

niponica

Discovering  
Japan

にほにか

no. 37



• Special Feature •

Osaka, Where the World Meets





• Special Feature •

# Osaka, Where the World Meets

Osaka — where water meets land, where people and goods come and go, where different cultures mingle. Attracting the attention of the world, Osaka has grown into a truly international city that is host to all kinds of interaction and exchange.

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Top: The castle tower, surrounded by its moat, stands at the center of Osaka Castle Park.  
 (Photo: Getty Images)  
 Cover: Nightscape at Tosabori River  
 (Photo: Nicolas Wauters)

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# Landscapes of Aqua Metropolis Osaka

Osaka has prospered for centuries as a major economic hub. Its growth was spurred by Osaka Bay, a key ocean trading port, as well as the waterways running throughout the city, which facilitated the transport of goods. Osaka may look different today than in times past, but its unique topography, highlighted by rivers flowing through the city center, still offers an urban landscape of interwoven land and water.



Cityscape at night, viewed from Osaka Bay. The skyscrapers in the background mark Osaka's city center.  
(Photo: PIXTA)



1

Dojima and Tosabori Rivers

The Dojima and Tosabori rivers flow along the northern side of the city center. Running parallel to each other past Nakanoshima Island, which stretches some 3 kilometers from east to west, they merge at the center's western end. Long a commercial center, the Nakanoshima area is lined with both skyscrapers that play a major economic role as well as historical buildings. (Photo: Aqua Metropolis Osaka Consortium)



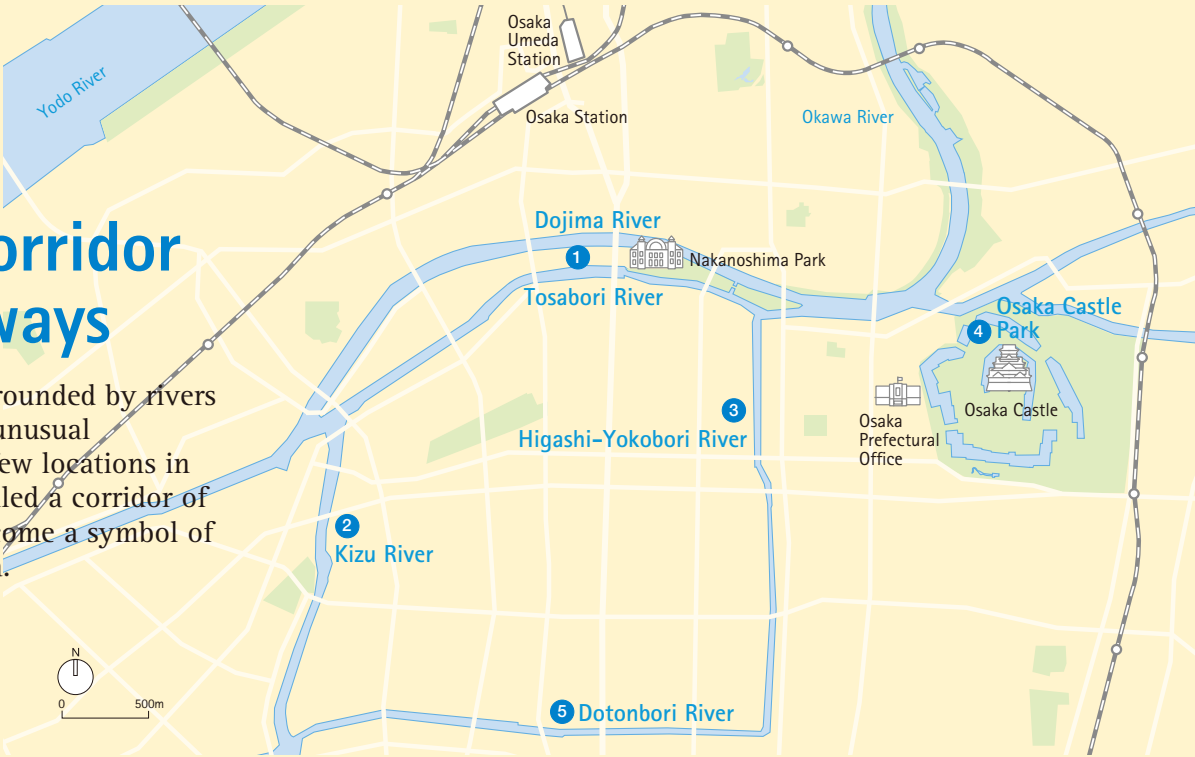
3

Higashi-Yokobori River

To the east lies the Higashi-Yokobori River, which is Osaka's oldest canal, dug some 400 years ago. Today, this is a popular recreational spot where visitors enjoy leisure activities along the water, taking advantage of the covered space under the elevated Hanshin Expressway. (Photo: β HONMACHIBASHI)

Osaka's Corridor of Waterways

The city's center is surrounded by rivers on all four sides. This unusual topography, found in few locations in the world, has been called a corridor of waterways and has become a symbol of Aqua Metropolis Osaka.



4

Osaka Castle Park

Along the Okawa River, which flows into the corridor of waterways, stands Osaka Castle Park. The central castle tower was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, then rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after it was destroyed by fire. River cruises around the inner moat on *gozabune* boats, golden traditional sightseeing boats, are popular. (Photo: PIXTA)

2

Kizu River

Along the western side of the city center, the Kizu River splits from the Tosabori River, flowing south to join the Dotonbori River. Situated close to Osaka Bay, this area has developed into an industrial zone, although in recent years, commercial facilities and condominiums have also sprung up here. (Photo: Aqua Metropolis Osaka Consortium)



5

Dotonbori River

Flowing on the southern side of the city center, the Dotonbori River is a canal constructed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. It runs through such bustling downtown neighborhoods as the Namba district. In recent years, the water has been cleaned up and a promenade has been built, attracting more and more people. They come to enjoy the glittering neon signs either on a riverboat cruise or while strolling along the promenade. (Photo: Shutterstock)



# History of Osaka, A City Shaped by Encounters

For centuries, Osaka has flourished as a strategic nexus connecting the sea and land. The history of the city has been firmly shaped by the exchange of people and goods, as well as the intermingling of different cultures.



Left: *Naniwameishozue Zokobauoichinazu* (Collection of National Diet Library)  
Upper right: Shitennoji Temple, built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century when Buddhism was first introduced to Japan. (Photo: PIXTA)  
Middle right: Surrounded by skyscrapers, the Daibiru Honkan Building, constructed during the “Great Osaka” period, still stands today. (Photo: PIXTA)  
Lower right: Crowds of people gather by the river in Nakanoshima Park. (Photo: Aqua Metropolis Osaka Consortium)



Utagawa Sadahide's *Naniwa Tenma Matsuri* depicts the bustling Osaka waterfront during a festival in the Edo period. (Collection of Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library)

Osaka has been a land of thriving exchange of people and goods for centuries. This created a new culture shaped by a bold mix of people and goods. Located on the shore of a calm bay and connected by rivers to such political centers like Kyoto and Nara, the city is also traversed by many roads leading in and out in all directions. As a long-standing critical transportation hub, Osaka has evolved into a place where various communities come together to create the foundations of new culture.

Osaka's history as a crossroads of exchange began with Naniwatsu Port, which was established around the 5<sup>th</sup> century. As a gateway to the world, Naniwatsu Port served as a departure point for the diplomatic missions of the time. This thriving trading port welcomed many visitors from abroad and is said to have flourished as a central hub for

global interaction. It was in the vicinity of Naniwatsu Port that Japan's first state-built temple, Shitennoji, was constructed. Back then, as Osaka engaged with and gradually embraced the new worldview of Buddhism, the foundations of the city's unique culture began to take shape.

It was much later, during the Edo period (1603–1868), that Osaka, the city of encounters, took another major step into its destiny. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the feudal lord who finally unified all of Japan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, had built Osaka Castle. However, the town surrounding the castle was destroyed in the war. In response, the Edo Shogunate gathered a group of merchants and artisans, relocating them to Osaka to build a commercial city with a system of waterways. The large number of bridges constructed here earned the moniker “the 808 Bridges of Naniwa,”

and people enjoyed the scenery along the riverbanks by taking boat rides in all four seasons. At the same time, progress was made in developing sea routes from Osaka to regions across Japan. These routes connected not only Edo (present-day Tokyo) but also Hokkaido and other distant locations to Osaka, enhancing its role as a logistics hub known as “the nation's kitchen.”

In the modern era, Osaka made significant advancements. As textile and other cottage industries developed, the city expanded, and its population grew to surpass Tokyo, making Osaka the largest city in Japan. Osaka was now a metropolis on the level of New York, London, Paris, and other major world cities, and prospered immensely as “Greater Osaka.” This was a time when modern urban culture, particularly ornate modern architecture, was in vogue.

Many of the opulent buildings of those days still adorn Osaka today, leaving a valuable legacy that reflects the city's growth and development at that time.

Starting in the 1930s, many of the waterways that had formed the backbone of Osaka had deteriorated due to poor water quality and the prevalence of land transportation. However, in the 1970s, steps were taken to improve the water quality of the rivers, and in 2001, efforts began to revive the city as “Aqua Metropolis Osaka.” In recent years, the promenades and parks built along the rivers, the illuminated bridges, and the riverside events have created a lively atmosphere that makes the most of the city's waterfront locations. “Aqua Metropolis Osaka” is seeing a revival with a new story written by the throngs of people who come and go through Osaka today.



# Inheriting the History of a Commercial City

Osaka has long been a merchant town with a *konbu* (culinary kelp) and medicine culture, which has been inherited by today's generation.

Photos: Kurihara Osamu



1. Doi says he wants to protect and nurture *konbu* culture and pass it on to the next generation.  
2. In addition to the high-quality *ma-konbu* (true kelp) produced in Hokkaido, Konbu Doi also sells original products such as bottled Jubai Dashi, which can be used to make authentic *konbu* broth by simply diluting the concentrate in hot water.  
3. Doi assists with harvesting *konbu*. (Photo: Konbu Doi)  
4. Ingredients simmered in *konbu* broth have a delicious and delicate flavor. (Photo: PIXTA)  
5. Konbu Doi is located on Karahori Shotengai, an Osaka shopping street featuring many historical shops.

## Carrying Osaka Konbu Culture into the Future

Osaka was a distribution and commercial hub during the Edo period (1603-1868) as prosperous as Edo (present-day Tokyo). The *kitamae-bune* or (north-bound ships) played a key role in the development of the area. Ships from Ezo in the north (present-day Hokkaido) brought specialties and products from across Japan to Osaka via ports on the Sea of Japan and the Seto Inland Sea.

One product shipped in at the time was edible kelp called *konbu*, which is used to make the *dashi* broth that forms the base of much Japanese cuisine. High-quality *konbu* arrived in Osaka, where the local soft water enriched *dashi* with even more umami flavor. This *dashi*-focused *konbu* culture shaped Osaka dining tables, from high-end restaurants to the homes of common people.

“Konbu Doi” is a *konbu* specialty shop established in 1903. With a discerning eye, Doi Junichi, the fourth-generation owner of the shop, selects high-quality *konbu* that has been carefully aged. Doi visits Hokkaido, where *konbu* is harvested, to support the producers there. He laments that *konbu* production has declined in recent years due to a lack of young workers, global warming, and less attention on this edible kelp as eating habits in Japan have changed. “But once you get a taste of the real thing, you understand that we must preserve this *konbu* culture,” he adds. Carefully prepared *konbu* broth has a sweet and refined taste and a natural umami that permeates the body and soul. “*Konbu* broth is the essence of Osaka culture, which we are proud to share with the world. Above all, we want everybody to know how delicious it is.”



1. Pharmaceutical researcher Yoshikawa Alice says she feels a deep satisfaction when she learns that a drug she was involved in researching is being used to treat patients.  
2. The original apothecary scale (above) and balance weights (below) used to measure amounts of medicine. The balance weight is still used today as the company's symbol.  
3. A paper signboard advertising a pain and fever reducer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the collection of Shiono Gisaburo Jr., the second president of drug wholesaler Shionogi & Co., Ltd.

## Taking on New Drug Development with the Pride of “Medicine Town”

Not far from Umeda in the heart of Osaka, the Doshomachi district, now lined with office buildings, has been bustling since around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the streets were lined with drug wholesalers. At one time, Doshomachi had sole responsibility for quality control and pricing of drugs in Japan and so was known as the crossroads of all Japanese medicine. Because so many pharmaceutical companies are still based there, the area continues to be known as “Medicine Town.”

Founded in 1878, Shionogi & Co., Ltd. is one of these pharmaceutical companies. Thanks to its advanced drug discovery technologies, it has made the leap from Doshomachi to the world stage. Yoshikawa Alice, a researcher at the Shionogi Pharmaceutical Research Center, is engaged in drug discovery to treat viral infections. She is in charge of research to verify the effectiveness

of drugs, which begin in the early stage of development and continue until immediately before market launch. “Our work affects people's health so we cannot let ourselves be complacent,” she says. The company's motto has been “pursuing precision in delivering safe medicine” since its inception. Yoshikawa carries on the pride of the Osaka drug merchants of the past, who valued trust and reliability above all.

In the face of a global viral pandemic, Yoshikawa says she felt a strong desire to help fight diseases like these. “I hope we can develop a new drug that will enhance the body's immune system. That way, we may be able to help people suffering from those symptoms and the aftereffects of the diseases,” says Yoshikawa, speaking warmly and sincerely of her dreams.



# The Birthplaces of Osaka-Style Communication

As a city that thrives on exchange and interaction, Osaka has many special places where people like to gather to laugh, talk, and enjoy hobbies.

Photos: Kurihara Osamu, PIXTA

## A discussion venue that makes participating easy

Held in and around Nakatsu, an area north of Umeda in the heart of Osaka that still retains a downtown atmosphere, Hyper Engawa is a talk event that has been conducted more than 300 times since 2019. The term *engawa* refers to a terrace-like space in traditional Japanese houses. Its function is to connect the outside with the inside. The event was named after this space to express the idea that people from outside should feel free to stop by. Topics range from local economic issues to music. Visitors are free to drop by whenever they want and interact with other participants. It is a special place that brings people together.

Middle left: The venue is an open space in the semi-underground area of a building.  
Bottom left: Participants discuss the urban development of Osaka.  
(Photos: Hyper Engawa)



## Watching warai, a type of comedic performance that has become a traditional form of entertainment

The Osaka dialect goes hand in hand with comedy and humor. This is because the roots of Osaka's signature *warai*, the art of comedy, can be traced back to *rakugo*, a form of comic storytelling that is believed to have originated around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. *Rakugo* is a storytelling art in which a comic performer narrates a funny story while playing several roles at once, using only body language to distinguish between them. At Tenma Tenjin Hanjotei, *kamigata rakugo*, a form of comic storytelling that employs the light and witty Osaka dialect, is performed every day. Its auditorium is always packed with people eager to enjoy the art of storytelling in the home of *warai*.

Top right: Audiences are attracted by the witty Osaka dialect.  
Middle right: At night, 1,500 lanterns illuminate the area.

## Playing board games at a club with traditions

In the past, the downtown area of Osaka was home to many *kaisho* (clubs, lit. "meeting places") where fans of traditional board games such as *go* and *shogi* would gather. With the success of the legendary shogi master Sakata Sankichi (1870–1946), who gave himself the title of Kansai Meijin ("Kansai" being the southern-central region of main island Honshu and "Meijin" being the most prestigious title in professional *shogi*), the local *shogi* clubs buzzed with energy and enthusiasm for quite some time. In recent years, the number of clubs has decreased greatly, but the Osaka Club, a members-only establishment, still attracts like-minded people who play *shogi* with an unwavering passion. Businessmen who were once active in the business district of the city now compete against each other in *shogi*.

Middle left: Fellow *shogi* enthusiasts get together to enjoy a *shogi* battle.  
(Photo: Osaka Club)  
Bottom left: The architecture of the Osaka Club reflects the glorious era of the city's development into a metropolis superior to Tokyo.



## Relaxing spaces that make you want to stay a bit longer

Osaka Prefecture has the largest number of coffee shops in Japan. Historically, this has been attributed to the introduction of coffee beans via the nearby trading port of Kobe, but it is also typical of Osaka that independent coffee shops are more popular than chains. With its extensive menu, Cafe Sunshine attracts a large number of regular customers who come not only to enjoy a coffee break, but also for breakfast and lunch. The coziness of shops like this makes it easy to get lost in conversation or open up to people you have never met before. Coffee shops have become a popular hangout for locals who want to chat in a relaxed atmosphere.

Top right: The soothing interior tones and soft lighting create a relaxing atmosphere.  
Middle right: The retro look of the cafe is very popular even with young people.  
Lower right: The soft and fluffy hand-baked pancakes are a popular item on the menu.





Left: "Detailed view of the Fifth National Industrial Exhibition" (Collection of Amagasaki City Museum of History)  
 Opposite page top left: The 183-day Japan World Exposition Osaka 1970 was the first international expo held in Asia, with 77 countries participating. The commemorative Expo '70 Pavilion in Expo Commemorative Park illustrates the enthusiasm of the time. Public entry to the Tower of the Sun, designed by Taro Okamoto, is available by appointment (left). (Photo: Osaka Prefectural Government)  
 Opposite page top right: EXPOCITY, a multiplex located in the Expo '70 Commemorative Park (Photo: PIXTA)



# A City Evolving through Expos

Osaka has been host since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a variety of large-scale exhibitions, each serving to advance the city's industry and culture.

## Thriving Osaka District Grows on Expo Footprint

The history of Shinsekai, a bustling neighborhood in southern Osaka that is now filled with crowds of people every day, began in 1903 with the Fifth National Industrial Exhibition. Seeking to promote industry, the exposition showcased the latest technologies from Japan and abroad with an observation tower equipped with an elevator, an unusual sight at the time, and evening illumination displays. These attracted so much attention that over 4.5 million visitors are said to have attended. When the exhibition closed, the site was used to build today's Tennoji Park, as well as Luna

Park, an amusement park and home to the well-known Osaka landmark, Tsutenkaku Tower. Although Luna Park closed after just ten years, the area has since developed into an entertainment district lined with diverse venues. The same lively atmosphere that filled the area during that initial expo is alive today.

## Birth of a City Symbol and Expansion of the Transportation Network

In 1925, to commemorate the expansion of its city limits, Osaka hosted the Great Osaka Commemorative Expo, and

in 1948, it held the Great Reconstruction Exhibition to celebrate its recovery from the World War II. It was, however, hosting Japan's first international expo, Japan World Exposition Osaka 1970 Expo '70, that had a particularly strong impact on Osaka.

Taking up the theme of "Progress and Harmony for Mankind," this international exhibition was held in Senri Hills, about 13 kilometers north of the Osaka city center. Over 64 million people visited the expo's various pavilions. When Japan World Exposition Osaka 1970 closed, the vast site was redeveloped as the Expo '70 Commemorative Park. Kept in place was the Tower of the Sun, built as one of the expo's themed pavilions. In addition, the National Museum of Ethnology, which exhibits folklore and cultural anthropology from Japan and across the world, was built. More recently, a large complex of interactive multiplexes and a shopping mall has also been built here, and the area is gaining popularity once again.

As the city hosted these large expos, the transportation network expanded. The newly established Kita-Osaka

Kyuko Railway is one such example. Day after day, the railway carried Expo visitors from the center of Osaka to the venue's location in Senri Hills. Since the exhibition, the train has continued to be an integral part of the daily lives of people living in the large residential area of Senri New Town.

## Building a City for the Future—EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN

Now, with the upcoming EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN, wide roads are being built in the venue's vicinity, subway lines are being extended, new subway stations are being added, and major stations are being renovated. Expo 2025 will be held on Yumeshima, an artificial island in Osaka Bay. The venue is designed to highlight the waterfront, evocative of Osaka as Japan's City of Water.

As a host of large-scale expositions, Osaka continues to evolve. The upcoming expo will transform the city into an even more attractive place for residents and visitors alike.



Left: Post card showing Luna Park and the original Tsutenkaku Tower. The original tower was destroyed by fire during the war. (Collection of the Postcard Museum)  
 Right: The streets of Shinsekai at the foot of Tsutenkaku Tower. The tower as it stands today was rebuilt in 1956. (Photo: PIXTA)  
 Opposite page bottom left: Kita-Osaka Kyuko Railway is essential to the daily lives of the people living in Senri New Town (Photo: PIXTA)  
 Opposite page bottom right: Artist's illustration of the completed Yumeshima, the venue for EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN (Photo: Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition)





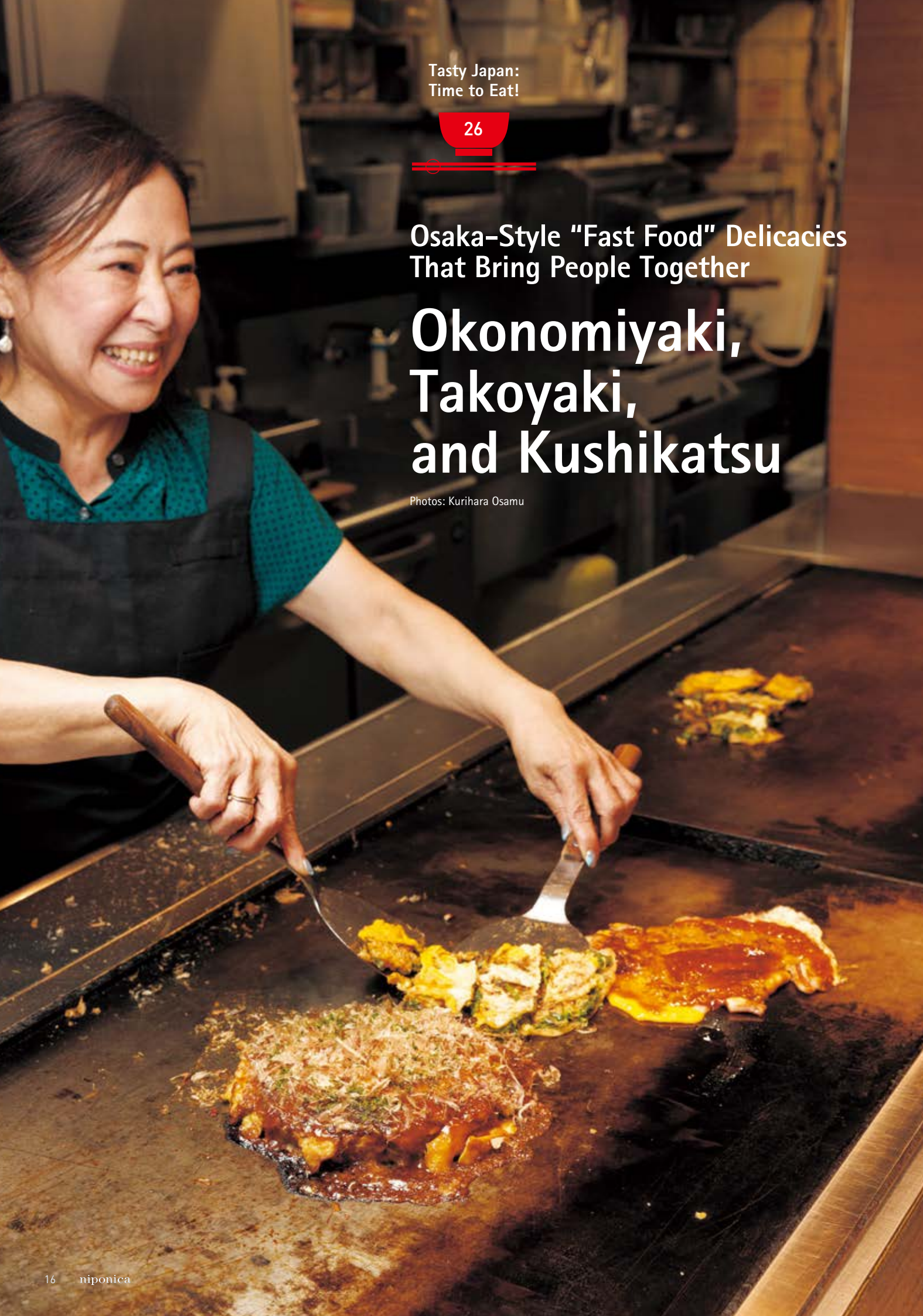
Tasty Japan:  
Time to Eat!

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Osaka-Style “Fast Food” Delicacies  
That Bring People Together

# Okonomiyaki, Takoyaki, and Kushikatsu

Photos: Kurihara Osamu



Opposite page: *Okonomiyaki* (front), *negiyaki* (middle), and *ikayaki* (right) are cooked on a griddle right in front of customers.

Right: The batter and other ingredients are mixed and placed on the griddle, formed into a round, pancake-like shape (left) and carefully cooked before sauce and other toppings are spread on top (right).

Bottom: Ajinoya has been in business for over 50 years. Here, the counter area always presents a lively scene with regular customers enjoying conversation with proprietress Sorayama Katsuko.



In addition to being a central distribution hub through which foods from all over the pass, Osaka was once a thriving center of production as well, facing out onto the waters of Osaka Bay with its bounties of seafood and bordering the Kawachi Plain with its agricultural harvests. As the city developed into a major economic center, its culinary culture came to flourish at eateries where merchants would congregate and socialize. The rise of the tea ceremony contributed, as well. As Osaka established its status as a “culinary capital,” it has tended to be food with common appeal, such as *takoyaki* and *okonomiyaki*, that have given Osaka the worldwide reputation it has today.

The people of Osaka have strong tendencies to value economic rationality. To them, beyond being appetizing, food must also be affordable. Averse to pointlessness and waste as they are, speedy convenience is prized above all else. What might satisfy all of these demands? “Fast food” items, Osaka-style.



**Okonomiyaki:**  
Best savored fresh off the griddle

Made by adding ingredients such as meat or seafood into a batter of wheat flour and *dashi* broth along with ample amounts of shredded cabbage and grilling the mixture





Upper left: Batter is poured into a special griddle with rows of round indentations and repeatedly turned over as it is cooked into *takoyaki* balls.  
Lower left: Toppings including savory sauce and mayonnaise complete the dish.  
Right: *Takoyaki* eaten while walking along the street acquires a particularly special flavor.  
(Cooperation: Takoya Dotonbori KUKURU)



Upper left: *Kushikatsu* skewers dropped into a vat of oil are fried until their breading turns golden.  
Upper middle: A range of variations can be enjoyed, including quail egg, frankfurters, and prawns.  
Upper right: Dip your skewer in the sauce on the table and enjoy.  
Lower left: Customers at counter seating are handed skewers of *kushikatsu* fried right in front of them.  
Lower right: The exterior of a distinctively original *kushikatsu* restaurant.  
(Cooperation: Kushikatsu Daruma)



in flat, pancake-like forms, *okonomiyaki* is eaten with a salty-sweet sauce. Though there is some uncertainty, one prevailing theory is that it was first sold at street stands in the Kansai region around the time of the World War II. It is popular in-home cooking, made with favorite ingredients on hand, as well as at the numerous privately run eateries found in the city that specialize in the dish. *Okonomiyaki* is a food that the people of Osaka eat regularly in day-to-day life.

If you want to savor the real flavor of this dish in its place of origin, visit an *okonomiyaki* eatery where the dish can be enjoyed hot off the griddle, cooked right in front of you. Variations of the dish that can also be sampled include *negiyaki*, featuring ample quantities of green spring onions in place of cabbage, and *ikayaki*, made with squid that is pressed between plates together with batter and grilled.

For the most authentic experience, gather around the griddle with a lively group of dining companions as the richly flavored savory sauce melts in your mouth.



### **Takoyaki:** Savory treats to munch right along the street

Made with the same type of wheat flour batter as *okonomiyaki* and cooked in round balls with chunks of octopus mixed in, *takoyaki* is another iconic Osaka fast food. You can still find the savory treats grilled at storefronts, just as in the era when *takoyaki* first appeared. Take in the captivating sight of skilled cooks grilling the balls to perfection as the delicious smells fill the air, and you will find it impossible to resist buying some yourself. Perfect for

munching on the go, it is a common sight to see people blowing on the bite-sized treats to cool them a bit before stuffing their cheeks on the streets of Osaka.



### **Kushikatsu:** Appetizing skewers to eat shoulder to shoulder with neighboring customers

No list of Osaka fast food delicacies would be complete without *kushikatsu*. These consist of bite-sized morsels of various ingredients that are skewered, coated with a wheat flour batter and *panko* breadcrumbs, and deep-fried. Beyond meat, seafood, and vegetables, a range of variations can be found, including cheese and eggs. Eat *kushikatsu* freshly fried, dipping the skewers in containers on the tabletop filled with savory sauce.

In the early days, when *kushikatsu* was first served, it was commonly eaten at food stands, sharing the limited space with others. This led to etiquette prohibiting double-dipping to avoid contamination of the shared sauce. While lately some eateries specializing in *kushikatsu* do offer table seating, this is a dish that you will want to savor with the casual enjoyment of lining up at the counter. Remember to show consideration for others seated next to you and sink your teeth into some freshly fried skewers of *kushikatsu* as you enjoy friendly conversation, and you will truly feel at home in Osaka.

Quick, affordable, and appetizing, the “fast food” of Osaka brings people who are meeting for the first time closer together, as well. Eat these favorites yourself — *okonomiyaki*, *takoyaki*, and *kushikatsu* — to fully appreciate the charms of Osaka and its bustling streets.



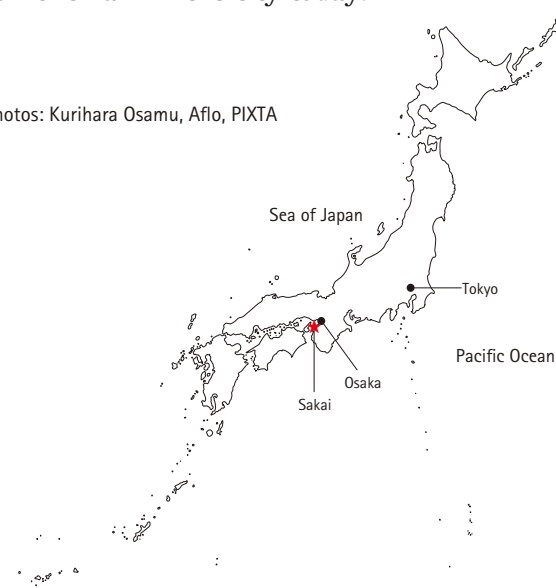


A Merchant Town  
Open to the World

# Sakai

Flourishing as a hub of trade with the outside world, Sakai became an autonomous city in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This rich culture and entrepreneurial spirit remain in the city today.

Photos: Kurihara Osamu, Aflo, PIXTA



1. The Old Sakai Lighthouse stands at old Sakai Port.
2. Hochigai Shrine, believed to hold power over the points of the compass, is visited by people wishing for safe travels and successful moves to new locations.
3. Daisenryo Kofun (Tumulus of Emperor Nintoku) is one of the most notable burial mounds in the cluster of Mozu Tombs. (Photo: Sakai City)
4. The amulet of the Hochigai Shrine for safe journeys is worn by people who love to travel.



About a 30-minute journey by train from Shin-Osaka Station, Sakai is the second most populous city in Osaka Prefecture after Osaka itself. One of the leading industrial cities in the Kansai region, with state-of-the-art manufacturing plants lining the waterfront area, Sakai boasts a long history of rich culture nurtured through foreign trade.

The name Sakai, which means “boundary” in Japanese, comes from its location across the border between Settsu and Izumi, two former administrative provinces in the region. Hochigai Shrine stands on the boundary that divides these two, plus a third, Kawachi, and is revered as a sacred space not belonging to any of these provinces or bound by any direction.

To the south of Sakai lie the Mozu Tombs, a World Heritage Site consisting of 44 burial mounds built between the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of these, the 486-meter-long Daisenryo Kofun (Tumulus of Emperor Nintoku), is one of the largest tombs in the world. This area was a strategic transportation hub on the road to the capital further east, where many emissaries from foreign countries traveled. The majestic sight of these burial mounds would have served as a powerful manifestation of the nation-state’s strength.

Around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sakai became a trading port for ships from China, with Portuguese and Spanish ships





5. The Nanban Byōbu folding screen portrays the bustling atmosphere in this hub of international exchange.  
(Photo: Sakai City Museum)  
6. Time slip to Sakai in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the VR installation at the Sakai Plaza of Rikyu and Akiko.  
(Photo: Sakai Plaza of Rikyu and Akiko)



also arriving in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The city developed into an international hub bustling with visitors from foreign lands. Merchants who made their fortunes in trade ruled the city, and Sakai flourished as an autonomous city full of vitality and a free spirit. This past is evident in paintings and other images from the time, and the cultural tourist center Sakai Plaza of Rikyu and Akiko even introduces the city's history and culture with a VR experience that allows visitors to virtually experience the cityscape and daily life as it was lived in those days.

This foreign trade also led to the production of matchlock guns in the city, with an increasing number of craftsmen



7. Sakai cutlery is produced by the city's master ironworkers, who carry on these globally renowned techniques. (Photo: Sakai Film Office)  
8. The Tour of Japan, an intense road cycle race  
9. Produced by Shimano, headquartered in Sakai. The company enjoys the lion's share of the sports bike gear and brake system market.  
(Photos: SHIMANO SALES CORPORATION)



10. Sen no Rikyu, the tea master who laid the foundation for Japan's *chanoyu* tea ceremony  
(Photo: Sakai City Museum)

skilled in iron manufacturing and processing. These techniques have been handed down to the present day and are seen in the production of Sakai cutlery, the high-quality kitchen knives cherished by professional chefs. Ironworking techniques have also been utilized in new industries, such as the manufacture of bicycle parts that are highly valued around the world. Sakai has also made a name for itself in recent years as the host city of the Tour of Japan international cycling road race.

The development of commerce brought with it a blossoming of culture, as well. Sen no Rikyu, the tea master who laid the foundation for Japan's world-class tea



11. A matcha parfait served at the tea shop Tea Tsuboichi the Tea House opened over 175 years ago.  
12, 13. Kojimaya, a historical Japanese confectionery established during the Edo period (1603-1868). The shop's *keshi mochi* is covered with a generous coating of fragrant poppy seeds, offering both refined sweetness and textural interest.

ceremony, was also an active figure in Sakai in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The *chanoyu* tea ceremony culture spread through his influence, and the town is still dotted with many historical shops selling the confections served at the Japanese tea ceremony. Sakai is a beautiful place to stroll through the streets, tasting the unique confections for which the city is known.

Perched along the ocean that connects it with the rest of the world, the city has grown to what it is today by welcoming many different cultures. Experience first-hand the extraordinary enterprising spirit of Sakai.



## Sakai Area Map

- 1 Old Sakai Lighthouse
- 2 Hochigai Shrine
- 3 Daisenryo Kofun (Tumulus of Emperor Nintoku)
- 4 Sakai Plaza of Rikyu and Akiko
- 5 Kojimaya
- 6 Tea Tsuboichi the Tea House

### Access

It takes about 30 minutes from Shin-Osaka Station to Sakai Station via the Osaka Metro Midosuji Line or Nankai Line.

### Contact information

Sakai Tourism & Convention Bureau official website  
<https://www.sakai-tcb.or.jp/en/>





Traditionally spun, soft and fluffy

# Senshu Towels



1



2



3



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1. Soft, highly absorbent Senshu towels (Photo: Osaka Towel Industrial Association)
2. Towel made of layers of gauze is lightweight, soft, and gentle on baby's skin. (Photo: Shinto Towel Co., Ltd.)
3. *Sukashi-ori* open weave technique to express light colors (Photo: Kosugizen Co., Ltd.)
4. Pile weave sandwiched between two layers of gauze create towels that are thick, yet light and soft. (Photo: Shinto Towel Co., Ltd.)

Japanese towel production began in 1887 in the Senshu district of southern Osaka. The towels made in this area have come to be known as "Senshu towels." Accounting today for about 40% of the towel market in Japan, these high-quality, handy, everyday towels are very popular.

The traditional post-weave technique of *atozarashi* is what gives Senshu towels their high quality. The process of washing and bleaching removes starch and oils from the cotton fibers, and Senshu towels undergo this process after they are woven. Clean Izumi Mountain water is used to carefully remove impurities to produce soft, fluffy towels with the excellent absorbency that cotton offers.

Senshu towels have evolved in recent years, offering new and unique designs, materials, and functions. One example is the *sukashi-ori* open weave technique, which gives the pattern of colored fibers tucked between white fibers a slightly muted look. Another is layered gauze fabric, which produces a lightweight, quick-drying towel. Daily life is just brighter and more colorful when you have a variety of beautiful, useful towels around.

Ideal for everyday use and as gifts, be sure to pick up a Senshu towel and experience for yourself just how great they feel.

