

Sky Rising in Yusuvara: #3 Snapshots from Kansai

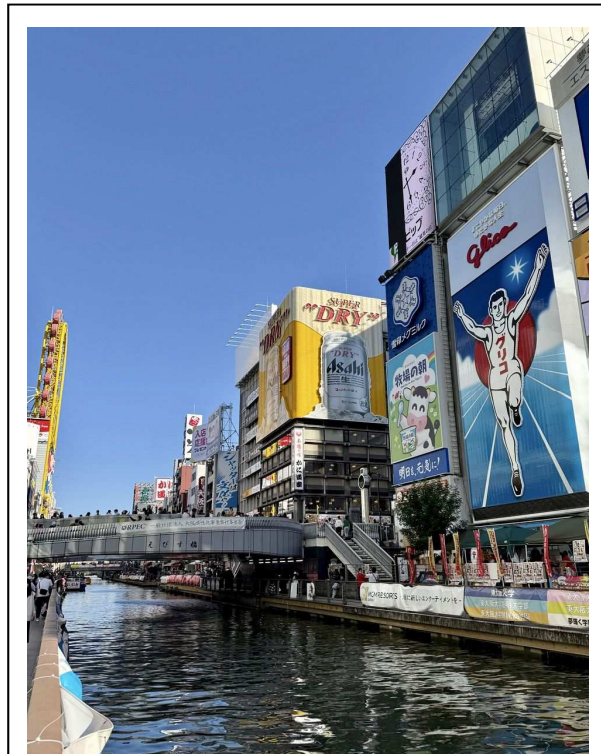
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My first excursion outside of Shikoku was to the Kansai region. The trip began on Halloween night and lasted a few days past the weekend. My girlfriend was visiting from America at the time, so we had the opportunity to go on this trip together. Before leaving on our night bus to Osaka, we had some time to explore around Kochi City. Despite it only being a Thursday night, the city was lively and full of people dressed up in Halloween costumes. A group of about six high school boys, all wearing full-body yellow spandex suits dressed up as Pikachu, even tried practicing their English with me! Albeit unexpected, it was certainly a humorous conversation.

While in Osaka, we of course visited many of the famous tourist attractions, like Osaka Castle, Kuromon Ichiba Market, and Dotonbori. However, our interactions with the locals were arguably more memorable. For instance, when we were struggling to find our way around one of the stations, a sympathetic man noticed how confused we looked and kindly gave us directions. While at the convenient stores, locals would sometimes strike up conversations with us. I even found it funny that while exploring America-mura, a salesman kept trying to sell me on an overpriced pair of American-styled jeans, as if I was not American and I did not have the ability to buy them at a much cheaper price. In addition to those interactions, we also had the opportunity to meet with my Japanese friend from university, who is actually from Kansai. He brought his girlfriend too, and they showed us all around the city. They generously treated us to their favorite sea-food restaurant for lunch, took us to various arcades, and showed us some impressive sites, like the Namba Yasaka Shrine. It was interesting to get a local's perspective on Osaka, and on the Kansai region in general. Not only that, it was also great being able to see my friend because we share a sort of reverse experience. He moved from Japan to America and me the opposite.

Our excursion to Kansai also included a day-trip to Nara, and the number of deer we saw was astonishing! I had never seen so many deer in my life, until visiting Nara Park. In California, while the deer are larger in size, they can be hard to find. Not only are they scared of humans, but you can only normally see them in regions with dense forests. Conversely, the deer in Nara were quite the opposite, especially if you had the deer crackers. My girlfriend often got surrounded by a herd of hungry deer that bit and head-butted her if she did not feed them the crackers right away. Even when she tried to get away from them, they just chased after her.

My time in Kansai was simultaneously both exhilarating and tranquil, and it led to the formation of some great memories. Although I was unable to visit Kyoto, that just now means that I will have to visit the Kinki region again someday. Hopefully, I will get that chance!



An afternoon snapshot of Dotonbori. Walking through the area was like swimming against a wave of people!