



Inspiration for corporate meeting planners

OSAKA

In collaboration with Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau





Welcome to Osaka

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

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

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

Osaka not only provides attractive world-class facilities, but also offers unforgettable experiences for delegates to enjoy. You can be assured your delegates will leave Osaka with many fond memories.

The Osaka Convention and Tourism Bureau (OCTB) is an independent, public interest incorporated foundation established by Osaka Prefectural Government, City of Osaka and the local economic sector to promote Osaka as a premier tourist and convention destination. We will offer every support possible to hold successful and memorable events which delegates will remember for years to come.

Hiroshi Mizohata
President, OCTB





Discover a new world
A ride down the river at Dotonbori

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Inside Osaka

Osaka, West Japan's commercial hub, offers a taste of modern Japan combined with history and culture and one-of-a-kind unique venues

Osaka is the centre and hub of the Kansai area which brings together economy, history and culture to create a region with diverse appeal. Historically, it was once the centre of political and economic activity in Japan, and today contributes over US\$1 trillion in gross regional product. It also has five of Japan's 14 world heritage sites. The city is the birthplace of iconic Japanese products—instant cup noodles and Suntory whisky to name just two—with groups able to host tours at venues such as the Instant Ramen Museum and the Suntory Yamazaki Distillery.

Leading the way

Osaka is a popular choice for

international medical congresses in particular, with the Kansai region home to several leading Japanese universities and research institutes. The city is also leading the way in sectors such as life sciences, environment and new energy, and telecoms.

MICE groups can expect a high level of support for their events, with economic and government bodies committed to working together to produce successful and memorable business events. Meanwhile, visitors to Osaka often touch on how friendly and easy-going the locals are.

The bustling hub of Umeda—one of Japan's significant commercial districts and centred on Osaka-Umeda station, the largest transport hub in Western

A nighttime photograph of Osaka, Japan, showing the city skyline, a large Ferris wheel (Tempozan Ferris wheel) illuminated in green, and a bridge spanning the water. The city lights are reflected in the water.

Bay delights include Tempozan Ferris wheel and an aquarium

Japan—has a host of facilities catering to MICE, including international hotels and the Knowledge Capital Congrès Convention Center, which opened just over three years ago.

Nakanoshima has a number of buildings for the sciences, academia and art, such as the Osaka International Convention Center, Osaka Science Museum and the National Museum of Art, Osaka, which are also used as venues for meetings and events.

The Bay Area is also home to world-class facilities such as International Exhibition Center Osaka (INTEX), alongside an aquarium, shopping centres and a Ferris wheel.

The gateway to West Japan

Osaka's strategic position—located almost in the centre of Japan—means that other parts of the country are more easily reached from Osaka, and it is closer to Tokyo. Some of Japan's 'must-

see' cities and sights—such as Nara, Kobe and Kyoto—can be easily combined with a meeting or incentive event in Osaka, meaning groups can maximise their time. They can also discover West Japan's hidden gems—with destinations such as Wakayama, Mount Koya and Tottori offering tours both varied and unique.

Osaka is also known for its huge pop culture scene. Anime, maid cafés, manga, cosplay—Osaka has it all, with the Nipponbashi and Shinsaibashi districts showcasing pop culture at its best. The city is also renowned for its shopping and its food has deservedly earned a reputation as the (gourmet) food capital of Japan.

A melting pot of tradition and new, Osaka is bidding to host the World Expo 2025, which is expected to attract up to 30 million visitors, there's never been a better time to consider the destination for a MICE event.

Gateway to West Japan

Osaka is home to one of world's most highly developed and efficient transport systems, and is among Japan's most accessible cities

Osaka's position in central Japan and its 24-hour international airport mean the destination is easily accessible both domestically and from abroad.

Osaka has two airports: Kansai International Airport (KIX), designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano and is only 34 minutes by Nankai train from the city centre, and the more centrally located Itami Airport, which only handles domestic flights.

KIX handles 1,200 flights per week connecting to 67 cities in 20 countries. The two main national carriers are Japan Airlines (JAL) and All Nippon Airways (ANA), while the major low-cost Japanese carriers flying to other parts of Asia include Peach Air to Taiwan, Seoul, Hong Kong and China; and Vanilla Air to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and the Philippines. There are also direct flights to Cairns with Jetstar, while Asia is connected by AirAsia X, Air Busan, Air China, Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines, to name a few.

Kansai International Airport unveiled its new International Terminal 2

for low-cost carriers, in January, featuring the first walk-through duty free shop in any Japanese airport, and two restaurants offering Japanese cuisine and Kansai specialities.

New connectivity

In the past year, Hong Kong Airlines has doubled its flights from Hong Kong to Osaka to 14, offering a twice-daily service. Air New Zealand, meanwhile, launched three non-stop return flights per week from Auckland International in November.

For groups travelling from South Korea, Air Busan commenced daily flights between KIX and Daegu

Well connected Kansai International Airport



in December, while Asiana Airlines increased the number of flights between Osaka and Incheon from 21 to 28 per week in November.

Other new routes in the last year include Juneyao Airlines' four flights to and from Nanjing, a twice-weekly service between KIX and Dalian from Tianjin Airlines and increased connections to and from Kuala Lumpur with AirAsia X.

Within Osaka and beyond

The subway, JR Osaka Loop Line, private railways, water bus or cruise—getting around Osaka is fast and efficient, and the city has reliable train connections to major Japanese cities.

Kobe, Kyoto, Nara and Wakayama can all be reached in under an hour. In 90 minutes, groups can be in Hiroshima. Or in just over two hours,



Tokyo, thanks to the efficiency of the *Shinkansen* (bullet train). From Itami Airport, Fukuoka, Kagoshima and Sapporo can also be easily reached. Osaka can be twinned with another Japanese city for an incentive itinerary, or as part of a post-programme conference.





Sky high HEP Five Ferris wheel, Umeda (above); Grand Cube Osaka (below right)

Show stoppers

Modern convention centres, a theme park and high-end international hotels are among the city's top venues for events

Osaka International Convention Center (Grand Cube Osaka)

Located on Nakanoshima island, Osaka International Convention Center, also known as Grand Cube Osaka, opened in 2000. The 12-storey, steel-framed structure is suited to a range of events, including conferences and exhibitions, and has hosted a number of prestigious international conferences, including the G8 Summit in 2008 and a range of medical

congresses. Its largest space caters for up to 2,754 people with 5,900 sqm of meeting space.

Knowledge Capital Congrès Convention Center

Osaka's most accessible large-scale venue, Congrès Convention Center opened in 2013 in the Umekita area and is linked directly to the city's central transport hub, Osaka Station. The venue can host up to 3,000 for events while a series of smaller rooms

cater for conferences of up to 600 or seminars and smaller meetings from 60 to 150.

INTEX

As one of Japan's biggest exhibition spaces—spanning 73,000 sqm—International Exhibition Center Osaka (INTEX) is located in Osaka Nanko Cosmosquare. Its largest hall (one of six) caters for up to 5,180 people for receptions; up to 2,690 guests can be hosted for banquets while smaller meetings can be held in the building's dedicated 300-seat conference hall.

Universal Studios Japan

Outdoor parties, exclusive use of attractions and private dinners

with entertainment are just some of the options available for groups at Universal Studios Japan, which celebrated its 15th anniversary last year. The theme park is also planning to open Super Nintendo World, which it says will feature attractions based on Nintendo titles. Timings have yet to be finalised, but this latest attraction is scheduled to open in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Hotel highlights

Osaka has no shortage of high-end international hotels. One of the newest is the 215-room InterContinental Osaka, located in the Grand Front Osaka retail and business complex. It offers four event spaces, with boardrooms for up to 12 executives and the Hinoki room, catering for up to 486 for receptions.

For a more intimate five-star option, the St. Regis Osaka in Midotsuji Avenue, Osaka's Champs-Élysées, offers 160 rooms and six meeting spaces catering for between 10 to 30 people, while its Astor Ballroom hosts 165 for a conference or 80 for banquets.

For large meetings, Ritz-Carlton Osaka's Grand Ballroom can host up to 1,400 theatre-style or 1,000 for receptions. Located in the Nishi-Umeda district, the hotel offers 292 rooms as well as a treasure trove of artwork. Guests can take a tour to learn more about the 450 pieces, which include a painting collection focusing on 18th and 19th-century European artists.



Destination masterplan

Luxury hotels, a dining and leisure precinct and a conference zone are in the pipeline for 2017 and beyond

Fast forward to 2023, and Osaka's new conference zone is expected to be finished. The first phase already complete—it includes the Knowledge Capital, various state-of-the-art urban functions, along with Congrès Convention Centre at Grand Front Osaka, with a capacity of 1,750—the last prime undeveloped location left in Japan is already slated for a fresh crop of potential venues and hotels. In the next phase, more transformation is expected with urban developments that will create a hub for greenery—pushing the paradigm of nature's role in a city—and innovation.

Hotel openings

Set to open in the summer, Conrad Osaka, will sit on the 33rd to 40th floors of West Nakanoshima Festival Tower, in the business and administrative centre of Osaka. The complex houses an art museum, concert hall, shopping and restaurants.

The hotel will offer 164 rooms, two ballrooms spanning 226 sqm and 188 sqm respectively, a 40 sqm boardroom and a 117 sqm meeting space, which can be split into three rooms. The hotel will also feature a Sky Bar on the 40th

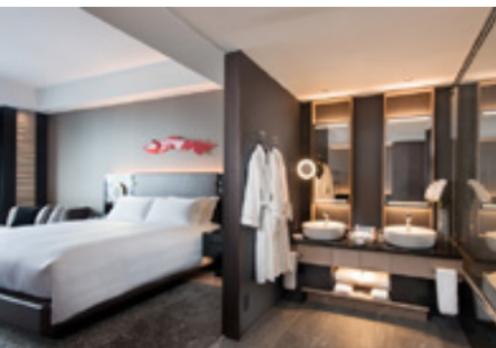


floor with panoramic views of the city.

A combined hotel-temple is planned for 2019, with house-builder Sekisui House and railway and property company Tokyu revealing



New and noted Jo Terrace Osaka (top); Swissôtel Nankai ballroom (below left); Conrad Osaka (below right)



plans last year to build a 350-room hotel on the grounds of Shinshu-otani-ha Namba Betsuin, a temple at Midosuji Boulevard, Osaka's main thoroughfare.

Refurbishments

In October, the 546-room Swissôtel Nankai Osaka unveiled its newly renovated ballroom—at 1,120 sqm, Grand Ballroom Naniwa is the largest such space in southern Osaka and can host up to 1,400 delegates, theatre-style. The refurbishment included new wall coverings, carpeting and paintwork. The new design, which features rich colours and eclectic wall art, aims to create a feeling of opulence. The hotel also recently enhanced its guest rooms, with rooms on the Swiss Executive Club floors receiving a makeover. Its new suites also feature Shoji-style (paper) sliding partitions.

Guest rooms on the eight and ninth floors of the Sheraton Miyako Hotel Osaka underwent refurbishment from January to March this year. The 679-room hotel, located a short walk from Osaka Castle, offers a total of 23 meeting spaces.

The 292-room Ritz-Carlton Osaka, meanwhile is currently renewing its Club Lounge and guest rooms, with renovations expected to finish in June.

Other developments

Due to open in June, Jo Terrace Osaka will become a new entrance to Osaka Castle Park, creating an outdoor space for eating, drinking and shopping, aiming to offer visitors to the park a relaxing place to stop by.

Set to launch in the autumn, a new restaurant is also planned for Osaka's former history museum.

Venues with a difference

From fine-dining restaurants to Noh theatres, Osaka's unique spaces provide a memorable backdrop for events



Iconic locations Osaka Castle (top); Osaka Central Public Hall (below left); Yamamoto Noh Theater (below right)



Yamamoto Noh Theater

Groups can immerse themselves in Noh—one of the world's oldest forms of masked theatre and inscribed as a Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity—at the Yamamoto Noh Theater, the oldest Noh stage in Osaka. Performances are suited to groups of up to 200 and the venue can also be hired on an exclusive basis for meetings and parties, catering for up to 80 seated. Stage tours and workshops, where groups learn about Japanese arts, are available.

GLION Museum

Motor enthusiasts will be well-catered for at GLION, a classic car museum housed in a historic red brick warehouse, with zones dedicated to 'pioneer vintage', 'European vintage' and 'Japanese vintage', and showcasing more than 100 heritage vehicles. Choose from a range of spaces for events, including the steak house for between 300 and 400, Café 1923 for up to 200 and the GLION Showroom for 300.

Garden Oriental

Garden Oriental is an oasis in the city. Opened in 1959 and formerly the official guest house of Osaka City, the venue offers a sophisticated setting for events, framed by expansive lawns and lush gardens. There are several spaces including a ballroom for up to 120 theatre-style or 130 for buffets, while the venue also features a tea ceremony room completely unchanged from when it was first built.

Osaka Castle Nishinomaru Geihinkan

For unbeatable views of Osaka Castle, groups can dine at the exquisite Geihinkan-Osakan Government Guest House. The venue, located on the grounds of Osaka Castle's Nishinomaru Teien Garden, is modelled after the Shiro-shoin of the Nijo Castle's Ninomaru Palace in Kyoto. It opened a restaurant which is available for group bookings in April last year. The fine-dining operation, overseen by grand chef Sho Ishii, offers French-influenced cuisine.

Taiko-En

Located in central Osaka, the historic Taiko-En is a complex of five restaurants and 12 banquet facilities built around a stunning Japanese garden. With a reputation as one of Osaka's best dining destinations, specialising in Japanese and French cuisine, the venue has played host to international royalty and welcomed state leaders during the G8 Summit.

Osaka Central Public Hall

The majority of Osaka's government buildings, museums and libraries are concentrated in the Nakanoshima area. One of the most iconic venues is the neo-renaissance Osaka Central Public Hall—surrounded by trees and water, which is illuminated at night. Spaces include an exhibition room and nine conference spaces, with the largest space—the main hall, catering for up to 810.



See the sights
Kuromon Ichiba
Market; Umeda Sky
Building (right)



Osaka highlights

Explore the city's major sights, food and shopping, and enjoy some stunning views with these two-day city tours

TOUR 1

Day one For a concise introduction to Osaka's culture, sights and sounds, DMC Destination Asia suggests starting with a visit to Yamamoto Noh Theater for a backstage tour. Next, visit Osaka Castle and its museum to learn more about one of Osaka's most iconic sights and enjoy breath-taking views of the city from the observation deck at the top. After lunch, get a taste for

pop culture with a walking tour through Nipponbashi's 'Den Den Town', where groups can immerse themselves in animation, comics and games, with shops selling figures, toys, plastic models, robots and costumes.

In the evening, head to Dotonbori, a popular shopping and entertainment district and one of the city's most popular areas for street food. At night, it is lit by hundreds of neon lights and



TOUR 2

Day one Enjoy a bird's eye view of the city with a helicopter ride over Osaka taking in sights such as Osaka Castle and the bay area. Groups can then whet their appetites with a stroll through the lively Kuromon Ichiba Market in the Namba area—known to locals as 'Osaka's Kitchen'—with all manner of fish, meat and vegetables on display.

After lunch and in-keeping with the food theme, groups can head to Sennichimae Doguyasuji shopping street, which specialises in cooking utensils and kitchen items. For fashion shopping, groups can visit the warehouses around Amerikamura, browsing stores selling vintage clothes and second-hand records.

For late-night eats and drinks, head to the alleyways of Ura Namba, crammed with bars and eateries.

Day two Step back in time at the Osaka Museum of Housing and Living, which houses a model of the entire city during the Edo Period, re-creating buildings and streets that show what life was like in Osaka of old. Walk the entire length of Tenjinbashi-ji Shopping Street, the longest straight shopping street in Japan, browsing its 600-odd shops.

Groups can enjoy stunning views of the city, particularly at sunset, at the Floating Garden Observatory of Umeda Sky Building, before enjoying a leisurely cruise on the city's waterways from Yodoyabashi to Dotonbori, followed by dinner.

mechanised signs, including those of the Glico Running Man and the Kani Doraku crab.

Day two Take a walking tour along the Nakanoshima waterfront, home to a number of late 19th and early 20th century buildings, including Osaka Central Public Hall.

After lunch, groups spend the afternoon at the National Museum of Art, with a collection focused on Japanese art and contemporary works. Or thrill-seekers can head to Universal Studios Japan to experience attractions such as The Wizarding World of Harry Potter and The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man.

Beyond Osaka

When in Osaka, groups can get a taste of West Japan, with sights and other major cities Kyoto, Nara and Kobe closely located

Mount Koya

Despite its proximity to Osaka, the Mount Koya area feels a world away from the bustling city, offering groups a serene and secluded experience. The centre of Shingon Buddhism is located in the mountains of Wakayama Prefecture, around a two-hour, scenic train ride from Osaka.

There are more than 100 temples in the area, a designated World Heritage site, including Kongosan-mai Temple, which was built in the 13th century. While it's an easy day trip from Osaka, groups with more time can opt to stay overnight at a *shukubo* (temple lodging), to fully immerse themselves in a Buddhist experience.

Himeji Castle

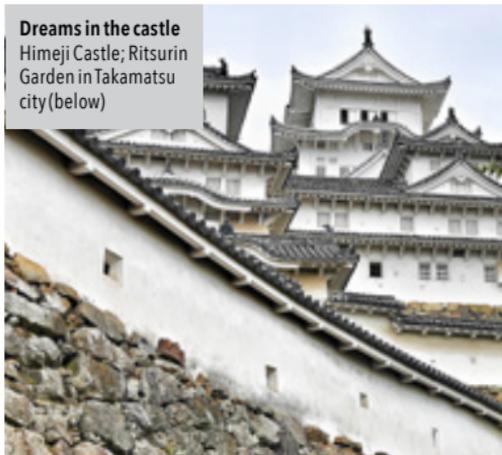
James Kent, sales and marketing manager at DMC The J Team, suggests spending a day at Himeji Castle (Himeji-jo) with a guided tour from a castle expert. One of Japan's most stunning sights, and a Unesco World Heritage site, Himeji-jo is considered the finest surviving example of early 17th century Japanese castle architecture with ancient structures dating back to the beginning of the Shogun period.

The castle reopened in 2015 following a five-year restoration programme. Located in Hyogo

prefecture, Himeji is just 30 minutes from Osaka via the Sanyo Shinkansen. The town has other sights worth seeing, including the temple complex

Dreams in the castle

Himeji Castle; Ritsurin Garden in Takamatsu city (below)



of Engyo-ji at Mount Shosha, which featured in the movie, *The Last Sumurai*, and Koko-en, a Japanese-style garden located next to Himeji-jo.

Tottori

Enjoy some stunning views at the Tottori Sand Dunes near Tottori city—only two-and-a-half hours by train from Osaka. The largest sand dunes in

Japan and part of the Sanin Kaigan National Park, the dunes span more than 16 kilometres along the Sea of Japan's coast and stand two kilometres wide and 50 metres high.

Groups can opt for a tour on the back of a camel or in a horse-drawn carriage, while for adrenaline junkies, the dunes offer activities that are not readily available elsewhere in Japan,

such as paragliding over the dunes or sandboarding. Groups can also take a tour of Tottori city, viewing the remains of Tottori Castle and visit Tottori City Historical Museum.

Takamatsu

The castle town of Takamatsu is the main gateway to Shikoku Island and houses the impressive Ritsurin Koen, one of the most famous historical gardens in Japan, which dates from the Edo Period.

Also of note is the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, in the 20th-century sculptor's former studio.

For lunch, try the local speciality—*Sanuki udon* (noodle soup), with varieties including *kake* (green onions) or *bukkake* (served in soy sauce seasoning).



Walking adventures
Mount Koya (top);
Tottori sand dunes



Team spirit

Take team-building to the next level with a closer look at Osaka's food, its landmarks, locals and Japanese culture

Tempt the taste buds

With mouth-watering displays of plastic food on show in many of the city's restaurant windows, groups can try creating their own versions.

At Design Pocket in the Namba area, groups can enjoy a plastic food-making experience, creating sushi samples, rice balls or exquisite plastic desserts with no less than 20 toppings.

For a taste of the real thing, opt for a

hands-on sushi cooking programme, with a chef giving a step-by-step guide. Groups can also try their hand at making *takoyaki* (octopus balls) and *okonomiyaki* (savoury pancake)—two of the city's most famous dishes.

For larger groups, Sakurako Ogawara, senior account manager, MCI Tokyo office, says that hotels can arrange a live food-station where delegates can view the art of cooking



DIY delicious
Takoyaki (main);
Kimono-fitting
(below)

A local assistant can guide groups around the area, and also help them to interact with locals, but the emphasis is on teamwork and problem-solving.

Connect with culture

Get to grips with the ancient Japanese art of *taiko* drumming—groups can enjoy a 90-minute hands-on experience that includes a 60-minute practice session followed by a 30-minute professional performance.

Other activities based on Japanese culture include flower arranging, tea ceremonies and kimono fittings. Groups can also immerse themselves in the art of *tate-do*—Japanese sword-fighting—with a demonstration from Samurai instructors organised through the Japan Tate-do Association. The experience includes a 10-minute Samurai performance; participants can then don kimonos or change into a Ninja costume and practice the basics of *tate-do*, learning one-on-one sword fighting, with a chance at the end to act out a film scene with added sound effects.

Osakan-style, with one example being a live tuna filleting demonstration, alongside the chance to try bluefin tuna. Smaller groups can view similar demonstrations within a restaurant environment.

Take in iconic sights

For a fast and furious introduction to the city and its major landmarks, DMC Destination Asia suggests groups team up and hit the streets as part of an 'Amazing Race Osaka', with the first clue leading them to one of Osaka's most iconic sights. Once there, they must take a group photo, and will then be given their next clue.



A relaxing note

Meeting planners can include a “spa day” for their group as visits to nearby *onsen* resorts are viable day-trip incentives from Osaka

Arima Onsen is one of the oldest *onsen* (hot spring) towns in Japan, founded 1,300 years ago. Located in a mountain setting, it’s just 45 minutes by bus from Osaka, and its compact size, with meandering cobblestone streets, means it can be easily explored on

foot. There are two public bathhouses available or groups can enjoy a more intimate *onsen* setting, staying in one of the town’s many *ryokan*, a traditional Japanese-style inn. Arima Onsen’s healing waters are famed for their ‘gold’ (*kinsen*) and ‘silver’ (*ginsen*) baths, the former has water that is



coloured yellow-brown by iron and salt while the latter is colourless, containing carbonated radium water, helping to rejuvenate tired muscles and keeping the skin moisturised.

Minoh Onsen Spa Garden is also within striking distance of Osaka, located at the mouth of Meiji-no-Mori Minoh Quasi-National Park, a 30-minute bus from Umeda. There are four baths, including an outdoor one, offering views of the Minoh mountains, and you can take a stroll from the forests to Katsuoji Temple.

Warm welcome Katsuoji Temple is a sanctuary for the senses



Around a two-hour train ride from Osaka, the resort town of Shirahama in Wakayama Prefecture is renowned for its hot springs, with **Saki-no-yu** onsen considered to be one of the oldest in Japan. Groups can enjoy views at the open-air (*rotenburo*) baths looking out onto the Pacific Ocean, with foot baths and indoor public baths also available.

If time permits, consider an overnight stay at **Tamatsukuri Onsen**, known as 'the bath of the gods'.

Located in Matsue City in Shimane, it's around a three-hour journey from Osaka. Groups can base themselves at a number of upscale traditional Japanese inns located on both sides of the Tamayu River. There are two hot spring foot baths located along the river, too.

Hotel options

InterContinental Osaka's All That Spa offers a range of treatments from body massages and facials to head spas. There are seven spa suites with Japanese design, and a dedicated head spa room. All That Spa-branded products feature ingredients from organic plants, such as Japanese mint, yuzu and shell ginger. Over at **St Regis Osaka's Iridium Spa**, enjoy the Japanese décor inspired by French influences, with treatments provided by therapists from the Sothys Institut de Beauté in Paris.



Gourmet delights

From street food and casual eateries to high-end restaurants and late-night bars, Osaka has dining and drinking options to suit all groups

Osaka is known as the 'nation's kitchen' and revered for its *kuidaore* 'eat until you drop' culture—best exemplified in the Dotonbori district, a mecca for street food, where groups can experience Osaka's best-known delicacies.

Wander along the myriad stalls specialising in three of Osaka's most famous foods: *okonomiyaki*, a grilled savoury pizza-pancake; *takoyaki*, a

ball-shaped snack made of batter, minced or diced octopus, ginger and onion; and *kushikatsu*, deep-fried meat and vegetable skewers.

Dotonbori is also home to a branch of *Matsusakagyu Yakiniku M*, famed for its Japanese-style BBQ. This branch has a private room for up to 20.

For a welcome reception, dinner at *The Cosmopolitan*, located in Grand Front Osaka, with a variety of steak and



Buoyant boulevard
Osaka's Dotonbori is known for its cuisine

are cheaper in Osaka. "For example, 'fugu' [globefish] is an expensive delicacy in Tokyo—it is still a delicacy in Osaka, but more accessible in price and crab is also the same," she says.

Those seeking fine dining will be spoiled for choice—more restaurants in Osaka are awarded Michelin stars than in Paris. The latest Michelin Guide for the destination was released in October, with eight new restaurants in Osaka awarded one star, including **Pierre**, located on the 20th floor of the InterContinental Osaka, and which has stunning city views. Focusing on French cuisine, it seats up to 84 people and there is also a private dining room for 12.

Other notable Michelin eateries include **Ishii**, which specialises in Yakitori dishes. For a taste of *kaiseki* (course-based dining), the intimate 20-seater **Masuda** won't disappoint.

seafood dishes, is a great choice.

The entrance is dominated by 'the cosmopolitan lady', a large painting by Masashi Ozawa, while the dining room features a 10-seat private dining area adjacent to the open kitchen.

Ako Mitani, sales manager at Meltwater Japan, recommends **Ganko** for a *washoku* experience—traditional Japanese cuisine based on down-to-earth ingredients such as rice and miso. Ganko's menu features homemade tofu, vegetables grown by contracted farmers and seasonal fish sourced direct from fisheries.

She adds that in comparison to Tokyo, groups will find some foods

After dark

Osaka is known as the birthplace of jazz in Japan, with the Umeda area housing several venues where groups can enjoy music late into the night. For late-night bites, head to the side streets of trendy Ura Namba.

A must-taste is Yamazaki whisky, Suntory's flagship whisky, made in Osaka. There are several dedicated Suntory Yamazaki-owned bars including **Whisky Dining** and **Whisky Bottle Bar Suntory Whisky House**.

Japanese craft beer is also trending in Osaka—head to restaurant/bar **Garage 39**, which has 16 brews on tap, and which can seat up to 70 people.

Ancient Arts
Immerse yourself
in Osaka's
historical culture



Event showcase

International organisations are rewarding staff with Osaka incentive trips

Osaka's dining, shopping and sights were just some of the highlights for these two incentive trips:

1 Transamerica at Taiko-En

Last summer, insurance company Transamerica hosted its Transamerica Direct Client Conference in Japan in 2016, organised by the J Team DMC.

The event saw 25 of the brand's top-selling brokers from around the US and their partners spend two nights

each in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. A gala dinner was hosted during the stay in Osaka at Taiko-En on August 10, featuring live cooking of tempura and yakitori as part of the meal, mini fireworks and a single brush-stroke dragon painter.

"The setting of Taiko-En, combined with the fireworks, Ninja, and enchanting dragon art created an enriching ending to our stay in Osaka," says Amy Ingalls, senior meeting and event planner at Transamerica.



WSB in Osaka

Financial services marketing business WSB, headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, hosts a team-building incentive every year for qualifying employees and their families. Its 2016 Japan Super Trip included visits to Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo, with a total of 4,600 people travelling in two groups back-to-back, from August 31 to September 7 and from September 4 to 11.

For the Osaka leg, a welcome dinner was hosted at the New Otani Osaka Hotel and Rihga Royal Osaka, with excursions to Osaka Castle and the Dotonbori shopping area. Guests also

enjoyed a one-day tour to Kyoto to view the Golden Pavilion.

The incentive was organised by Vietnam-based Phu Bao Tours. Its assistant director of events, June Nguyen, says: "Since the client was a big group, everybody enjoyed doing different things in Osaka. Some loved the variety of the cuisine, others the shopping and nightlife. We chose Osaka as the first stop because it offers access to many international flights and the city's infrastructure is highly organised and efficient."

Festival Calendar

January - June

Strawberry picking season

March/April

Cherry Blossom season

March

Grand Sumo Tournament

Held over two weeks in the Osaka

Prefectural Gymnasium

July

Tenjin Matsuri festival

Over a thousand-year history including the Mikoshi parade of portable shrines

November

Danjiri Matsuri Festival

The city has about 80 ornately designed Danjiri, or carts, which are used in the festival at the Osaka Castle.

December

Hikari-Renaissance

An illumination art festival of lights in Nakanoshima and Midosuji

Summer fun
Tenjin Matsuri
festival



Why choose Osaka?



Petrina Goh

Business development manager, CWT Meetings & Events.

"This year, Osaka seems to be the Japanese city of choice as the focus moves away from Tokyo. Event planners are spoiled for choice in terms of hotels for small- to large-scale events and the city also offers fantastic shopping and food streets such as Shinsaibashi and Dotonbori, as well as the key tourist attractions of Osaka Castle and Universal Studios Japan."

James Kent

Sales and marketing manager, The J Team



"Osaka is an attractive destination for meetings and events—it is accessible with its two airports and the Shin Osaka Shinkansen, while the city has an energetic and vibrant side, as well as being warm and welcoming. It's also the home of great innovators, such as Panasonic and Nissin cup noodles, and has a wide choice of restaurants and bars once the day's formalities are over."



Simon Er

General manager, business events & marketing, Global Travel

"Osaka has a unique blend of modernity and tradition that portrays the attractiveness of Japan. It has modern infrastructure and amenities supported by strong traditional and cultural offerings such as entertainment, historical venues and food. There is also a wide range of hotels with both modern and 'ryokan-type' rooms."

Joycelyn Hoh

Director, Singapore, BCD Meetings & Events



"Osaka is a distinctly unique location. It has a mix of charm and warmth with excellent infrastructure and facilities that make it ideal for meetings and incentives. With the city's mix of cosmopolitan sophistication and old-world charm, one can expect a wonderfully mixed experience like no other, with an array of distinctive precincts ranging from hip and artistic to the traditional."

Osaka MICE Business Alliance

Get the latest MICE developments in Osaka when you're organising events in OCTB's one-stop service

The Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau provides a one stop service—supported by our network the MICE Business Alliance—for MICE Organisers, and can offer the following support:

- To help select appropriate venues for your event
- To introduce local travel agents, DMC/PCOs, and other related service providers
- To coordinate site inspections of venues and hotels for key decision makers
- To provide promotional materials such as tourist guides and maps
- To propose ideas for social and hands-on experience programmes
- To offer suggestions for entertainment and performance during your event

About the MICE Business Alliance

We at the OCTB launched the “Osaka MICE Business Alliance” to create a network that brings to together local industry, government and various partners in West Japan, across the wide range of fields involved in the MICE business to cooperate, collaborate, and attract MICE projects, in order to be able to provide MICE organisers with the best service available locally.

The Alliance strives to develop new MICE products to raise Osaka's charm as a MICE destination and to disseminate it to both inside and outside, with the aim that more MICE projects will be held in Osaka, contributing to regional economic activity, and the development of Osaka as a whole.

MICE Promotion Department

Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau

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