

Osaka, Japan



Report made by

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General information of the city

- **Name of the city and country:** Osaka, Japan
- **Description:** The second largest metropolitan area in Japan, Osaka is a bustling city that blends old and new in a chaotically charming way. It is also known for its tasty and affordable cuisine and for its steam-punk vibes around Dotonbori canal and Shinsekai district.

Transportation accessibility

- Subway is 100% wheelchair accessible with help from the staff (tell staff near platform access gates your destination and transfers, if any, and you're all set, no need to reserve or to get there in advance; the process is very fast) and has reserved seating for disabled and elderly people. Anyone needing help to get to the platform or to board the train can ask for assistance (assistance will also be waiting when getting off).

- Never found an elevator that didn't work, though sometimes it's difficult to locate them in bigger stations as they tend to be inside nearby buildings across the street (e.g. office buildings). Ask around if in trouble (I suggest at nearby stores), as people are usually kind and eager to help.
- Tactile pavement in all subway stations both on aisles, entrances and platforms.
- Bus is also 100% accessible with manual ramps deployed by the driver.
- Accessible taxis need to be specifically booked. There are a few small companies that operate in the center of Osaka, such as Hakobune or Aino.
- Train and monorail stations are also 100% wheelchair accessible (with the aforementioned staff assistance) and have tactile pavement, however wheelchair spots and assistance need to be booked in advance for long distance trips (e.g. Shinkansen).
- Most train stations also have accessible toilets and most of them have sockets that may be useful to charge a mobility device.
- Tramway is mostly inaccessible, but you can get mostly anywhere by subway, train, monorail or, otherwise, by bus.
- Next stops are announced both on trains, subways, monorail and buses, but only few bus stations have loudspeakers for incoming bus line announcements.
- **Score: 5/5.** Even though it's not perfect, comparing it to other cities, transportation accessibility in Osaka is, without a doubt, in the top tier, as most of the time you don't need to plan in advance for accessibility.

Streets accessibility

- Streets in Osaka are mainly flat.
- Sidewalks on main streets are mostly wide and well maintained.
- All main streets have tactile pavement (along all the street, not just on crossings) and curb cuts -most at nearly zero level-.
- There are no sidewalks on side streets, although no tactile pavement on side streets either.
- All traffic lights have a button to trigger beeping sounds for people with visual impairments, although there are crossings with narrower streets without traffic lights.
- There are not many cycling lanes and bicycles sometimes use the sidewalk.
- There's not much difference between the city center and other areas. Accessibility is mostly good everywhere in the city.
- In touristic areas there are some streets reserved only for pedestrians.

- Aside from train and subway stations, some public areas -specially in parks- also have accessible toilets.
- To cross some wider streets, sometimes there are high passes. Most of them have elevators, although sometimes they are difficult to locate as they are inside regular buildings attached to the passes and cannot be seen from the street.
- **Score: 5/5.** Not perfect, as there are some crossings in smaller streets without tactile pavement, but still one of the most accessible in the world.

Restaurants & shops

- Only about 40-50% of shops and restaurant entrances are wheelchair accessible. Some of them are zero level and some others have ramps.
- All ramps are different in size and length, some of them are quite steep.
- The inside of small shops and restaurants is usually really narrow and many traditional bars have only high counters.
- Nevertheless, as there are so many -even in areas where restaurant and shop accessibility may not be good-, if you look around a bit, you will always find an accessible place nearby.
- Shopping malls are a safe bet and they also have traditional food.
- Outside shopping malls, not many restaurants have accessible toilets.
- **Score: 3/5.** Not really good, but the sheer amount of options compensates a little bit.

Hotels & accommodation

- Not many hotels in Osaka have wheelchair accessible rooms per se.
- In general, hotels -even if they mostly have elevators- tend to have really small regular rooms (wheelchairs may get to the bed, but not be able to move around the room or even to turn around). Only suite style rooms may be big enough to move around.
- Most of them also have a step -between 10 and 30cm- separating the room from the ensuite toilet.
- Toilets are extremely small.
- If you need an accessible room, the easiest way is to look for international hotel chains and to always check accessibility details (always ask about steps in the room and to get to the room and about width of doorways) calling the hotel before booking -information on their website may not be trustworthy due to different criteria on accessibility-.

- Problems with entrances for smaller hotels are similar to the ones described in the previous section.
 - Traditional hotels -aside from single steps separating areas and rooms- usually have tatami flooring and wheelchairs are not usually allowed on them.
 - AirBnB apartments, which is another accommodation option, have similar problems to hotels so always contact the owner before booking.
 - Overall, as accessibility in hotels is bad, try to secure accommodation in advance.
- **Score: 2/5.** Not many options, but, still, there are some.

Tourist attractions accessibility

- In Osaka, all main tourist attractions are wheelchair accessible on the outside -some of the best touristic places are exclusively outdoors, as they are city areas (e.g. Dotonbori or Shinsekai) or galleries (near Namba or Umeda), instead of specific buildings-.
 - As for buildings, all skyscrapers are wheelchair accessible, but, for ferris wheel enthusiasts, only the port ferris wheel is.
 - The Osaka castle is wheelchair accessible and the surrounding park too, although there are some steep slopes where some manual wheelchair users may need help.
 - In other outdoor settings, the only problem that may be found is around some temples where gravel is quite common.
 - Also, the inside of temples have many inaccessible areas due to many steps, but temples are not Osaka's main attraction and, besides, even without being able to always get inside, they are still worth a visit (especially, Shitennoji), if you're not going to the nearby Kyoto or Nara.
- **Score: 4/5.** Quite good, except for the inside in some traditional buildings and gravel in some temples.

Getting there

- Osaka has two airports, one international airport (Kansai International Airport, KIX) that connects to many cities in Asia and some in Europe and North America and an airport with mostly domestic flights (Itami, ITM) where international passengers coming from transfers in Tokyo arrive.
- Kansai airport has easy city center access to either Namba or Umeda stations via accessible trains that have high frequency (it's a 45 minute ride approximately).
- If train doesn't work for you, there are also buses that go to the city center, though accessibility to board the bus with your wheelchair needs to be booked in advance ([Accessibility Information for Kansai airport buses](#)).

- Itami has an accessible monorail station that connects to the main subway line, the red Midosuji line that goes to the city center either in Namba or Umeda (see [transportation section](#) for more details on transportation accessibility).
 - You can also get to Osaka from other cities in Japan by Shinkansen (bullet train), which is also wheelchair accessible (wheelchair seating needs to be booked in advance by phone or at the station when buying the tickets).
 - The bullet train station, Shin-Osaka, is also directly connected to the subway's main line (Midosuji red line).
 - Finally, if you get to Osaka via one of its ferry terminals, all have nearby accessible subway stations that can get you to the city center with one transfer maximum.
- **Score: 5/5.** No need to plan in advance for accessible transportation, as all arrivals have accessible and high-frequency options.

Overall accessibility score

- **Score:** 24/30. Overall **4.0/5 stars**.
- **Summary:** Osaka is a really accessible destination. The only thing that needs real planning before going is accommodation and, once you're there, maybe, some specific restaurant options, all the rest is mostly accessible.