

Chikamatsu Monzaemon, a major figure in the development of "kamigata" (the Osaka-Kyoto region) culture, describes bridges in his works with great effect. Such works are valuable resources that allow us to get an idea of how the bridges looked in those days.

Bridges also act as the settings of some literary works. Yasunari Kawabata based a novel entitled "Soribashi" on Sori Bridge, which is located in the grounds of the Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine.



Yasunari Kawabata



Sori Bridge of Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine

From cherry-blossom viewing in the spring and enjoying cool breezes in the summer to moon viewing in the autumn and snow viewing in the winter, since ancient times people have gathered at bridges for a host of reasons, and used them as places of rest and celebration.

Even now, during festivals and special events, they are thronged with large numbers of people, and overflow with the same energy seen in former times.

Festivals and Events Involving Bridges

Funaborikomi Parade Date: End of June – early July Place: Nakanoshima – Dotombori River

At this traditional event, which takes place at the time of a Kabuki performance, the actors introduce themselves and encourage people to attend the performance from a boat. You can cheer for your favorite Kabuki actor from one of the bridges on the Dotombori or Higashi-Yokobori Rivers.



Funaborikomi Parade

Tenjin Festival Date: 25 July (Funatogyo) Place: Nakanoshima and Okawa River

This ranks alongside Kyoto's Gion Festival and Tokyo's Kanda Festival as one of Japan's "3 Great Festivals". It is a water-based event that boasts a thousand-year history. Many bridges, such as Tenjin Bridge, Temma Bridge, and Sakuranamiya Bridge, offer great vantage points for viewing the Funatogyo procession and the fireworks display.



Tenjin Festival

Naniwa Yodogawa Fireworks Festival Date: Early August Place: Banks of Yodo River

This fireworks display was started in 1939 through the efforts of local residents. Since then, its name has been changed to the "Naniwa Yodogawa Fireworks Display" and now fills the summer night sky with around 20,000 fireworks. It is held on the banks of the Yodo River near Juso-Ohashi Bridge.



Fireworks illuminating the night sky

Osaka Hikari Renaissance Date: December Place: Nakanoshima

This festival of light, which started in 2003, has already become an established winter event. It is visited by more than one million people. The bridges of Nakanoshima are also illuminated, and provide good vantage points for enjoying the displays.



Hikari Renaissance

Bridges of Ancient and Medieval History

The history of Osaka's bridges can be traced back to the reign of Emperor Nintoku during the Kofun Period.

After that, in the Nara, Heian, Kamakura, and Sengoku Periods, bridges frequently appeared in history books and legends. Many of these bridges are shrouded in mystery.



Osaka under Emperor Nintoku (around 5th century)

Bridges of Recent History

When Toyotomi Hideyoshi built Osaka Castle, Higashi-Yokobori and Nishi-Yokobori Rivers were constructed, and then in the Edo Period, Dotombori River was constructed. This led to the creation of a large number of bridges, and gave rise to the expression "The 808 Bridges of Naniwa (Osaka)".



"Osaka Temma Matsuri" (Osaka Tenma Festival) Property of Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library

Bridges of the Modern Age

The Meiji Restoration saw an influx of western culture, and the start of a switch from wooden bridges to iron ones.

Throughout the Taisho and Showa Periods, with the development of streetcars and the promotion of the first city planning project, many of the famous bridges that enrich our lives today with their elegance were constructed.



Korai Bridge (Osaka's first iron bridge, 1870) Naniwa Hanai Higashibori Teikyo Zu (Drawing of Naniwa Hanai Higashibori Iron Bridge) Property of Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library

Present-Day Bridges

After World War II, with the development of motorization and bridge-building techniques, long-span bridges incorporating cutting-edge technology were constructed over the Yodo and Yamato Rivers and in the bay area.

In recent years, there have been activities aimed at improving the landscape, such as recognizing and illuminating representative bridges.



Naniwa-Ohashi Bridge and Minato-Ohashi Bridge, Bay Area

Design Competitions

As part of a Dotombori River waterfront improvement project, design competitions were held in which design ideas for the construction of Ebisu and Ukiwa Bridges were received from the general public.

Ebisu Bridge

Citizens were asked, through a questionnaire, about the kind of bridge they wanted, and then a design competition was held. A design that incorporated both the theater-like quality of a piazza on a bridge and barrier-free considerations was selected.



Ebisu Bridge: Winner of Best Design Award

Ukiwa Bridge

A verdant design that conveys the image of a floating field was selected. Suggestions for the name of the bridge were also received from the general public, and a name that aptly expressed the design concept was selected – "Ukiwa" (floating garden).



Ukiwa Bridge: Winner of Best Design Award

The Functions of Bridges Looking underneath bridges

Bridges do not just allow people and vehicles to cross from one side of a river to the other. They also support city functions by conveying lifelines such as water, gas, power, and telephone lines.



Underside of Tenjin Bridge

The next time you go under a bridge, have a look for yourself at its underside.



Sendanmaki Bridge and River Bus



03 Akagawa Temporary Bridge
This bicycle/pedestrian bridge uses part of the JR Tokei Freight Line. The floor and railings are made of wood.

04 Nagara Bridge
This bridge is famous as the scene of the "Leg and of the Human Sacrifice", which has been passed down since former times. It is illuminated at night.

05 Shin-Yodogawa-Ohashi Bridge
The construction of this bridge was timed to coincide with the opening of the Shinjuku and the Japan World Exposition. The east side was completed in 1984 and the west side was completed in 1988.

06 Juso-Ohashi Bridge
With its imposing series of five arches, this bridge rhythmically stretches across the majestic Yodo River. It was constructed in 1932.

07 Hamanakatsu Bridge
Originally employed in a railway line, opened in 1874, these iron girders were later converted for use in a road bridge. They are thought to be the oldest existing rail-way girders in Japan.

08 Yodogawa-Ohashi Bridge
The central part of this bridge, which takes Route 2 across the Yodo River, is a Warren deck truss bridge. It was constructed in 1926.

09 Kanazakigawa Bridge
This arch bridge carries the Hanshin Expressway across the Kanazaki River at its downstream end. For boats traveling up the Yodo River, it performs the role of a navigable entranceway.

10 Denpo-Ohashi Bridge
The central part of this bridge, which takes Route 13 across the Yodo River, is a five-arch bridge. It was constructed in 1942.

11 Sotogai Bridge
Whale bones are used in the railings of this bridge. It is said that the villagers of Kisu-Tsuzi shaved the whale bones in order to honor the spirits of dead whales.

Bridge-lovers Corner
This and that about Osaka's Bridges Naniwa 808 Bridges

Tsuruno Bridge
Japan's oldest bridge that appears in historical records is in Osaka!

It is thought that the earliest reference to a bridge in Japanese history is the following, which appears in the Chronicles of Japan: "A bridge was constructed in a place called 'Ikaino-tsu'. This bridge was called 'Obase', 'Igaitsu', the location of this 'Obase', is believed to be in the vicinity of modern-day Ikuno Ward. The place names 'Ikaino' and 'Obase' are still used in this area, and a stone monument and history monument have been erected at the 'Former Site of Tsuruno Bridge', which is said to have been the site of the bridge in Igaitsu.

Stone monument at "Former Site of Tsuruno Bridge"

Bridge Cleaning Bridges are precious assets of local citizens

Osaka's bridges are precious assets of its citizens and local areas.

Cleaning activities led by local people help not only to maintain the beauty and popularity of bridges but also to invigorate local areas.

Nakanoshima Garden Bridge **Suisho Bridge**

Nishiki Bridge **Korai Bridge**
Totobori River **Ote Bridge**
Hirano Bridge **Ote Bridge**

Hommachi Bridge **Higashi-Yokobori River**

Bridges that are being cleaned to date
Cleaning of Nakanoshima Garden Bridge

Monuments Pursuing the origins of bridges

At the ends of bridges that have a close relationship with history, culture, or the lives of citizens, monuments indicating the origins of the bridges have been erected.

Reflecting on the history of Osaka through bridges makes it possible to reaffirm the relationship between bridges and people.

Why not take a walking tour of the city's bridges with this map as a guide!

Naniwa Bridge
This monument is decorated with Edo Period color prints and Meiji Period photographs, which allow the visitor to get a glimpse of the bridge as it was in former times.

Kizugawa Bridge
Descriptions of the changes that have occurred in the bridge since the Edo Period together with color print illustrations help visitors appreciate the bridge's history.