



Exploring Osaka's Museums

Discover arts, culture,
history and innovation
in Japan's most
enigmatic city

Introduction

Osaka may be known as the “eat ‘til you drop,” entertainment capital of Japan, but it is also home to world-class museums and cultural venues that make a memorable day out for all the family.

The term “second city” is frequently applied to a nation’s second-largest metropolitan area. But in the case of Osaka, residents may not settle for being a mere “second” after Tokyo, proud as they are of their distinctive history and heritage. Just for starters, Osaka is some 1,000 years older than Tokyo, the mysteries of its 7th-century imperial palace still being unearthed. And while Tokyo (then called Edo), was the city of the Shogun and samurai warriors, who traditionally shunned the handling of money and were inept in the ways of business, Osaka, on the other hand, was always the city of merchants, and as such prioritized good food and good living. This can be seen in the *joie de vivre* and straight-forward manner of the locals today.

What’s more, thanks to the patronage of Osaka’s wealthy merchants over centuries, the arts have been able to flourish here. The city’s prosperous families, such as the Sumitomo and the Ataka, used their fortunes to purchase exquisite collections, which even today are considered amongst the world’s finest.

An international port city, Osaka has also been a hub for the exchange of ideas, shaped by its strong ties to the Asian continent over generations. With several prestigious universities, it is also a seat for learning and cutting-edge research, particularly in the sciences.

Such an environment has undeniably helped Osaka become a premier cultural destination, its museums treasure troves that have something to offer everyone—and with low rates of admission, you are guaranteed even greater value from your visit! (Be sure to check our advice on travel passes too.)

Whether you are looking to gain a deeper understanding of Japan, or searching for activities that will keep the kids endlessly entertained, the five museums featured here—and their environs—are fantastic places to start your adventure in this enigmatic city.



Above: A model at Osaka Museum of History (p.10) shows how the ancient imperial Naniwa Palace once looked. Archaeologists working out of the museum are still unravelling its mysteries.



Left: Osaka Science Museum (p. 14) brings the fundamentals of physics to life through stimulating, hands-on exhibits.

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Cover image: *Shiro-Kujaku* (White peacocks) [detail], by Ishizaki Koyo, 1922. From the collection of Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka.

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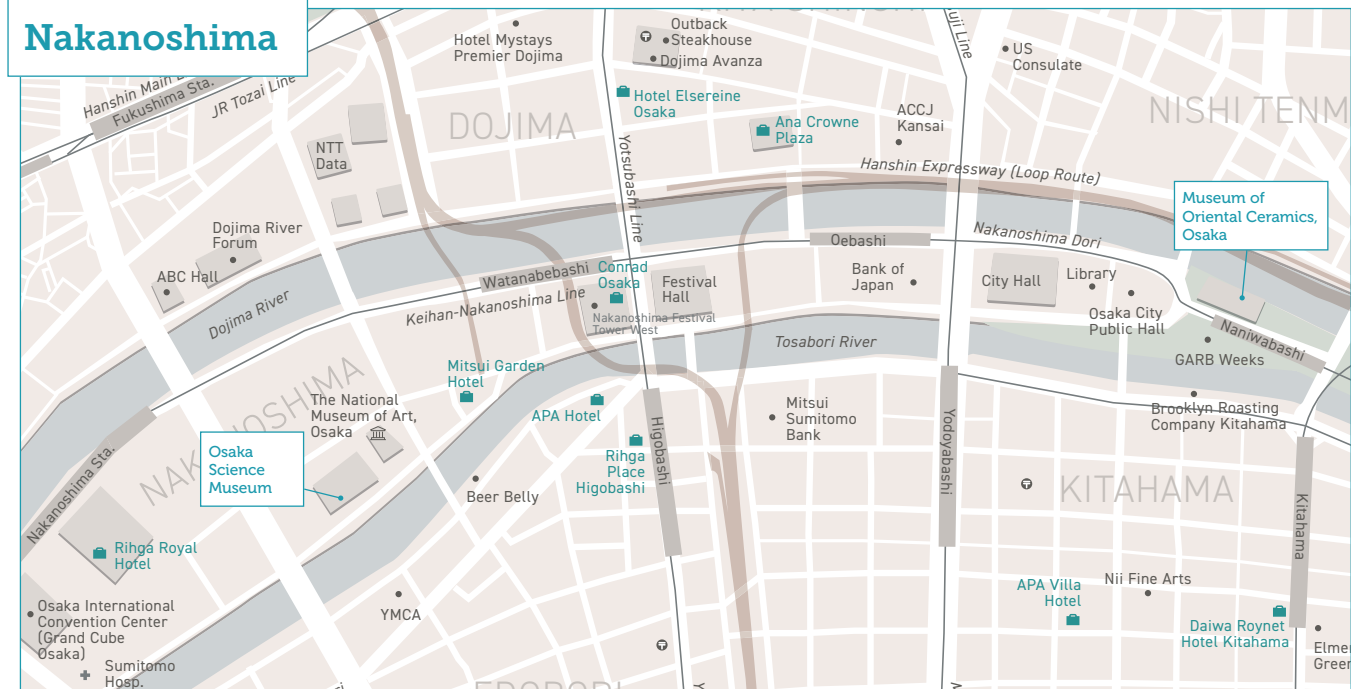
Above: Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts (p.8) has one of the most prestigious collections of East Asian art in Japan. This celadon water-dropper with an inlaid vine pattern from the Korea Gallery dates to the Goryeo Dynasty (late 12th-13th century).

Below left: Two figurines of sumo wrestlers in Kakiemon-style Arita ware from the Japanese island of Kyushu, dating to the 1680s. From the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.

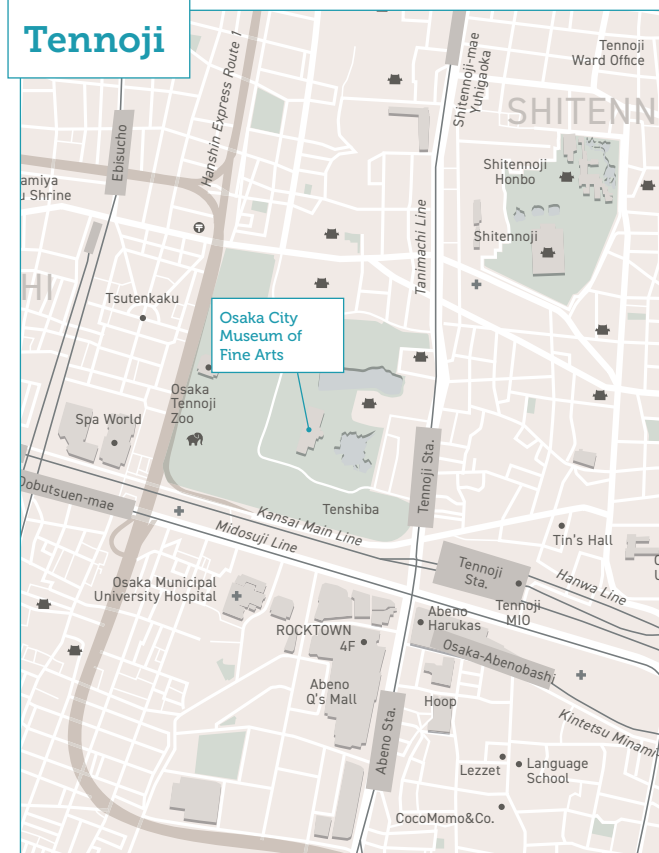
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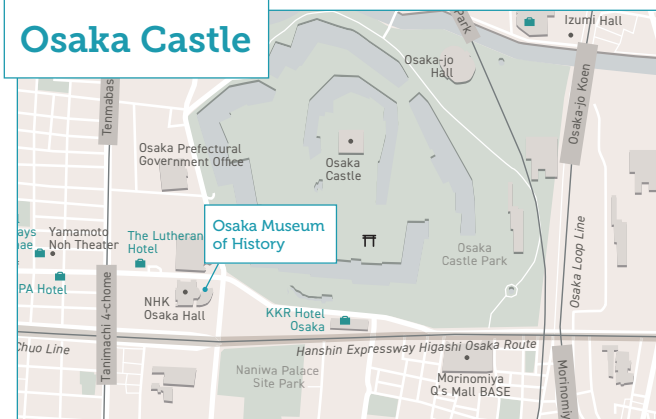
Nakanoshima



Tennoji



Osaka Castle



Nagai



Before you go...



COVID-19

Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are in place in museums, with a minimum requirement to wear a face mask, use the alcohol hand gel provided, and maintain distance from other visitors. Some will also ask to keep conversation to a minimum.



Accessibility

All the museums featured in this booklet have wheelchair access, with wheelchairs also available to borrow at some venues. Please check in advance for any special provisions.



Tickets

Museum tickets for permanent collection galleries and special exhibitions are usually payable separately, with discounts available for high school and university students. Younger children go free. Ticket reservations may be required for certain special exhibitions. Please enquire for details.

Japan is a cash-oriented society and it is a good idea to have some to hand, but credit card is accepted at all museums but for Osaka Museum of History and Nagai Botanical Garden next to Osaka Museum of Natural History. If you understand Japanese, all five museums also accept payment via the PassMarket app available for iOS and Android.



Travel Passes & Discounts

A number of travel passes are available to help you make the most of your trip to Osaka. The pass that offers the most benefits for those who wish to visit the museums featured in this booklet is the **Osaka Amazing Pass**, available to purchase for 1 or 2 days from any manned station on the Osaka Metro, as well as a number of tourist information offices and hotels in the city.

This pass offers free admission to some 49 venues around Osaka with discounted admission at an additional 28 venues as of early 2021. The 1-day pass (¥2,800) covers all Osaka Metro and City Bus services as well as several of the regional train lines including the Nankai airport line, whereas the 2-day (¥3,600) pass only covers Osaka Metro and the City Bus. Please note that this pass cannot be used on JR lines. There are no children's rates.

For the most up-to-date information, visit the [Osaka Amazing Pass site: www.osp.osaka-info.jp/en/](http://www.osp.osaka-info.jp/en/)

Plan your journey at the [Osaka Metro website: www.osakametro.co.jp/en/](http://www.osakametro.co.jp/en/)

Discounts offered with the Osaka Amazing Pass

The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka	Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts	Osaka Museum of History	Osaka Museum of Natural History	Osaka Science Museum
Discounted admission	Free admission (excludes special exhibitions)	Free admission (excludes special exhibitions)	Free admission (excludes special exhibitions)	Free admission (excludes the Planetarium)

Harnessing the light

Be astonished by this island museum’s masterpieces of Asian pottery, displayed with utmost sensitivity to their cultural origins, color and reflective properties.

Osaka has frequently been referred to as “The Venice of the East, a monicker it shares with a number of other cities throughout Asia. Of the abundant islands carved out by its waterways, Nakanoshima is no doubt the finest. It is well worth strolling the 10.6-hectare strip of garden where you can marvel at an array of eye-catching 19th-century buildings and tasteful later additions.

Ample time should be allotted for the jewel in the crown, The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka. One of the best collections of ceramics in the world, the museum opened in 1982, initially as the home of the famed Ataka Collection including 144 Chinese works from the Eastern Han to the Ming dynasties, and 793 Korean works from the Goryeo to the Joseon dynasties. The priceless collection was narrowly saved from being sold off after the acquisition of the parent company thanks to the intervention of the government and the trustee for the collection, The Sumitomo Group, who set up a special fund for the entire collection to be donated to Osaka City.

Over time the collection was bolstered by further donations of Persian ceramics and other works from around Asia, namely the Rhee Byung-Chang Collection of Korean ceramics, a source of pride for Koreans living in Japan. In response to feedback from the locals, the museum acquired and was gifted a number of Japanese works in the early 90s, which range from the seventh-century Nara period to the 20th century, the most notable of the latter being works by *Mingei* folk movement proponent, Hamada Shoji.

Of the 5,669 pieces in the museum’s collection, some 300 are on permanent exhibition, organized according to region, era and technique. These include two National Treasures and thirteen Important Cultural Properties. You can also find the work of contemporary artists, in frequent special exhibitions. Backstage, the museum is active in research on Asian ceramics, often in tandem with other domestic and overseas institutions.

As I walked into the cuboid building, I noted its composition of porcelain tiles, a kind of tribute to the 1895

Osaka Hotel which formerly stood here. The majority of the Korean and Chinese collection is on the second floor, while the Japanese ceramics are in a single large galley on the other side of a glass foyer offering pleasant river views. (The Rhee Collection has its own gallery one floor above.) The curator, Kobayashi Hitoshi, explained that “through pottery, the museum hopes to represent the differences and characteristics of the three cultures. While the collection isn’t intended to represent a complete history of ceramics, you can truly appreciate the artistry.”

Below: Buncheong ware with iron-painted lotus and mandarin duck design, 15th-16th century. Gifted by Mr. Ataka Teruya.



Above: The state-of-the-art display lighting brings out the complex hues of the museum’s pieces. Right: The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka is located in leafy Nakanoshima Park.

Kobayashi went on to explain that this is enhanced by the museum’s thoughtful, multi-award-winning display system. Needless to say, as the surface of ceramics reflects light from all directions, lighting is incredibly challenging. The museum technical team used a combination of natural lighting and LED lights to bring out rather than distort the original tones of the pieces and ensure minimal glare on the glass cases. They also installed an innovative angular skylight that allows light to indirectly illuminate the display cases.

The Chinese ceramics are displayed in bright rooms whose high ceilings enhance their vibrant coloring and create space for their powerful impact, while the Korean and Japanese collection rooms by contrast have low ceilings and dimmer lighting to create a softer impression, with Japanese pieces also placed closer to floor level to emulate the viewing conditions of a tatami mat room. Tradition has it that celadon is best viewed at around 10 am, as the sunlight of a fine autumn day shines through the shoji screen of a north-facing room. The display cases housing the museum’s fine celadon are bathed in just this kind of light, and even on a rainy day, one can lean in and marvel at the hues that alternate between an ash grey and turquoise blue.

As I wandered back through the galleries, I found delights for the mind as well as the eye, the wisdom traditions of the East condensed into ceramic form. Two mandarin ducks (symbol of fidelity) on a Joseon dynasty jar face away from one another as if in a lover’s tiff. Most intriguing was the Zen-like riddle on a bottle, which made me uncertain whether a fish-carrying kingfisher is between water and cloud, or beneath the water itself. I particularly enjoyed a Goryeo-Dynasty ewer bearing a boy climbing an auspicious *baoxianghua* vine, a wish for the prosperity of one’s descendants. An 8th-century Chinese court lady figurine is one of several pieces that slowly rotate on turntables—a world first for a museum at the time—for you to take in their fine details. The 150 diminutive ceramic, glass and metal Chinese snuff bottles on permanent display from the Oki Shoishiro Collection of 1,200 pieces are also sure to charm.

Ataka Eiichi probably had little inkling that his collection would take on such good company or find a home as grand as The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka. The museum has excellent English explanations, on par with the Japanese. Equally rewarding is to simply let the mind wander in amazement at how the simple elements of water, earth, and fire can transcend space and time.



The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka



	1-1-26, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0005 (East side of the Osaka City Central Public Hall)
	06-6223-0055
	9:30 - 17:00 (last entry: 16:30)
	Mondays (if Monday is a national holiday the museum will close the following day), while exhibitions are being changed, New Year holidays
	Exit 1 of Yodoyabashi Stn on the subway and Keihan lines; Exit 26 of Kitahama station, or Naniwabashi Stn both on the Keihan Nakanoshima line
	¥1,400, University and high school students: ¥700, Children aged 15 and under go free. Admission may vary by exhibition.
	www.moco.or.jp/en/
	Insta: @moco_press



Highlight

Above: Chinese teaware like this Southern Song *tenmoku* glaze tea bowl with silvery spots gifted by the Sumitomo Group, has been highly prized in Japan through the centuries. It is one of two National Treasures in the museum’s collection.

Pondering Impermanence

The low admission and high quality of the collection of Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, itself a cultural monument with stunning gardens, makes it one of the best-value days out in the city

Within Osaka, Tennoji is a treasure trove of history and culture, from the sixth-century temple complex of Shitenno-ji, to the early 20th century retro neighborhood of Shinsekai and its iconic Tsutenkaku tower, to the hyper-modern chic of the Abeno Harukas tower, Japan's tallest skyscraper. Tennoji's centerpiece is most certainly its Park, the setting for Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, built in the 1930s. The museum is on the former estate of the Sumitomos, a successful merchant family who started a copper refinery in 1615 that has evolved into the Sumitomo Group, one of Japan's largest conglomerates. Don't forget time to make time to stroll the delightful Keitakuen, a garden also part of the grounds that was designed by master gardener Ogawa Jihei whose work you will stumble upon at many a Kyoto park and temple. This and the neighboring City Zoo,

combine to create a lush oasis that enables you to forget you are in a metropolis of 2.5 million people. It is only fitting that a family of such prestige would have a lavish estate. The land was donated to the city with the intention that a museum be built upon it, although the construction was hindered for a decade due to the Great Depression and several natural disasters. The impressive structure, today a designated Tangible Cultural Property, eventually opened to the public in 1936. Exploring the building, it is hard to ignore the unusual blend of Western and Japanese design elements: with luxurious marble, grand chandeliers, and a sizable clock over the main staircase that conjures up a Victorian-era train station. While Museum of Fine Art's holdings also include work from Italy, Greece, and Egypt, it is predominantly of East Asian Art, with pieces procured from the prestigious Taman Collection and

Casal Collection of Japanese lacquerware among others. (As all of the artwork has been donated by private collectors, photography of the exhibits is prohibited.) It is small but significant, with a few dozen items from the museum's permanent collection

Below: Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts features prominent Japanese artists through to the modern era, including the Nihonga painter, Uemura Shoen (1875-1949), best known for her portraits of women.



Above: "Withered Field" pair of screens by Kodama Kibo, 1936. Right: The Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts building, constructed in the 1930s, is itself a Tangible Cultural Property.

of 8,500 works on display at any one time for maximum impact. The museum's curator, Yumino Takayuki, who is a calligraphy specialist himself, stressed that the creating the right atmosphere is key, and in doing so less is more. He said that together with those in charge of the incoming collection, they work hard to enhance it with the proper illumination without overwhelming it. "The ancient works of Asian art are the most visited in the museum, and people will spend a long time with them, sometimes all day with a single piece." I imagined this was not just "the historical and cultural depth" of these works as Mr. Yumino suggested, but how the careful display and lighting inspires a certain kind of reverence.

At the time of my visit the exhibit was focussed on Buddhist art, which the museum undoubtedly takes great pride in. In fact, the clan founder Sumitomo Masatomo was himself a monk prior to his going into business—upon the dissolution of his particular sect of Buddhism. The bronze buddhas here sit with a tranquil nobility; the balance of form and emptiness upon the screens arouse a certain humility. Peering at an ancient scroll of the Lotus Sutra from 741, it is incredible to think that

the anonymous artist-monk was simply going about his own personal form of spiritual practice by brushing gold calligraphy onto blue parchment, with little idea that people would be admiring it nearly 1,300 years later. Mr. Yumino also goes to great lengths to preserve the museum as a repository of Japanese history, and to keep the locals in touch with their traditions. The basement galleries are dedicated to local and amateur artists, in efforts to sustain the high quality of Japanese art into the future.

While not one the Japan's tradition Big Three Museums (four if you include the recent Kyushu National Museum), the Osaka Museum of Fine Art's collection is of exceptionally high quality. There is many a National Treasure and piece of great importance here. As such, you get tremendous value from the unbelievably low entrance fee of 300 yen (in keeping with the traditional frugality of Osakans). It calls for multiple visits, in order to enjoy the revolving displays of the museum's massive collection. Not a bad way to spend an afternoon, combined perhaps with a meal or drink at one of the handful of restaurants centered around the grassy Ten-shiba, mere steps from the museum's front doors.



Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts



	1-82, Chausuyama-cho, Tennoji-ku, Osaka 543-0063 (Within Tennoji Park)
	06-6771-4874
	9:30 - 17:00 (last entry: 16:30)
	Mondays (if Monday a national holiday the museum will close the following day), exhibition preparation periods, New Year holidays
	JR Tennoji Stn, Exits 15 and 16 of Osaka Metro Tennoji Stn, Kintetsu Osaka Abenobashi Stn, and Hankai Tramway Uemachi Line Tennoji-ekimae Stn
	¥300, University and high school students: ¥200, Children aged 15 and under go free. Separate admission fees apply for special exhibitions
	www.osaka-art-museum.jp/en/
	Insta/Twitter: @ocmfa_since1936



Highlight

Above: The museum's ancient Buddhist statues can be admired from all angles, including this 12th-century wooden figure of a *hiten* or heavenly being that is often found accompanying the Buddha.



Osaka Museum of History

The Palace in the Sky

Immerse yourself in Osaka’s glorious past as a grand imperial capital, bustling trading hub and city of leisure, brought to life through large-scale replicas

Above: The view of Osaka Castle from Osaka Museum of History.

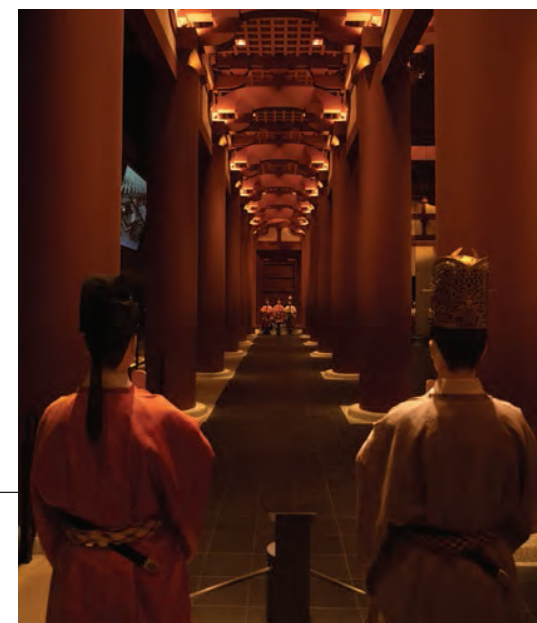
Viewed from the east, I thought that the facade of the Osaka Museum of History looked like a book being opened. This is most appropriate as the story of Japanese history is a long one, and Osaka—or, at least what became Osaka—has been there since the beginning. And to get this view, you need to be standing within the grounds of Osaka Castle. The castle today is a symbol of one of the highest apices of the history of not only the city but the nation as well.

History buffs will relish a slow visit here, to take in the many thousands of objects that bring to life Osaka’s vibrant past. The building shares a dome-like glass atrium with the headquarters of NHK Osaka Broadcasting Station, where you can purchase a drink from the coffee shop and watch the current NHK program being aired on the towering screen within.

The Osaka Museum of History is located in close proximity to two of Osaka’s most important historical sites, one of which is the aforementioned castle originally built by the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Having re-established control of Japan and brought to a close the nation’s 150-year-long Warring States Period, he deliberately had the structure built upon the site of the Osaka Hongan-ji Temple, whose powerful monks had proved difficult to supplant. The castle has burned down numerous times and suffered bomb damage during the War, and so what you see of it today is much newer. The area’s roots, though, extend back well over a thousand years to the ancient Naniwa Palace, whose mysterious role in Japanese history is still being unravelled by archaeologists. In fact, the team working at the nearby excavation site are based at the museum itself. You can observe postholes *in situ* on the basement floor, while on

the 8th floor there is an elaborate model excavation site inspired by that of the Naniwa Palace where you can decipher “remains” and learn about the excavation process through work-

Below: The large-scale replica of the Naniwa Palace on the 10th floor also features court nobles dressed in the Chinese-influenced garb of the period (see p. 16).



Above: Osaka Museum of History’s 9th floor captures the city’s pre-modern heritage as a thriving mercantile city in recreations like this one of townspeople crossing the Naniwa Bridge.

Right: The Osaka Museum of History building.

sheets and see the actual tools used (see p.16). The space is so authentic it is even ringed by a tall safety fence.

The building’s 10th floor is almost entirely dedicated to a partial reproduction of the Latter Palace’s eighth-century Daigokuden Hall and this is the best place to begin your visit. (The “Highlight Course takes about one hour, while the complete course requires much more time to explore.) The replica of the Daigokuden Hall is a wonder in vermillion and black, with models of elegantly dressed court figures. From the museum, you can gaze out toward Osaka Castle, an impressive sight from these heights, and one even more so at night as it was at the time of our visit. (Happily, the museum is photography-friendly!) The blinds lower in order to screen an impressive array of images detailing the culture of Naniwa at the time. Models and artifacts document life not only at the time of the Palace but of the society that came before, namely the warehouses and burial mounds of the people who dwelt here upon the Uemachi Plateau.

Exhibits on the 9th floor bring to life the late Middle Ages, extending to the end of the feudal Edo Peri-

od, a time when Osaka was Japan’s primary trading center known as “The Water City.” As on the previous floor, we are able to examine life at this time, through full-scale replicas, scale models, photographs and video. Most impressive are the wooden bridges that traverse the exhibits above. While most museums worldwide lean heavily toward the ruling classes of the time, here we are exposed to scenes of daily life, as Osaka has always been a culture of the people.

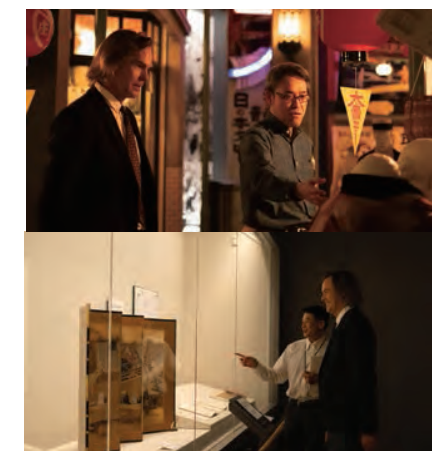
The remaining 7th floor of the permanent exhibition deals with the first fifty years after the dawn of the modern period, until about 1930. As Osaka was largely destroyed during the Second World War, this is considered to be a Golden Age of sorts. Strolling was a popular pastime, and exhibits are constructed in that spirit, as you amble past full-scale replicas of homes, factories, and even Dotonbori’s Kado Theater. With the emphasis on entertainment, it is little wonder Osaka is known as Japan’s gourmet capital, and that a large number of famous comedians hail from here. It is a reminder that Osaka is ultimately a city of the people, one that reflects their fun-loving nature and zest for life.



Osaka Museum of History



	4-1-32, Otemae, Chuo-ku, Osaka 540-0008
	06-6946-5728
	9:30 - 17:00 (last entry: 16:30)
	Tuesdays (if Tuesday a national holiday the museum will close the following day), New Year holidays
	Exit 2 or 9 at Osaka Metro Tanimachi 4-chome Stn
	¥600 yen, University and high-school students: ¥400 yen, Children aged 15 and under go free. Separate admission fees apply for special exhibitions
	www.mus-his.city.osaka.jp/eng/
	twitter @naniwarekihaku



Highlight

Above: Curator at Osaka Museum of History, Funakoshi Mikio, leads the author through Osaka’s early 20th-century entertainment district on the 7th floor. Iwasa Shin-ichi, also a Curator at the museum, points out the boats approaching the newly built Shinmachi pleasure quarters in the Edo-period Naniwa-Sonezaki folding screen.

Reconnecting with nature, past and present

Marvel at this collection including fossils of dinosaurs and large mammals that once roamed the Japanese archipelago

Located in the enormous grounds of Nagai Park that formerly served as a venue during the 2002 FIFA World Cup, the Osaka Museum of Natural History is a homage to Osaka’s natural environment and humankind’s place within it. Indeed, 1,800,000 specimens document vividly the past and present status of Osaka’s ecosystem. Key to the museum’s philosophy is taking great care to contextualize displays and show these critters in their original environments, which is hugely important in an era where increased urbanization has distanced us all from nature. Photography is welcome, and you are even encouraged to touch some of the exhibits. Fittingly, the lush Nagai Botanical Gardens is just next door, where you could easily spend the rest of the day.

Shortly after beginning your journey through the museum, you will stumble on two of the star attractions

which affirm Osaka’s heritage as a maritime city: The skeletons of three massive whales, a finback, humpback and sperm whale respectively, which tragically washed up on the shores of Osaka Bay. Such beaching events are a once-in-a-decade event, we were told, since these whales usually dwell a considerable distance from Japanese waters. It took a back-breaking seven years to prepare the 19-meter-long finback—which would have weighed 10 tons while alive—for display.

More impressive fossils await you in the museum foyer, appropriately named Naumann Hall, after its centerpiece, the prehistoric Naumann’s Elephant, whose footprints have been found in this very park. Believed to have been unique to the Japanese archipelago, its size fell a little short of that of its contemporary up in the north, the woolly mammoth. Here we are transported to the earliest days of



Man’s engagement with Osaka’s natural environment, perhaps as long as 20,000 years ago. Exhibits elucidate this relationship that ancient peoples had with nature based upon recent archaeological discoveries, complete with geographical maps illustrating the changes the area underwent as a result of human settlement and development.

Starting with the ground floor, the exhibit hall named ‘The Natural World Around Us’ delves into the different types of environments found



Opposite page: Visitors will delight at the museum’s impressive fossils including the skeletal models of Desmostylus, comparing the possible physiologies of this prehistoric mammal. Above: “The museum takes care to present specimens in the context of their natural habitat” explains Sakuma Daisuke, curator at Osaka Museum of Natural History. Right: Osaka Museum of Natural History is located in leafy Nagai Park.

in the region, but also includes a thought-provoking look at invasive and endangered species. Among the unwelcome additions to Osaka’s ecosystem are insects and seeds that made easy luggage stowaways, but also maritime life such as shellfish that have attached themselves to the hulls of ships.

The ‘History of the Earth and Life’ hall will undoubtedly be a favorite with most visitors, with its fully reconstructed skeletons of dinosaurs, prehistoric birds and mammals unearthed all over the world. I found myself fascinated by the side-by-side display of two skeletons of a prehistoric, semi-aquatic mammal called *Desmostylus*. As scientists are still unsure how this creature looked, the reconstructed skeletons are based on two differing theories regarding their physiology. One is displayed more like a land creature, the other like an amphibious swimmer, with the skeletons reflecting how these functional differences would have impacted their muscular structures.

The three exhibit rooms upstairs, ‘Evolution of Life,’ ‘Gifts from Nature,’ and ‘The Lives of Living Things,’ again illuminate the place of all living species, including ourselves, in the ecosystem. It maps out our own evolutionary past, with examples of

coevolution between species too. The exhibited skeletons are deceased animals from Tennoji Zoo across town and are still lovingly looked after by the staff.

Finally, there is the museum’s ‘Nature Square,’ displaying an array of colorful bugs and butterflies against photographs of their mountain and river habitats that would be familiar to the Osaka resident. You can find it in the Annex together with the museum shop and special exhibition room.

Osaka Museum of Natural History’s display explanations are not all available in foreign languages, but their friendly, English-speaking staff are keen to answer your burning questions. There is also a strong outreach here and motivation to further education and conservation outside of the museum itself, with a host of educational events like nature hikes, workshops, and botanical tours. In addition, they hold up to 100 meetings and lectures a year. Most admirably, the staff is active in efforts to rescue specimens in disaster-hit areas. This is perhaps the lesson the museum demonstrates so clearly: the interconnectedness of humankind and other species, and shared responsibility we have towards our planet.



Osaka Museum of Natural History



	1-23, Nagai Park, Higashi-Sumiyoshi-ku, Osaka 546-0034
	06-6697-6221
	9:30 - 17:00 (last entry: 16:30)
	Mondays (if Monday a national holiday the museum will close the following day), New Year holidays
	Exit 3 of Osaka Metro Nagai Stn, East Exit of JR Nagai Stn
	¥300 yen, University and high school students: ¥200 yen, Children aged 15 and under go free. Separate admission fees apply for special exhibitions
	www.mus-nh.city.osaka.jp
	Facebook: facebook.com/osakamuseumofnaturalhistory/ Twitter: @osakashizenshi



Highlight

Above: The museum has a dazzling collection of exotic insects and butterflies found across the globe, which not only demonstrates the variety of forms they take but also the adaptations they have evolved according to their habitats.

Life's great and minute mysteries revealed

Kids and adults alike will love the vast array of games and activities here that bring magic to the inner workings of our daily lives and the wider universe

The first thing you'll notice on approaching Osaka Science Museum is its squashed spheroid shape designed to resemble the elliptical orbiting path of the planets (the open-work piece of architecture with the "bunny ears" immediately adjacent is the National Museum of Art). It sits on the island of Nakanoshima, a 3-kilometre, highly pedestrianized stretch of Osaka that has become a destination for leisure and culture, not least for its examples of early Western architecture, excellent hotels and high concentration of museums (see also the Museum of Oriental Ceramics on p. 6, and the forthcoming Nakanoshima Museum of Art, opening 2022 on p. 18). River boat cruises also depart from here.

Built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Osaka City, Osaka Science Museum was envisioned to be a source of inspiration in particular for the next generation of budding

scientists. It sheds light on what the Director calls "the real, the actual, the natural": the surprising properties and peculiarities of those everyday fabrics, plants, and naturally derived chemicals and pharmaceuticals we take for granted every day. After spending time here, perhaps you too will start to see familiar phenomena from a different perspective and find new value in them, whether at home, school, or the workplace.

Kids will have a whale of a time on the museum's second floor, which could be described as an educational playground, where they can enjoy seeing scientific experiments in action by pushing the displays' buttons and manipulating levers. And what better way for kids to learn than through hands-on exhibits? This is exactly the approach of Osaka Science Museum: to bring science to life through interactive experiences. We adults too found ourselves repeatedly entering

play mode, stopping here and there to be pulled into wonder. With over 200 exhibits to explore, one could easily pass half a day here alone. There are not many opportunities in our lives to feel the cool surface of a meteorite, or even compare the weight of an apple on the moon and planets, but on the fourth floor you can do just that. Themed around "The Universe and Discovery," this where most self-guided visits begin, and opens with a large 3D model of the sun with photogenic explanations of its workings.

Right: An example of an old Japanese gold coin known as keicho koban, which was made in the Edo period.



Above: The many hands-on exhibits that make Osaka Science Museum an educational playground for children and adults alike.
Right: The museum's futuristic façade.

The museum is also a celebration of Japan's own scientific achievements and innovations during the twentieth century: an example of which you will encounter as soon as you enter through the main doors. The towering figure of the Gakutensoku (meaning "to learn from the laws of nature") built in 1928 is considered Asia's first robot. Though now controlled by contemporary technology, its cartoonish face and limbs were originally manipulated using compressed air in what was an extraordinary feat for the time. The facility where Dr. Yukawa Hideki did ground-breaking research in mesons (a type of subatomic particle which influences the relationship between protons and electrons), that won him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1949, is also here. One of my favorite displays, of old Japanese daily appliances and electronics, brought a sense of nostalgia and occasionally puzzlement—particularly the toaster and washing machine. I could imagine playing a guessing game with my young daughter as to what some of the more bizarre looking items were. Overall the exhibit information is English friendly, with the smaller details in Japanese only. No matter, as there is a wealth to see and do here, and, what's more, those who want to

dig a bit deeper can rely on the English-language museum guide app.

Osaka Science Museum is also home to Japan's first planetarium—and having been remodeled in 2019, it is now also one of the largest in the world. It is something our guide for the afternoon, General Affairs Planning Section Manager, Yoshioka Katsuki, explains to us as the venue's biggest draw and source of pride to the museum's staff. Presentations change hourly, and from the comfy reclining seats you can wonder at the heavens stretched across the 26.5-meter dome above. Staff members also give lectures here, on topics ranging from complicated astronomical phenomenon, to what planets are currently on view in the night skies for keen urban stargazers. I was taken with the Carl Zeiss II projector, Japan's first, that stands just outside the planetarium hall.

If all of this stimulation of the five senses has built up your appetite, head to the museum café for a refreshing beverage and light meal, and don't forget to swing by the shop for some the museum's unique stationery and books before you leave.



Osaka Science Museum



	4-2-1, Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0005
	06-6444-5656
	9:30 - 17:00 (last entry: 16:30)
	Mondays (if Monday a national holiday the museum will close the following day), exhibition preparation periods, New Year holidays. Check for irregular closures
	Exit 3 of Osaka Metro Higobashi Stn, Exit 2 of Keihan Nakanoshima Line Watanabebashi Stn
	¥400, University and high school students: ¥300, Children aged 15 and under go free. Separate admission fees apply for the Planetarium.
	www.sci-museum.jp
	Twitter: @osaka_kagakukan, @gakugei_osm



Highlight

Above: The shows at Osaka Science Museum's state-of-the-art planetarium, one of the largest in the world, are not currently available in English but are nonetheless spectacular, with comfortable seating. Screenings are 45 minutes long.

Did you know?



Naniwa Palace: Remnants of a Forgotten Capital

Japan’s capital has moved a number of times over the centuries, most famously to Nara, Kyoto and Tokyo. But did you know Osaka is believed to have served as capital not once, but twice? You would be forgiven if you answered “no,” since its time as capital was brief and the mysteries as to Naniwa’s (as Osaka was formerly called) role in Japan’s ancient history are still being unravelled to this day.

It was the Emperor Kotoku (596-654) who established his grand Naniwa Palace here and reigned for nine years until his death. He recognized the value of Osaka’s position as a port during a time when Japan enjoyed friendly diplomatic relations with Tang China, the gateway to the rest of the Asian continent, and which inspired the Taika Reforms (645) to establish centralized imperial rule. One of Japan’s oldest written chronicles, the Nihon Shoki, records the event of the palace burning down in 686, but it would

once again rise to prominence when the Emperor Shomu (701-756) ordered for it to be rebuilt and subsequently moved his capital there in 744. In fact, Emperor Shomu decided to move his capital from Nara (formerly known as Heijo-kyo) no less than three times. The reasons are not well understood, though it is thought that these decisions were triggered by events perceived to be auspicious (or indeed, inauspicious, such as natural disasters and epidemics). We know that the Emperor had set off on a long pilgrimage and a rebellion was brewing in the west, which would be successfully crushed by his own forces. Naniwa served as capital for a mere year, but rather than falling into obscurity, archaeological excavations carried out since the 1950s have confirmed that it actually continued to prosper, with extensive ruins and pottery shards discovered in the Palace’s environs.



Life after death

As an institution dedicated to furthering scientific research, Osaka Museum of Natural History cooperates with Tennoji Zoo on the highly sensitive work of preserving and archiving the remains of their beloved animals from around the world for future posterity. Few visitors perhaps understand, though, just how challenging a task this can be. In 2003, the Curator of Zoology along with two assistants at the museum decided to start the “Naniwa Honehone Dan,” (“hone” meaning “bone”), a group that invites the wider community to take part in the conservation of animal specimens. Out of the museum’s training rooms, staff give hands-on instruction on how to dissect and taxidermize animal carcasses, and how to treat different tissues like skin and bone. While they focus mostly on birds and small mammals, occasionally a porpoise or even a giraffe will show up! Every finished specimen is kept at the museum. Their activities have been enormously successful and more recently, they have begun providing opportunities for children to also participate, fostering a new generation of biologists. You can find special animal bone-themed stationery inspired by the group’s activities at the museum shop.



Be an Archaeologist for the Day!

For Okamura Katsuyuki, archaeology curator at the Administrative Agency for Osaka City Museums, the crown jewel of Osaka Museum of History is the eighth-floor Naniwa Archaeological Resource Centre, made to resemble as closely as possible some of the excavation sites in Osaka including the Naniwa Palace ruins. The impressive space invites children and adults alike to handle real tools and examine recreated architectural features such as wells and ditches, and objects like ceramics that archaeologists have discovered at different depths in and around the actual site. Quiz worksheets (also available in English) lead you through the process as you determine what these items may have been for and how old they might be. There may be no experience quite like it to be had in Japan, so don’t miss it!

Keitakuen Garden

The majestic Keitakuen Garden that borders Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, part of the former Sumitomo family estate, is a must-see if you are in the Tennoji area. This fine example of a forested strolling garden, featuring an elegant teahouse and pavilion, as well as gentle waterfalls, quaint bridges and stepping stones, is a joy to visit the year round. It was designed in 1909 in

by Ogawa Jihei VII (1860-1933), also known as Ueji, one of Japan’s most celebrated gardeners. Most of Ueji’s masterpieces are to be found in neighboring Kyoto, at Heian Jingu Shrine and Murin’an among others.

Open: 9:30am-5pm
Admission ¥150 (free for Osaka Amazing Pass holders)



The Right Snuff

The precise roots of snuff are difficult to identify, but like most forms of tobacco, it began in the Western Hemisphere. People indigenous to the area ground the leaf into a fine powder, which often took on the scent of the wood used as a mortar and pestle. The snuff was then stored in airtight containers, usually made from bone.

Tobacco was introduced to China by the Portuguese by the end of the 16th century. Within 100 years snuff and snuff bottles were an important part of social etiquette

for the Qing Dynasty upper class, eventually spreading to the rest of the country. The bottles made it a tactile experience as well as olfactory. While the custom of taking snuff eventually died out, bottles are still being produced, and the original historic bottles prove popular with museums and collectors.

Japan too took on the custom, and the country’s finest display of snuff bottles can be found at the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.



Osaka’s Tennoji: A Must-Visit

For Shino Masahiro, Director at Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, there are few better ways to spend the day than in the city’s lively Tennoji area.

“If you are coming to Osaka, I wholeheartedly recommend a visit to Tennoji, the home Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts. From Kansai International Airport, a train whisks you here in under an hour.

For overseas visitors, there is no better place than our museum to find fine examples of Japanese art at the level of national treasures. But there is much to see around

here too. Keitakuen Garden is a great place to experience some of the area’s rich history and the changing of the seasons. The cutting-edge, 300-meter-tall Abeno Harukas building, which houses a contemporary art museum and observation deck, as well as Osaka Tennoji Zoo, and the surrounds of Tennoji Park itself have long been popular with local families.

With its charming mix of urban and green spaces, and opportunities to see fabulous works of art, Tennoji has it all!”





Left: "The Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka invited architectural studios worldwide to submit designs for its new site. The deep black facade of Katsuhiko Endo's (Endo Architect and Associates) winning entry has a highly distinctive look. Image courtesy of Osaka City. Architecture by Katsuhiko Endo (Endo Architect and Associates).

The Island of Art

Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka, opening in early 2022, is set to be the latest addition to the city's floating museum hub

Joining the likes of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka Science Museum and the National Museum of Art, Osaka as part of Nakanoshima's thriving cultural ecosystem in 2022 is the eagerly anticipated Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka. With an eclectic collection comprising painting, prints, sculpture and design pieces, with not only the most prominent artistic movements from the late 19th century onwards represented, but also the keen exchange of eastern and western cultures that took place during that time.

Nakanoshima Museum of Art is all the more anticipated having been over three decades in the making. Its story began in 1989, during Osaka's centenary celebrations, with the generous donation of the Yamamoto Hatsujiro collection. The museum is perhaps most proud, however, of the work of pioneering Japanese artists who took their hand to Western style painting (called *Yoga*) during the country's period of rapid modernization, including Kishida Ryusei, Fujishima Takeshi and his student, Saeki Yuzo. The pieces by

Saeki (1898-1928), who was active in Paris in the 20s and heavily influenced by the Fauve painters, represent the largest extant collection of his work in Japan, given his tragic early death at the age of 30. The final missing piece of the jigsaw was the vacated site of Osaka University's Medical School, and it was decided that this location would make the perfect home for the city's new and distinguished collection.

Many would agree there is opportunity to be found in even the most adverse circumstances, and that Nakanoshima Museum of Art's progress has been hampered numerous times, namely by the successive financial crises, has not been seen as a hindrance in itself. After all, it has enabled the museum's curators to further build and refine its collection. Following its closure in 2010, the Suntory Museum entrusted some 18,000 art posters to the museum. It has also amassed impressive holdings of some of the most innovative examples of product design from the last century, particularly of furniture and dining wares; and over 800 pieces from the ground-breaking

Gutai group of artists, in particular by its figurehead, Yoshihara Jiro (1905-1972). The museum also took the time to deliberate its architectural design, soliciting entries from top studios from around the world, tasked with creating an inclusive space "where anyone, both people with and without interest in art museums, can come and find a place to be themselves." The winning design by Katsuhiko Endo (Endo Architect and Associates) is a contemporary, five-storey building with a light-filled atrium and spacious galleries on the fourth and fifth floors. Once finished, it will be hard to miss its highly unusual and eye-catching deep black façade.

You may not have needed another reason to visit Nakanoshima, Osaka's floating center of culture, but one thing is for sure: Nakanoshima Museum of Art will be an unmissable element of your adventure-filled Osaka travel itinerary!

The official opening date of the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka is due to be announced at the time of writing. Updates will be available in Japanese only until the English site is launched.



About the Administrative Agency for Osaka City Museums

Creating a Vibrant Future for Osaka's Museums

In 2019 five of Osaka's world class museums came together to form an independent agency that is the first of its kind in Japan and opens the door to new possibilities for inter-museum collaboration in the country.

Our goals are:

Sharing Osaka's lessons with the world

We take the Osaka brand beyond Osaka. Our museums uncover the wonders of Osaka's rich nature and history, as well as its artistic, scientific and cultural traditions through a variety of activities and thoughtful campaigns.

Contributing to the vibrancy of Osaka

We use our deep knowledge of Osaka to support its development. By reaching out to a wide audience and partnering with both local organizations as well as institutions around the country, our museums contribute to Osaka's vibrant institutional ecosystem and the revitalization of their respective areas.

Creating a centre of learning

We seek to create an unforgettable visitor experience and opportunities for lifelong learning. Our museums endeavor to be an educational hub and center of activity that embraces the curiosity of visitors, fosters creativity and receptibility to new ideas, and is open to all.

Contact

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