troupe with a more than 100-year history that has also performed to sold-out audiences overseas.

Movie Theaters

Hollywood, European, Asian, and domestically produced first-run movies are shown at many cinemas in Osaka. There are three multiplexes in



Umeda: the Navio Toho-plex, Burg 7, and Piccadilly Theater. Cinemas in Namba include the Shikishima Cine Pop. Art house films are shown at three cinemas in Umeda: the Garden Cinema, Cine Libre, and Theater Umeda. They are also shown at the Shinsaibashi Cinema Deux and Cine Nouveau in Kujo.

Nightscapes

Enjoy the breathtaking views of the glittering metropolis from one of the many vantage points in the city. The **Floating Garden Observatory** in Umeda's Sky Building offers an unobstructed 360-degree view 170m off the ground. See the cityscape from Japan's tallest building, **Abeno Harukas** (300m), or take in views of the magnificent **Osaka Castle** from KKR and New Otani hotels. Ride high on Japan's largest ferris wheel, the **Red Horse Osaka Wheel** (123 meters), complete with transparent floors!

Bars & Clubs

Savor the staggering variety of places to eat and drink. Standing bars and drinking alleys, *izakaya*, craft beer bars, quirky holes-in-the-wall, video-game bars, dance clubs, and more. Head for an area and pull up a stool with the locals, or check out the club pages of **Kansai Scene**, a magazine for tourists and expats, for a list of the upcoming gigs for the month.

River Cruises

Explore the "Venice of the East" by taking an evening cruise on one of Osaka's many rivers. Take a 40-minute trip around the Dotombori while listening to jazz on the **Tombori River JAZZ Boat**. Or, take in the sites of Osaka while, at the same time, experiencing *rakugo*, the traditional art of Japanese comedic storytelling, on the **Naniwa Tanken Cruise**.

Architecture

Osaka is an old city with a rich history that has bestowed it with a number of beautiful and interesting structures. The city's architecture is made up of a diverse combination of old edifices and new buildings that are a result of a mish-mash of styles and tastes. Lack of regulation and a kind of "anything goes" attitude, that resulted from, among other things, a rush to rebuild after World War II has sometimes meant unexpected things popping up in unexpected places, for example, the **Gate Tower Building** in Umeda that has a highway running through it!

The adoption of Western buildings also led to a new preference in materials, more concrete over the prewar-favored wood. This new Western style adaptation of architecture opened the gateway for truly innovative, pioneering architectural designs. The following list outlines noteworthy architecture that is worth a look while visiting Osaka.

Abeno Harukas

Abeno Harukas is the tallest high-rise building complex in Japan, standing 300m (984ft) tall. The observation deck, "Harukas 300," offers a commanding view of the Rokko mountain range, the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, and Awaji Island, as well as a stunning Osaka cityscape.

Umeda Sky Building - Floating Garden Observatory

The Umeda Sky Building is Japan's only building selected as one of the world's top 20 buildings. Two giant towers are connected in the center by **The Floating Garden Observatory**, a 173m high top floor that has an open roof and a 360-degree design, affording panoramic views of the city.

Tip: Time it right and catch the sunset before enjoying a spectacular night view.

Kitahama

Kitahama is full of retro-style architecture, perfect for a stroll on a nice day. Highlights include the Osaka Exchange Building, the Arai Building, the Naniwa Bridge, and **Osaka City Central Public Hall**. The latter, arguably the most famous building in Osaka, opened in 1918 and embodies the neo-Renaissance style. The gardens of Nakanoshima Park, a green oasis in the middle of the urban landscape, offer something unique for every season.

Nakazakicho

The gentrified old wooden buildings of the traditional Japanese houses dating back to the Showa era have been renovated into fashionable shops and cafes. Old meets new, as artists have crafted this area into the best of both worlds, creating something truly unique.

The Gate Tower Building

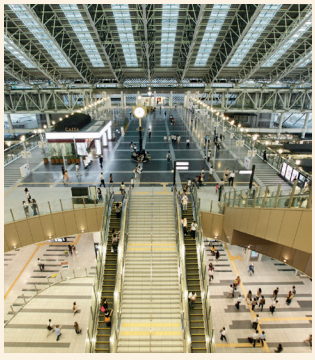
So, how did the Gate Tower Building come to have a highway built right through the middle of it? Turns out the building owner had approval to expand the building and the government had plans to build a highway over the same plot of land. So, they had to compromise, resulting in a 16-story building with a highway passing through it five stories up! The building has a double-core construction, with a circular cross section, ensuring the highway does not interfere or make contact with the building that is nicknamed the Beehive.

Shinsekai

A retro downtown area retaining the atmosphere of the Showa Era (1926–1989), Shinsekai (meaning "New World") is home to the **Tsutenkaku Tower**. An icon of Osaka, it is registered as a tangible cultural property of Japan. At night, the entire tower is illuminated with colorful LED lights.







Far left: Umeda Sky Building
Above: Osaka City Central Public Hall
Left: Osaka Station Atrium

Osaka Architects

Tadao Ando
This famed architect has won just about every award for architecture, which is made even more amazing by the fact that he is self-taught. His architectural style is described as the "haiku" effect; the use of simple yet complex design, and emphasis on empty space to highlight the beauty of simplicity. The Osaka native has several works that can be seen in his hometown. Highlights include the Church of Light, Chikatsu-Asuka Historical Museum, Fukoku Life, and the House in Hamadera.

Kengo Kuma
The gurunavi Shun Shoku Lounge by renowned architect Kengo Kuma is located on prime real estate right outside Osaka Station. It features layered wood, which creates a topographical-style interior that is both unique and functional as desks, seats, and display areas. Kuma also designed the Asahi TV building in Nakanoshima.





Top: Tadao Ando's Chikatsu-Asuka Historical Museum
Bottom: Kuma Kengo's Asahi TV building in Nakanoshima

Sports & Leisure

Enjoy sightseeing whilst exercising or simply join the enthusiastic supporters at a local game. Whether you are a runner, a cyclist, a baseball fan, or a hiking enthusiast, there is surely an unexpected discovery waiting for you.

Facilities & Destinations

CYCLING

Kansai Cycle Sports Center
Located in Kongo-Ikoma-Kisen Quasi-National Park, this is a bicycle park, an amusement park, and a campsite combined into one. On its bicycle grounds and three-kilometer cycling course, you can try out up to 800 different bicycles.

Maishima Infinity Circuit
This go-cart facility offers patrons a thrilling driving experience, just like that of a Formula One racer. A driver's license is not required and free helmets and gloves are available.



Kansai Cycle Sports Center has 800 kinds of bikes to try out

HIKING

Mt. Kongo
Mt. Kongo is the 1,125-meter dominant peak of the Kongo Katsuragi range that stretches along the border of Osaka and Nara prefectures. Near the top are Katsuragi Shrine and Temporin-ji Temple, which was established more than 1,300 years ago. There are many climbing routes from beginner to advanced levels. The Juhyo (trees glazed with ice) Festival is held annually in February.

Mt. Ikoma
The Ikoma mountain range is the best place to get fantastic views of Osaka city from the east. There are many beautiful hiking trails dotted with temples and shrines, and there's even the chance to jump in a local *onsen* (hot spring) and do a temple stay overnight.

RUNNING

Banpaku Kinen Koen (Expo '70 Commemorative Park)
A large park that features various sports facilities, Banpaku Kinen Koen also has beautiful seasonal flowers. The outer lane of the park is a five-kilometer running course and, in early April, visitors can experience running on pathways lined with cherry blossoms. Patrons can enjoy bike riding, and even rent a cycle boat to paddle on the water.

Kema Sakuranomiya Park
Known for its large number of cherry trees, which bloom in the early spring, Kema Sakuranomiya Park incorporates Water Square and the Mint building. The park's many walking trails make it a good place for strolling and jogging.

Nagai Park
A large park located in the Sumiyoshi ward in the south of Osaka, Nagai Park is home to three multipurpose sports stadiums, including the 50,000-seat **Nagai Stadium**, a baseball



The moment ORIX Buffaloes fans release hundreds of whistling balloons into the air at Kyocera Dome

field, the Nagai Botanical Garden, a swimming pool and gymnasium, and a tract of preserved forest.

Osaka Castle Park
One of the most popular parks in the city, Osaka-jo Koen includes Osaka Castle Tower (Osaka Castle Museum), the Nishinomaru Garden, an *ume* (plum) orchard, cherry trees, the Osaka-jo Hall, and a Japanese archery ground.

Yodogawa Riverside Park
A riverside park along the Yodo River, which runs from Fukushima Ward, Osaka to Oyamazaki Town, Kyoto. The Yodogawa Riverside Park features rich natural resources and various sports facilities. Its running tracks are popular with marathon runners, and it hosts a large fireworks display every summer.

OTHER

Naniwa Ice Rink
Located near downtown Osaka, Naniwa Ice Rink can be enjoyed throughout the year. Ice skating demonstrations are held by the rink's skating school graduates on Sunday afternoons.

SUP Stand Up Paddle Boarding
Paddle up and down Osaka's waterways standing on a surfboard. Paddleboarding is growing in popularity among visitors and locals alike. From ¥4,000/hr.

Riverside Yoga
Refresh mind and body at a riverside yoga lesson in Nakanoshima. From ¥500/session. Mats can be rented for ¥200.

Sports Teams

BASEBALL

ORIX Buffaloes
The ORIX Buffaloes are a professional baseball team based at the iconic Kyocera Dome Osaka, an indoor stadium that hosts not only exciting baseball games, but various other events and live shows.

Hanshin Tigers
The Hanshin Tigers team was established in 1935 as the Osaka Baseball Club (Osaka Tigers). Despite its stadium being in Hyogo prefecture, it has enjoyed a strong following from Osakan fans. Attending a Hanshin Tigers game is one of the most fun ways to interact with Osaka locals.

SOCCER

Cerezo Osaka
Cerezo Osaka is one of Japan's greatest professional soccer clubs, which has produced excellent, international-level players, including Shinji Kagawa. Members of the team play for the Japanese national team as well as foreign club teams.

Gamba Osaka
Gamba Osaka is one of the biggest soccer clubs in Japan. The club has won nine titles since its establishment in 1991. This club is on the way to being one of the biggest clubs in the world, and is going all out to do so with its top quality players and dedicated fans.

RUGBY

Kintetsu Liners
Founded in 1929, the Kintetsu Liners is a rugby team belonging to the top league. The team is based at the Higashi-Osaka Hanazono Rugby Stadium, Japan's Mecca of Rugby.

BASKETBALL

Osaka Evessa
Osaka Evessa is a professional basketball team playing in the recently formed B.League, the top-tier professional basketball league of Japan. You can catch a game at their home arena Maishima Arena.

Osaka with Kids

Families are spoilt for choice when it comes to finding activities that will please both young and old. With such distinct seasons, you will be able to find unique things to do during every month of the year.



Summer is the time for fruit picking when strawberry, grape, and stone fruit orchards are teeming with families enjoying a day out in the sun. Autumn is packed with events, from the water-themed **Aqua Metropolis Osaka Festival** to mandarin picking and, of course, autumn-leaf viewing. Come winter, you won't want to stay inside, with ice-skating, penguin watching, and the **Umeda Snowman Festival** brightening up the city. In spring there's picnicking under the cherry trees and much, much more.

Zoos, a world-class aquarium, and an interactive science museum are just some of the many family-friendly activities to be found in Osaka. Animal-lovers need look no further than the acclaimed **Osaka Aquarium**, "Kaiyukan," where you can get up close and personal with acrobatic dolphins, otherworldly jellyfish, giant spider crabs, and the aquarium's crowning glory — a female whale shark. **Tennoji Zoo** has many lovely exhibits, situated in a beautiful park that includes a serene Japanese garden. **Misaki Park** is a zoo that also includes thrilling rides and a petting area for younger children. If rides are your thing, then **Hirakata Park** is a must. With roller coasters, swimming pools, and ice-skating rinks, there's enough fun here to fill a whole day.

For the ultimate in theme park fun, **Universal Studios Japan** has 54 hectares of rides, shows, and shops. History buffs should head to the **Osaka Museum of Housing and Living** where buildings and streets show what life was like in Osaka during different Periods of its history. For the technologically inclined family, the **Modern Transport Museum**, which houses exciting driving simulators, lets you get up close with the history and science of railways. For those looking for something hands on, the **Osaka Science Museum** has a wonderland of interactive exhibits.











Misaki Park
Osaka's southern-most amusement park has everything you could possibly want: rides, a zoo and even dolphin shows.

Hirakata Park
43 attractions are sited in the park, making full use of the hilly landscape. Hirakata Park is an amusement park for families, located in a bed-town of Osaka.

Osaka Museum of Housing and Living
A section of the townscape of Osaka in the late Edo Period is re-created to perfection. There are also exhibits and introductions of the townscapes and housing of the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods.

Osaka Science Museum
With 200 experiential exhibits based on the theme of "Space and Energy," as well as science shows and a planetarium, this museum can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Osaka Tennoji Zoo
The third oldest zoo in Japan, opening in 1915. It currently houses about 1,000 animals across 200 species in an area of about 11 hectares, including an African Savannah zone.

Osaka Aquarium Kaiyukan
One of the largest aquariums in the world, Kaiyukan consists of 15 water tanks centered on a single huge tank holding 5,400 tons of water, which is where the whaleshark lives. The aquarium is home to 620 species and 30,000 marine animals from the Pacific Rim.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS JAPAN®
Just a 15-minute train ride from JR Osaka Station, the Universal Studios Japan theme park features a variety of rides and shows associated with well-known movies and TV programs produced in Hollywood.

Kids Plaza Osaka
Hands-on museum for kids of all ages where they can learn through play. Some great science exhibits and a large indoor 'Kids Town', designed by Austrian contemporary artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, that cries out to be explored.

1. Hirakata Park
2. Tennoji Zoo
3. Osaka Aquarium
4. Science Museum
5. Misaki Park
6. Fruit picking

Spiritual Osaka

Spirituality is a very important aspect of Japanese culture, having a significant influence on almost every facet of society. The major religions of Japan have historically been Shinto and Buddhism, meaning many holidays and events involve a trip to a shrine or a temple. The festivals held at these shrines and temples also play a significant role in the social fabric of the nation.

Osaka is located in close proximity to two sacred spiritual centers: Ise, home to Japan's most important Shinto shrine – Ise Jingu, and Koyasan, a mountain temple village, which is the headquarters for Shingon Buddhism. Osaka itself is home to several significant spiritual sites:

Imamiya Ebisu Shrine

One of the most important traditions in Japan is visiting a Shinto shrine on, or just after, New Year's Day to pray for good luck in the coming year. In Osaka, one of the most popular places to do this is Imamiya Ebisu Jinja in the south of the city. At the beginning of the year, around a million people visit the shrine to pray for health and happiness and particularly success in business. Everyone in the merchant city of Osaka knows the importance of Imamiya Ebisu Shrine, dedicated to the god Ebisu, the patron deity of commerce. During the **Toka Ebisu Festival** on January 10th, people buy sacred bamboo branches decorated with lucky items and visit the shrine to pray for commercial prosperity.

Hozen-ji Temple

Hozen-ji is a peaceful oasis in the bustling Dotombori area, situated in the middle of **Hozen-ji Yokocho**, a quaint, narrow alley home to boutique shops and restaurants. Built in 1637, this small temple pays homage to Fudo Myoo, one of the five Myoo, or "wisdom kings." The fierce kings are the guardians of Buddhism and, more specifically, the Five Wisdom Buddhas, representations of the five qualities of the Buddha. Worshippers say their prayers and then splash water on the moss-covered Fudo-myo statue, known as **Mizukake Fudo**. The temple grounds are very atmospheric at night when the many paper lanterns are lit, giving off a soft, warm glow. This quiet place of worship will take visitors' minds off the hustle and bustle of the busy shopping and nightlife area that is Dotombori.

Osaka Tenmangu Shrine

Osaka Temmangu Shrine is the most famous of the many Tenjin shrines located throughout Japan. Tenjin is the Shinto *kami* (spirit or phenomena) of scholarship – the deification of a scholar, poet, and politician named Sugawara no Michizane. Tenjin's influence is now regarded as particularly strong in passing exams, so many school students and their parents pray for success at a Tenjin shrine before important exams.

Tenjin Matsuri is one of the three great festivals of Japan. An excellent boating event featuring beautiful dolls, believed to have been created in or around 1690, it also boasts fabulous festival fireworks which dazzle the crowds of worshipers and onlookers.

Shitenno-ji Temple

The oldest officially administered temple in Japan, Shitenno-ji was built by Prince Shotoku (574-622 A.D.), the great cultural hero of early Japanese history, who brought about the adoption of Buddhism in the country. Prince Shotoku ordered





Left: Shrine maidens at the Toka Ebisu festival in Imamiya Ebisu Shrine
Above: Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun in Sakai

the construction of Shitennoji Temple in 593 A.D. to mark his, and the Soga Clan's, victory over the Monobe Clan, who were opposed to Buddhism coming to Japan. The temple was built not far from Osaka Bay, which played a vital role in trade and traffic. It was a strategic location which enabled a show of Japan's power and prosperity to the world. Despite repeated reconstructions, the layout of the temple compound has remained largely unaltered from the original. Shitennoji is the favorite shrine of many Japanese people and is fondly regarded as the Buddhist altar of Osaka.

Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine

Osaka's most renowned shrine is **Sumiyoshi Taisha**. Located in Osaka's Sumiyoshi ward, it is the headquarters of some 2000 Sumiyoshi shrines throughout Japan. It enshrines three gods that have long been worshiped for safeguarding the nation, protecting sea voyages, and promoting *waka* (31-syllable) poetry. It is thus a place of pilgrimage for sea travelers, students of the military arts, and *waka* poets. The main shrine is designed in the oldest style of shrine construction and is registered as a National Treasure. The shrine's symbol, the iconic vermillion bridge known as Taiko-bashi, arches across the pond in front of the shrine.

Inunakisan-Shipporyu-ji Temple

Located halfway up Mount Inunaki, is Inunakisan-Shipporyu-ji, a temple established by En-no-gyoja, an ascetic monk, in 661. During the reign of Emperor Junna (823–833), prayers offered at this temple resulted in longed-for rain. After this miraculous event, the Emperor named the temple "Shipporyu-ji," likening the mountain's seven renowned waterfalls to *shippo*, the seven treasures in Buddhism that include gold and silver. Mount Inunaki is famous for its beautiful autumn leaves and is a popular hiking destination. Visitors can also participate in a one-day mountain asceticism training session at Mount Inunaki.

Ancient Tombs

Sakai is an area of Osaka that was once the seat of kings. Many clues to the history of royalty there remain hidden within keyhole-shaped burial mounds, known as *kofun*, dating back to the third century AD. The two largest, **Ojin-tenno-ryo Kofun** in Habikino and **Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun** in Sakai, are said to be the tombs of Emperors Ojin and Nintoku. These are the 15th and 16th emperors in the imperial line and thought to be the first two that are based on historical figures, rather than legend.

Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun is known as the last resting place of Emperor Nintoku, said to have ruled Japan for 87 years. It is the largest keyhole-shaped tomb in Japan, measuring approximately 486 meters in length, 249 meters in diameter, 35 meters in height for the back circular mound, 305 meters in width, and 33 meters in height for the front mound. There is an approximately 2.8 kilometer walkway encircling the tomb, which takes an hour to walk around.
These ancient tumulus clusters are currently applying for UNESCO World Heritage status.

Monozukuri: Made in Osaka

Monozukuri is the business of 'making things,' but the word is best compared to the word 'craftsmanship' in English. Osaka has a long history of making things and many of the world's most recognizable brands and products can trace their history back to this ancient city.

Beverages

Two of Japan's leading beverage companies, **Asahi** Breweries and **Suntory**, both began in Osaka in the 1800s. A manufacturer of beer, soft drinks, wine, and spirits, Asahi was founded in 1889 as the Osaka Beer Company. Asahi Breweries Ltd. was established in 1949 and has since become a worldwide success with many partnerships around the globe. The Asahi Brewery in Suita, Osaka offers tours between 9am and 3pm each day.

In 1899, Torii Shinjiro established Suntory in Nishi-ku, Osaka and was determined to produce "whisky and wine that suits the Japanese taste." He searched around to discover the highest quality water for whisky and, in 1923, he chose Yamazaki where the construction of the **Yamazaki Distillery** began. In 1924, the construction was completed and the production of Japan's very first domestically made whisky was in process. The Suntory distillery in Yamazaki has about 130,000 visitors annually, and offers daily tours between 9:30am and 3pm.

Instant Ramen

The world's first instant-noodle product originated in Osaka when, in 1958, instant ramen was invented by Osaka resident Momofuku Ando. He had such a grand vision for his product that instant noodles have even been developed for consumption in outer space! Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi consumed them on the U.S. space shuttle Discovery in 2005. Visitors can make their own instant ramen with soup flavor and ingredients of their choice at the **Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum**. They can also learn about the creation of instant noodles, manufacturing methods, and the history of their development.

Plastic Food

The use of model food to advertise restaurant fare is a uniquely Japanese method that, not surprisingly, began in the food-obsessed city of Osaka."Shokuhin samples" are the remarkably lifelike models of delicious dishes that crowd the display cases of so many restaurants, izakayas, and coffee shops in Japan. They are a lifesaver for the many tourists who cannot read Japanese – when ordering, they can simply point to the plastic rendition of the delicious dish they are after. In Japan, fake food is a lucrative industry and an almost century-old tradition of elite craftsmanship. In Osaka, Fumio Morino makes these impeccably realistic food models at his factory **Morino Sample** in Hirano. It takes years of training to make convincing-looking fake foods and each one is handmade to order by Morino and his staff. Visitors to Osaka can try their hand at making plastic food at various model-food stores and factories in the area.

Knives

Osaka's forged knives, long crafted with artisanal mastery in the Sakai region in the south of the city, played an indispensable role in the development of Japanese cuisine. Knives are said to be the very essence that allowed for the development of *washoku* (traditional Japanese cuisine), which has been designated as an item of intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. Even today, around 90 percent of knives used by professional chefs around the country are forged in Sakai, and the area attracts world-renowned chefs



Photo: © Alan Wiren





Left: A craftsman forging steel knives in Sakai
Top: Suntory Yamazaki Whisky
Bottom: The Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum

from afar to acquire these indispensable tools fashioned into ultimate sharpness. Visitors to Osaka can take hands-on lessons and workshops in knife use and maintenance by making an appointment with **Tower Knives Osaka**, located around the corner from the Tsutenkaku Tower in Shinsekai.

Outdoor Clothing

The home of Japan's leading outdoor brand, **MontBell**, is in Nishi-ku, Osaka. Born in Osaka in 1947, founder Isamu Tatsuno spent much of his youth dedicated to becoming a mountaineer. Back then, he didn't have enough money to buy the right equipment, so he had to be creative and create the things he needed. For example, he sewed blankets together to use as a sleeping bag. These experiences were the beginning of Tatsuno's craftsmanship, and his experiences at a textile trading company lead to him establishing MontBell Co., Ltd. at the age of 28. There are now 77 MontBell shops in Japan and their products are also sold around the world.

Confectionery

Toyoshita confectionery, established in 1872, makes candy using meticulous traditional methods. Especially recommended are the candies formed into the shape of "Traditional vegetable candies of Naniwa" such as Tennoji turnip, Tanabe radish, Kema cucumber, Tamatsukuri Kuromon pickling melon, Kintoki carrot, Katsuma pumpkin, Kawachi one-inch bean, and water eggplant. In the factory, a rich variety of sweets, such as simple fruit candies and unique throat lozenges are sold, and freshly made candies can be sampled while the manufacturing line is working. Visitors to Osaka can go to the factory in Abeno and pick up a uniquely Osakan gift.



Photo: © Jason Haidar

THEME

Pop Culture

Pop culture is one of Japan's biggest exports. Worldwide, people of all ages have become fascinated with the quirky aesthetics of Japanese fashion and entertainment. From *anime* and *manga* to video games and everything in between, Japan is responsible for some of the world's most popular hobbies. There are plenty of places where visitors to Osaka can unleash their inner *otaku* ("nerd") and immerse themselves in everything Japanese pop culture has to offer.

Nippombashi

Nippombashi, colloquially known as **Den Den Town**, or *denki no machi* (electric town), is the "Akihabara of Osaka," and has over 500 stores specializing in all things *otaku*. This is where Japanese pop-culture enthusiasts go to buy *anime*, *manga*, video games, and electronics, and to visit maid cafes, themed restaurants, and more. Offering the largest selection of Japanese pop-culture products in Western Japan, and having the added bonus of being duty-free for tourists, Nippombashi is the one-stop shopping spot for all Japanese hobbyist's needs. Maid Cafe experiences are abundant and accessible here; Osaka's maid cafes are open and friendly to men, women, and children, with cute maids serving specialty pancakes and colorful parfait desserts, while playing games and entertaining their guests.

The biggest manifestation of Japanese pop culture takes place in the heart of Den Den Town every March at the **Nippombashi Street Festa**.



Photo: © Jason Haidar



Photo: © Daniel Lee

Pikachu, Super Mario, and many more of everyone's favorite *anime*, *manga*, and video-game characters take over the streets to pose for pictures in Western Japan's biggest cosplay festival, which attracts around 200,000 attendees and 10,000 cosplayers each year.

Ota Road

Ota Road (meaning "road of *otaku*") is the main road in Nippombashi and is dedicated to avid *anime*, *manga*, and video-game collectors and enthusiasts. This clustered concentration of quirky shops is a hot spot for anyone looking to find a treasure to add to one of their collections (action-figure aficionados gather in Nipponbashi to find rare collectibles and parts), or a gift for a fellow *otaku* wanting a unique souvenir; there are action figures, robot collectibles, costumes, to-scale airplane models, rare and original *manga* drawings, and much more.

Namba / Shinsaibashi

Anyone into video games will want to hit the covered shopping arcades of Namba and Shinsaibashi, where bright colors and flashing lights invite visitors into countless game centers that have everything from the latest DDR clone, to obscure games from the 8-bit era. These arcades are also full of **purikura** (print club) machines, which are photo booths that allow you to decorate your own photos. Back in the mid-90s, when these exciting photo booths first emerged, you were only able to take pictures with frames of popular Japanese characters, such as Hello Kitty, Little Twin Stars, and My Melody. Nowadays, with the *purikura* machine, you can apply fake eyelashes, change eye and hair color, enlarge eyes, and decorate to your heart's content with infinite photo-altering options.

Namba and Shinsaibashi are also great areas to get into a **karaoke** booth and sing at the top of your lungs to all your favorite songs, a phenomenon that was born in the 1970s and is now an engrained part of Japanese contemporary culture. These days, a lot of *karaoke* parlors offer unique experiences along with the classic singing, such as cosplay rental and various differently themed booths and rooms.

Amerikamura

Since the 1970s, Amerikamura (America Village) has been the center of youth culture in Osaka. Crammed streets filled with one-of-a-kind fashion shops, used-clothing stores, miscellaneous goods shops, cafes, galleries, and more. The area got its name from the import shops selling American goods, which were set up in the area around 30 years ago. Centered at **Sankaku Koen** (Triangle Park), Amemura (as it is often shortened to) is always full of young people sporting unique fashions. There are performances and flea markets on weekends, which create a fun and lively atmosphere.

Amemura is home to **Silver Ball Planet** – now Japan's pinball mecca – and the biggest pinball arcade outside the U.S. Located on the third floor of Namba Big Step, it currently features more than 100 retro machines. Be prepared for the tidal wave of nostalgia as you step into this pinball hall of fame. Classics such as Batman, Terminator 2, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and Indiana Jones are all waiting to bring back your childhood memories.



Photo: © Jason Haidar

Day Trips from Osaka

Many of Japan's foremost sightseeing spots are located in Kansai, the region Osaka is a key part of. Osaka features historic buildings, cultural attractions, and high-tech amusement facilities. The neighboring cities also have something for everyone. Kyoto, the ancient capital, embodies the iconic traditional culture of Japan with an abundance of temples and shrines; Kobe, a fashionable port city, is famous for its delicious Kobe beef; and Nara is home to numerous World Heritage sites and the famed docile deer of Nara Park. These unique destinations form a culturally endowed urban region. From Osaka, these cities can each be reached within 30–60 minutes by express train.

Kyoto

The ancient capital city is bulging with a plethora of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. From the lush bamboo groves of **Arashiyama** to the *geisha* district of **Gion**, to the thousands of vermillion *torii* gates at **Fushimi Inari Shrine**; Kyoto offers unique beauty in all seasons with more than 1,000 years of history.

Nara

The original capital of Japan dating back to 710, Nara's history stretches back more than 1,300 years. It is home to many incredible World Heritage Sites such as **Todai-ji,** a temple which houses an enormous Buddha statue in its main hall, Daibutsuden (Big Buddha Hall), which is the largest wooden structure in the world. Friendly deer roam **Nara Park** and bow for crackers from visitors.

Hyogo

Hyogo, the largest prefecture in Kansai, features one of the premier original castles in Japan, **Himeji Castle**, as well as the international port city of Kobe. Foodies will want to try the famed Kobe beef, and lovers of the great outdoors will want to hike over **Mount Rokko** and take a soothing soak in the legendary waters of **Arima Onsen** on the opposite side.

Wakayama

Wakayama prefecture is famous for its beautiful natural vistas and endless opportunities for outdoor







Photo: © Jason Haidar

Far Left: Himeji Castle
Top: Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto
Bottom Left: Nachi Taisha Shrine in Wakayama
Bottom Right: Todai-ji Temple in Nara

activities, but perhaps its most renowned location is **Koyasan**, the Shingon buddhist village in the misty Kii mountain range. Dating back more than 1,200 years, visitors can stay overnight in one of the many temples and experience the life of monks, eating vegetarian *shojin-ryori* (traditional Japanese buddhist cuisine), transcribing sutras, meditating, and of course, wandering through the atmospheric *okunoin* - the town's vast graveyard.

Shiga

The picturesque shores of Japan's largest lake, **Lake Biwa**, offer vast natural beauty that changes with the seasons. Dotted around the lake are many UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Mount Hiei offers stunning views of Lake Biwa as well as many historical sites, including the renowned temple, **Enryaku-ji**. On the eastern side of the lake, visitors can see one of the 12 original castles of Japan, **Hikone Castle**.

Mie

The mountains of Mie offer great hiking during the warmer parts of the year and skiing in winter. Down along the coastline, visitors can enjoy areas famous for lobster, abalone, oysters, and blowfish. The area is most famous for the **Ise Grand Shrine** dedicated to the goddess Amaterasu, which is rebuilt every 20 years. Mie is also the home of the famed Iga Ninja.

Discount Tickets for Traveling Around Osaka and Kansai

Many different tickets are available for travelers to use while traveling in and around Osaka, including the **Kansai Thru Pass** *(surutto.com)*. This two-day or three-day ticket is convenient for taking trips in Kansai. It allows unlimited rides on designated public transportation. Also, by showing a pass used that day, visitors can receive special offers at facilities along the railways.

Another option, the **Osaka Amazing Pass** *(osaka-info.jp/osp/en)*, is available for purchase as either a one-day or two-day pass. Visitors can then ride trains and buses in Osaka for free, with the addition of free access to many tourist facilities including Osaka Castle, Umeda Sky Building's Floating Garden, and more. There are also special offers and discounts available at famous sights and other restaurants and shops. See the respective websites for more information.





Osaka – Did you know?

WORLD FIRSTS INVENTED IN OSAKA

1. Instant Noodles and Cup Noodles

85.7 billion servings of instant noodles were consumed throughout the world in 2005. The appeal of instant noodles has expanded as far as outer space; astronauts took ramen noodles aboard a space shuttle for consumption in 2005. *(Chicken Ramen: 1958, Cup Noodles: 1971; Nissin Food Products Co., Ltd.)*

2. Instant Vacuum-packed Meals

Instant vacuum-packed meals form an indispensable part of daily menus, and a wide range of meals are now available. Vacuum-packed meals figure prominently as emergency provisions in times of disasters, since they can be stored at room temperature and have long shelf lives. *(Bon Curry: 1968; Otsuka Foods Co., Ltd.)*

3. Sweets with Toys

Sweets with toys provide children with not only the pleasure of the actual sweets, but also the fun of the toy. Nowadays such toys have become collectors' items. *(Glico: 1927; Ezaki Glico Co., Ltd.)*

4. Utility Knives

Utility knives (cutter knives) are an essential office supply. Exported to over 100 countries throughout the world, there are now over 100 different varieties of knives. *(Utility knife: 1956; Olfa Corporation)*

5. Calculators

In the modern PC age, calculators are one item we cannot do without. The first calculators to go on sale weighed 25kg and were devices placed on "desktops", in the true sense of the word. Nowadays, calculators are far more compact and slim. *(Compet: 1964; Sharp Corporation)*

JAPAN FIRSTS INVENTED IN OSAKA

6. Automatic Ticket Gates, Automatic Ticket Vending Machines

In days gone by, tickets were sold and checked by station employees at the gates. Nowadays, the automatic ticket gates and automatic ticket vending machines found at almost all stations have greatly contributed to labor saving at stations. *(Automatic ticket gate: 1967; Hankyu Corporation Kita Senri Station; Automatic ticket vending machine: 1954, Hankyu Corporation Umeda Station)*



7



8



10



11



12



13

7. Prefabricated Houses

Prefabricated houses accounted for approximately 160,000 of all houses built in Japan in 2006, which works out at one prefabricated house per eight houses built. *(Midget House: 1958, Daiwa House Industry Co., Ltd.)*

8. Domestically Manufactured Televisions

Televisions form an increasingly vital part of our lives as we move further into the digital and flat-screen age. When they first went on sale, people crowded around televisions placed in streets. *(Television: 1953, Sharp Corporation)*

OSAKA TOPS THE WORLD

9. Dual Carriageway for Trains and Motor Vehicles

At 3,750m, this bridge, which connects Kansai International Airport, the world's first real offshore airport, and Rinku Town on the mainland, is the world's longest dual train and motor vehicle truss bridge.

10. The Longest Monorail System

Recorded in The Guinness Book of Records as the longest monorail system in the world, Osaka Monorail's main track now stretches 28.0km following extensions to the Saito Line.

OSAKA TOPS JAPAN

11. The Longest Shopping Arcade

Tenjimbashisuji Shopping Street extends 2.6km from 1 Chome to 7 Chome, making it the longest shopping arcade in Japan.

12. Tallest Building in Japan

Standing at 300 meters, Abeno Harukas in Tennoji is the tallest skyscraper in Japan. The building stands on top of the Kintetsu Osaka Abenobashi Station and is conveniently located across from JR Tennoji Station. Inside is a department store, an art museum, a hotel, and an observation deck.

13. Largest Ferris Wheel in Japan

Expo City's 123-metre Ferris Wheel, the Redhorse Osaka Wheel, is the largest in Japan and fifth-largest in the world. It has 72 passenger cabins and takes around 18 minutes to complete one rotation. All the cabins have transparent floors and two — equipped with more luxurious seating and lighting — are designated as VIP cabins.



Osaka Neighborhoods

Osaka is an international tourist destination filled with endless attractions, including shopping, gourmet dining, entertainment, retro buildings, and historical sights. Each area has its unique charm as well as a huge array of interesting shops and high-quality restaurants — many that are off the beaten path. Get an authentic taste of Osaka by mixing with the locals in one of these trendy neighborhoods.

Dotombori

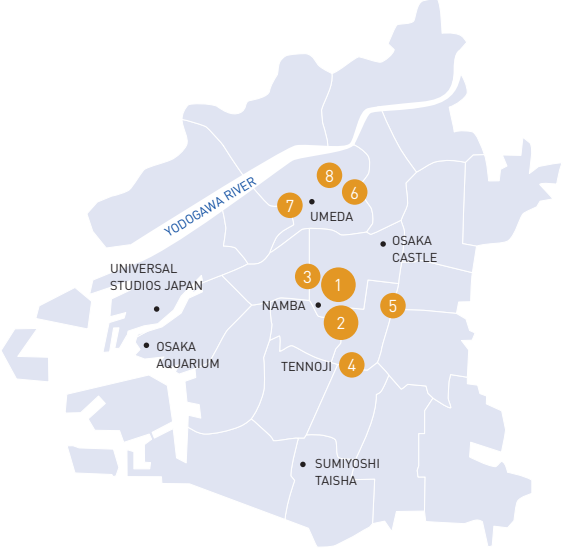
Dotombori is in the heart of Osaka and is central to the city's *kuidaore* (literally, "to eat oneself bankrupt") food culture. Centered around the Dotombori Bridge, from which the iconic **Glico Man** sign can be photographed, countless restaurants and bars line the Dotombori River and wind through the seemingly endless alleyways and shopping arcades in the area.

Hozenji-Yokocho Alley

Enter Hozenji-Yokocho Alley and step back in time right in the heart of the city. This area embodies the old world of Naniwa (what the city was called before it became Osaka) and is hidden down the alleyways near Dotombori. This stone-paved alley offers a multitude of well-established Japanese dining options, and the moss-covered **Mizukake Fudo shrine** is popular with locals.

Nippombashi and Den Den Town

Den Den Town (electric town) is Osaka's quintessential stop for all things *anime*, *manga*, electronics, and video games – and home to the renowned **Nippombashi Street Festa**. Every March, hundreds of thousands turn out for this event, which is largest cosplay parade in Japan. Over 240,000 passionate *anime* and *manga* cosplayers and fans from around the country (and from abroad) walk the streets of Nippombashi (the Akihabara of Osaka).



1. Dotombori, Hozenji-Yokocho Alley
2. Nippombashi, Den Den Town, Ura-Namba
3. Amerikamura
4. Shinsekai
5. Tsuruhashi
6. Temma
7. Fukushima
8. Nakazakicho

Ura-Namba

Ura-Namba, literally meaning "back" or "secret" Namba, is a hidden back-alley gastro gem that is brimming with the energy of a younger generation eager to gentrify the neighborhood into an epicurean paradise. Here, you will find various *izakaya* (Japanese-style pubs), *yakitori* (skewered chicken) establishments, *nihonshu* (Japanese liquor) standing bars, and the trendy **Torame Yokocho**; a gourmet spot with a large *torii* as its entrance, which offers a down-to-earth local feel and a taste of Osaka at reasonable prices.

Amerikamura

For the latest trends in fashion, music and art, head to Amerikamura (American Village). 'Amemura', as it is called, has a certain edginess to it and is Osaka's youth fashion Mecca, with one-of-a-kind clothing boutiques packed into the tangled knot of skinny lanes and alleys that lead to the small, but significant **Sankaku Koen**, (Triangle Park); the unassuming heart of this must-see area for the fashion curious. The area is also packed with clubs and bars with somewhere to go at any hour of the night.

Shinsekai

Famed for *fugu* (blowfish) and *kushikatsu* (delicious meat and vegetable morsels fried on a stick and dipped in *tonkatsu* sauce), Shinsekai might not be the glammest part of town but it has been serving up the true flavors of Osaka for over 100 years. Just a half-hour walk from Namba, or a short subway ride away, the heart of the area is the **Tsutenkaku Tower**, built in 1912 as part of a makeover for the area. Just around the corner, the renowned Tower Knives shop can be found. It offers a wide range of Japan-made culinary knives and sharpening stones for professional and home use.

Tsuruhashi

Comprising a total of about 800 shops in six marketplaces and shopping streets, these retro, maze-like avenues date back to the end of WWII. There are many *yakiniku* (BBQ meat) restaurants and specialty stores such as Korean grocery stores and boutiques. Chefs from Kyoto and Osaka gather early in the morning to get the finest fresh seafood from the wholesale fish market.

Temma

As the sun slips below the horizon, from about 6pm to 9:30pm, Temma comes to life with a mixture of authentic Osakan "mom-and-pop" style restaurants as well as restaurants serving all kinds of international cuisine. In the alleyways winding from JR Temma Station, Beer Belly can be found serving up pints of Osaka's own **Minoh craft beer**. During the day, the Tenjinbashisuji *shotengai* (covered shopping street) — the longest shopping arcade in Japan — is bustling with one-of-a-kind shops, second-hand outlets, and plenty of souvenir stores.

Fukushima

Characterized by the Seven Lucky Gods graffiti mural outside the JR station by Osaka's own graffiti artist Grind Pencil, Fukushima is another of Osaka's hidden gems. It is teeming with izakayas, standing bars, and delicious eateries; the perfect area for a night of exploration and chatting with friendly locals. At night, visitors can take a stroll toward **Dojima river** and be wowed by the glowing river lights and modern Osaka skyline.

Nakazakicho

A multicultural hipster haven that still retains the feel of old Japan with buildings dating back to the Showa era. Explore the area's retro charm in a maze of lanes, revealing vine-draped cafes, boutique restaurants, and small, trendy businesses ranging from yoga and tea shops to galleries of handmade trinkets.



Amerikamura is Osaka's youth fashion mecca



Photo: © Jason Haidar

Shinsekai has been serving up the true flavors of Osaka for over 100 years



Photo: © Jason Haidar

Hozenji-Yokocho offers a serene retreat from the bustle of Dotombori

OSAKA TOURISM FACT SHEET



3rd Busiest Airport
in Japan

Servicing more than **23 million** passengers a year

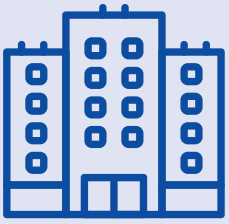


4th Busiest Train Station
in the World

Umeda station services more than **820 million** people a year



1,512,000
Annual visitors to Osaka Castle



90%
Hotel occupancy rate

54,733 rooms and **356 hotels**



9.4 million
Foreign tourists visited Osaka in 2016



No. of Michelin Stars:
Ranked 4th in the World

Osaka has 91 Michelin Starred Restaurants and 142 awarded the Bib Gourmand



Overseas Vistors by Country

1. China
2. South Korea
3. Taiwan
4. Hong Kong
5. USA
6. Thailand
7. Australia
8. Malaysia
9. Singapore
10. Germany

VISITOR SERVICES



Osaka Free Wi-fi

Osaka provides free Internet access at approximately 4,000 locations across the city. **Osaka Free Wi-Fi** is available at stations and major locations. Osaka Free Wi-Fi Lite is available at individual stores.



Tourist Information Centers

Osaka city welcomes visitors at their five Sightseeing Information Centers located in Osaka's two largest train stations (Osaka/Umeda Station and Namba Station) as well as at **Kansai International Airport** (KIX). They offer a wide range of maps and pamphlets related to attractions and facilities in Osaka City and are staffed by multilingual assistants.



24 hour Multi-lingual Call Center

A one-stop online helpline service available to local and international travelers, providing assistance in travel and medical related inquiries to ensure a worry free stay while in Osaka.
ofw-oer.com/call/en/



MICE Support Services

The Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau offers various types of assistance for those who wish to hold a conference in Osaka.
osaka-info.jp/en/convention

Additional online resources

In addition to **Osaka-info.jp** where you can plan and research your Osaka travel plans, there are a number of other excellent online resources:

Café de Osaka - Now! Now! is the official Facebook Page of the Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau. It contains regularly-updated detailed information on Osaka's recommended sights and spots clustered into the themes of Art, Entertainment, Sport, Culture, Shopping and Dining.
facebook.com/cafedeosaka.now.en

Enjoy Osaka is dedicated to guiding you to and around the prime sightseeing locations in the Osaka City area and helping you to make the most of your stay. Information is currently available in English, Chinese, Korean and Thai.
osaka-info.jp/enjoy_osaka/en

For visually impaired visitors, or for visitors who prefer audio information over visual, there are Osaka introductions given by the **Visiting Osaka Audio Guiding System**.

Message from the president

As the seat of the nation's oldest capital and a hub of international exchange, Osaka has served as an economic and cultural centre of the nation for centuries. It is famous for being Japan's kitchen, a gourmet paradise and a city offering entertainment and fun, while its reputation for technology and innovation has created an exciting cultural and geographic hub.

The ease of access to Osaka—the gateway to West Japan—has made the city a firm favourite among visitors to the country. They can explore the Kansai region, known as the 'Cradle of Japan', with many of the country's Unesco World Heritage Sites and most celebrated monuments located within 30 minutes by train from Osaka.

The Kansai region is also home to renowned global companies from a range of industries including pharmaceuticals, life sciences, finance, environment, new energy, and telecoms.

Osaka represents an exciting destination that visitors from all countries and regions will enjoy.

Hiroshi Mizohata
President, OCTB

About the Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau (OCTB)

The Osaka Convention and Tourism Bureau (OCTB) is an independent, public interest incorporated foundation established by Osaka Prefectural Government, City of Osaka and the local economic sector to promote Osaka as a premier tourist and convention destination.

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OSAKA CONVENTION & TOURISM BUREAU

About the logo
Aiming to become one of the world's top tourist cities, we have designed this logo with Osaka Castle, a symbol of Osaka, as a motif. Brilliant lights in the background of the logo symbolize Osaka shining in the world.
This logo represents Osaka as a city full of energy, where tourists and residents actively interact with each other, as well as a city of history and culture by bringing to mind Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who was born in Osaka and succeeded in dominating the whole country during the Warring States Period.



Osaka Bob & Family (The official mascots of the Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau):
Osaka Bob is a 20-year old foreign exchange student who has lived in Osaka for five years. As a fan of Osaka's tourist attractions, he will be your guide on the latest information and trends of interest to tourists. Together with his family and multinational friends, Osaka Bob is a keen follower of the Osaka tourism scene.

Credits

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Photos: © OCTB unless individually credited

