Osaka:

About Osaka

Osaka is Japan's second largest metropolitan area after Tokyo. It has been the economic powerhouse of the Kansai Region for many centuries. Osaka was formerly known as Naniwa. Before the Nara Period, when the capital used to be moved with the reign of each new emperor, Naniwa was once Japan's capital city, the first one ever known.

1. Minami Area
   * Spot
     + Traditional Shopping Street - Hunt for Japan-Made Souvenirs

There are various shotengai (shopping streets) throughout the Minami area, but we’ll introduce two shotengai that are fun to explore.

First is Shinsaibashi Shotengai. Over 180 stores are concentrated here, extending from Dotonbori to Shinsaibashi. Established Osaka department store Daimaru, selling both domestic and international fashion brands, is also on the corner of this shotengai. Many employees here speak English, and there are also English signs and displays, so you can shop with peace of mind.

One more shotengai contains many restaurants unique to Minami. The Sennichimae Doguyasuji shotengai is a three-minute walk from Namba Station (use the Osaka Metro Midosuji or Yotsubashi Line). Here you will find rows of specialty shops with everything you need in for a restaurant, such as knives, pots, and bowls. There are also places where you can create the food samples seen at the entrances of restaurants in Japan. Some shops will even let you make your own samples, making this the perfect place for obtaining memorabilia from your trip.

* Cruising on the Dotonbori River

Try the cruise along the Dotonbori River to take in another view of the neighborhood. The cruise also allows visitors to take a break from the crowds. The boarding point is visible from the center of Dotonbori. Tickets cost 900 yen for adults and 400 yen for children. The ride is sure to make your time in Dotonbori all the more special.

Tombori River Cruise Boarding Point: Directly in front of the Dotonbori branch of Don Quijote Official Website: http://www.ipponmatsu.co.jp/cruise/tombori.html (Japanese only)

* food
* Enjoy Classic Osaka Ramen

Kinryu Ramen, marked by the gigantic dragon on the roof, is a popular spot in Dotonbori. The restaurant is open 24 hours a day and is ideal for late nights. It is known for its simple ramen menu and unlimited toppings to customize your noodles, like kimchi and chives.

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Pictured above is part of the dining space. Tatami mats and tables are placed on small stands, on which customers eat ramen while being watched by people passing by. There are also similar mats and low tables located inside. The classic ramen here is made with pork bone broth and is rich in flavor. Each bowl is priced reasonably (from around 600 yen). If you want to truly experience food in Osaka, Kinryu Ramen is the place to visit. We highly recommend trying the ramen at this restaurant.

Kinryu Ramen Dotonbori Branch Address: Osaka, Osaka, Chuo, Dotonbori 1-7-26

* Crab and a Sit-down Meal at a Famous Restaurant

Famous for its moving crab sign, Kani Doraku is also recommended for visitors wanting to enjoy a sit-down meal. This is a higher-end restaurant with a menu that includes fresh crab, hot pot, and even traditional Japanese kaiseki cuisine. The dishes here are high-quality and exquisite. They also serve crabs to go.

Kani Doraku Dotonbori Main Branch Address: Osaka, Osaka, Chuo, Dotonbori 1-6-18

1. Osaka Castle Area
   * Spot
     + Osaka Castle Park - Beautiful in Every Season

The park surrounding Osaka Castle was opened to the public in 1931 but it wasn't until after World War II that the area was turned into an urban park. Osaka Castle Park is home to about 600 cherry trees, a peach grove with about 200 peach trees consisting of 12 different species and 1270 plum trees in its plum grove.

The plum grove is one of the most popular plum blossom viewing spots in Japan. In February, the whole area is covered in dark pink and white blossoms and hundreds of people visit each day.

The peach grove close to the plum grove was opened in 1999. Peach blossoms are so often confused with cherry blossoms which bloom in the same season that many people don't even know about this grove.

When the cherry blossoms are in bloom, all the cherry trees around the castle are lit up at night, creating a magical cherry blossom viewing experience. In autumn, the area is full of many different kinds of trees with foliage in all shades of red, orange and yellow.

* Food
  + Takoyaki Doraku Wanaka

The popular store of Osaka Takoyaki "Wanaka" has its main shop at Sennichimae in Osaka.

Wanaka's "Takoyaki" (8 pieces for 500 yen, sauce flavor). The dough is delicious! Dashi (broth) works well, and it's nicely done with the right crispiness outside and the delightful softness and chewiness inside. Aside from the original sauce flavor, there are other choices such as Kamadakishio (salt made by boiling seawater in a flat pot) ·Soy sauce· Doro sauce (originated from Kansai, tangy flavor).

Takoyaki Doraku Wanaka Osaka Castle Park shop: Osaka-shi Chuo-ku Osakajo 3-1 JO-TERRACE OSAKA F Terrace 102

* + Kobe Butter Crepe Specialty Shop Hysteric Jam

Plenty of butter is used for the dough, and the "Saku (crispy)・ Fuwa (fluffy) ・ Juwa (melty)" texture of the dough is their selling point. Surprisingly, there are over 100 flavors of crepes available! "Matcha Tiramisu" (680 yen) is the most popular item that is loved by the Japanese customers as well as the ones from overseas.

Plenty of original premium cream is used, and the royal way to eat this is to start with a spoon. There is a large bench in front of the shop so that you can get a seat and take your time to enjoy this delectable goodness.

Hysteric Jam Osaka Castle Park shop: Osaka-shi Chuo-ku Osakajo 3-1 JO-TERRACEOSAKA F terrace 104

1. Tennoji Area
   * spot
   * Stroll Around Shinsekai

While visiting Tsutenkaku Tower, we suggest taking a walk around Shinsekai. Discover great souvenirs and try local food at the shops lining the streets while enjoying the energetic local atmosphere.

When trying to describe the distinctive atmosphere of Osaka in Japanese, many people use the term “kote kote,” which roughly means "energetic, chaotic." Shinsekai is overflowing with this energy and is the perfect area to describe as kote kote.

Around the entrance to the Shinseikai area is a narrow street called Janjan Alley (Janjan Yokocho in Japanese). It is lined with shops selling kushikatsu (deep-fried skewers of meat or vegetables) and izakayas, or Japanese pubs.

Games including go and shogi have been also quite popular in this area for many years. Even today, you can see people playing shogi through the house and store windows.

* + Stroll Around Tennoji Park

East of the Tsutenkaku Tower lies Tennoji Park, where visitors can take a break in the heart of nature.

The nearby areas around Shin Imamiya Station and Dobutsuen Mae Station have seen more backpackers and tourists recently, leading to a rapid increase in the number of affordable accommodations. This makes it a great place to stay, as well as a suitable starting point for sightseeing in Osaka.

Please note that the area is considered slightly unsafe and shady by the locals so be careful when walking around at night.

1. Kita Area
2. Osaka Bay Area