



# Osaka

This affluent Japanese city serves up a cornucopia of exquisite traditions and cuisines, with pockets of kookiness which show that it does not take itself too seriously.

BY CARLA AVOLIO

## QUIRK SEEKERS

**SLEEP** The Japanese art of onsen is raised to mind-boggling heights at Spa World ([spaworld.co.jp](http://spaworld.co.jp)), a hot spring theme park featuring European and Asian-themed baths, as well as cosy guest rooms.

**BUY** Get your fix of character-themed products – like kitchenware with motifs of the cat Totoro – from Donguri Republic (*Namba Walk 5-4, Tel: 81 6 6213 8508*), a store dedicated to Studio Ghibli's animated films.

**EAT** Slurp up instant noodles you've made at The Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum ([instantramen-museum.jp](http://instantramen-museum.jp); above).

**EXPERIENCE** Play modern and retro games in a neon-lit room while sipping on a beer at futuristic video game bar Space Station (*2-13-3 Nishishinsaibashi, Tel: 81 80 4151 6336*).

## CULTURE VULTURES

**SLEEP** For a high-end traditional experience, The Ritz Carlton, Osaka's ([ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)) Japanese Suites are fitted with woven tatami mats, futon mattresses, a stone bath, and Shoji screens.

**BUY** Head to one of Japan's most exquisite department stores, Takashimaya ([takashimaya.co.jp](http://takashimaya.co.jp)). Get fitted for a yukata (summer kimono) with the help of in-store translators.

**NOSH** Dine on seafood among the locals at Geppa (*1-4-25 Dojima, Tel: 81 6 6346 4234*) in old geisha district, Kitashinchi. In kappo style, sit at counters facing the chefs.

**EXPERIENCE** Osaka is the birthplace of bunraku, so there's no better place to take in this traditional form of puppetry than at the National Bunraku Theatre ([www.ntj.jac.go.jp](http://www.ntj.jac.go.jp); below).



## FOODIES

**SLEEP** InterContinental Osaka ([ihg.com](http://ihg.com)) boasts sleek interiors and a farm-to-table restaurant, Noka, which offers a made-to-order buffet (above).

**BUY** Sharpen your culinary skills by purchasing some of the finest, hammer-forged kitchen blades from Tower Knives Osaka ([towerknives.com](http://towerknives.com)). They're crafted in the famous sword-making district of Sakai.

**EAT** Try the unusual delicacy of chicken sashimi in the safe culinary hands of Osaka's only Michelin-star yakitori (grilled skewers of meats and vegetables) restaurant, Ayamuya (*5-17-39 Fukushima, Tel: 81 6 6455 7270*).

**EXPERIENCE** Watch takoyaki (octopus-filled balls) being made, pair them with champagne, or make plastic replicas at the Dotombori Konamon Museum (*Chuwa Daiichi Bldg, 1-6-12 Dotombori, Tel: 81 6 6214 6678*).



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