

Osaka

Osaka, with a population 2,602,000, is the capital of the Osaka prefecture, and is situated on Osaka Bay at the mouth of the Yodo River. One of Japan's largest cities and principal industrial and commercial centres, Osaka is the focal point of a chain of industrial cities stretching to Kobe, an alternate port for Osaka. The manufacture of machinery, electrical machinery, iron and steel, metals, textiles, and chemicals, food processing, and printing are among the chief industries.

Osaka was historically known as Naniwa. From the middle of the seventh century until the middle of the eighth, Naniwa served as the capital of Japan, with resulting large-scale urban growth. The present historical sites in the area of Hoenzaka and the ruins of Naniwa-no-miya Palace are testimony to the rich and ancient history of Osaka.

The city was devastated by a series of wars in the 14th century, but after the construction of Ishiyama Honganji Temple in 1496, the area developed as a temple town. It was during this period that the area first became known as Osaka. After the temple was destroyed, Osaka Castle was constructed on the site in 1583. With the castle as the focal point, a community began to grow around the city's perimeter. This grew to become today's Osaka.

The urban districts were later reconstructed and canals excavated under the hereditary rulers of Edo, the present Tokyo, leading to an age of economic prosperity that surpassed all previous growth. Osaka thrived as a financial and commercial centre throughout the Edo dynasty, 1603–1867.

Osaka was established as a modern municipality in 1889, and urban improvements, such as water supply and drainage systems, harbour construction, and a streetcar transit system, were undertaken. Throughout the early 20th century, steady progress continued, with the City of Osaka playing a pioneering role for Japanese cities through its construction of a modern infrastructure and establishment of social welfare policies. The opening of Kansai International Airport in 1994 helped to further link Osaka with major cities around the world.

Osaka has become popular as a gourmet town. Sushi, globefish, eel, and udon (noodles) are found throughout the city and presented in original cooking styles.

Osaka hosted Expo '70 in 1970 and the International Garden and Greenery Exposition in 1990.