Neon Alleys by Night, a Floating Gate at Dawn — A 7-Day Osaka & Hiroshima Itinerary

Seven days across Japan's Kansai and Chugoku regions — Osaka's Dotonbori canal lit up in neon and its centuries-old street-food markets, a day trip to Himeji Castle, the country's best-preserved original fortress, then a bullet train to Hiroshima for the Peace Memorial Park and a ferry to Miyajima, where a vermilion torii gate seems to float on the tide. A stop in the canal town of Kurashiki closes the loop back to Osaka, with real hotels, a real regional rail pass, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION	BEST TIME TO GO	FROM
7 Days	**Late March-May or October-November** cherry blossoms in spring or crisp foliage in autumn, with mild, dry weather; avoid the humid rainy season in June and the muggy peak of July-August	**$850 USD / person** for 2 people, incl. 6 nights' lodging, the 5-day Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass, and entry to Himeji Castle and the Peace Memorial Museum

Day 1 Osaka Arrival & Dotonbori's Neon Canal

A first evening along the canal that gave Osaka its nightlife reputation, with the Glico Man sign glowing over the water.

Airport Transfer — Kansai Airport (KIX) to Namba

~40 minutes · Nankai Rapi:t Limited Express ~$10 USD one-way

The Nankai Rapi:t is the fastest link from Kansai International Airport into central Osaka, running direct to Namba Station in the heart of the Dotonbori district; a taxi takes about the same time but runs closer to $60-$70 USD.

Dotonbori Canal Walk & the Glico Man Sign

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

Osaka's most famous strip runs along a narrow canal lined with oversized, illuminated signs — a giant mechanical crab, a blowfish, and the running Glico Man that has watched over the water since 1935 — with a canal boat cruise available for a closer look at the lights.

Dinner — Okonomiyaki Mizuno

~1 hour · ~$18-25 USD / person

A Dotonbori institution since 1945 and a Michelin Bib Gourmand pick, Mizuno griddles its okonomiyaki with a signature yam batter that keeps the savory pancake unusually light — expect a line, and call ahead for a reservation.

Okonomiyaki Mizuno · https://www.mizuno-osaka.com/

Overnight — Hotel Monterey Osaka

From $140-180 USD / night, for 2 people

A European-styled hotel a few minutes' walk from Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi's covered shopping arcade, with a rooftop terrace and marble-floored lobby that belie its mid-range rates.

Hotel Monterey Osaka · https://www.hotelmonterey.co.jp/en/osaka/

Day 2 Osaka Castle & the Kuromon Market

A feudal-era castle rebuilt in concrete and gold leaf, then a street-food crawl through Osaka's 190-year-old kitchen.

Osaka Castle & Park

~2.5 hours, self-guided · museum ~$6 USD / person, park free

First built by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1583 and rebuilt several times since, the castle's gold-trimmed keep now houses a museum on the warlord who briefly unified Japan, with a top-floor observation deck over the surrounding moat and plum orchard.

Kuromon Ichiba Market Food Crawl

~2 hours, self-guided · ~$20-30 USD / person in snacks

A covered market running since 1822, its stalls grilling scallops, wagyu skewers, and whole king crab legs to eat standing up in the aisle — Osaka's unofficial kitchen and one of the best places in the city to graze rather than sit down to a single meal.

Namba Yasaka Shrine's Lion-Head Stage

~30 minutes, self-guided · free

A small neighborhood shrine best known for its 12-meter lion-head stage, its gaping mouth doubling as a good-luck photo stop a short walk from the market.

Overnight — Hotel Monterey Osaka

From $140-180 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night in the same Dotonbori-area rooms.

Day 3 Himeji Castle Day Trip

Japan's largest surviving original castle, its white-plastered walls earning it the nickname White Heron Castle.

Train — Osaka to Himeji

~35-55 minutes · JR Special Rapid ~$14 USD, or Shinkansen ~$25 USD one-way

The JR Special Rapid service runs direct from Osaka Station to Himeji in under an hour for the price of a regular ticket; the Sanyo Shinkansen cuts the ride to about 30 minutes for a premium, and is covered by the 5-day Kansai-Hiroshima Area Pass activated today.

Himeji Castle & Koko-en Garden

~2.5 hours, self-guided · castle ~$17 USD / person, garden ~$2.50 USD / person

A UNESCO World Heritage site and the best-preserved original castle keep in Japan, its steep wooden stairways and maze-like approach designed to slow down attacking samurai; the adjoining Koko-en, nine connected Edo-period gardens, makes an easy add-on next door.

Dinner — Namba, on your own

~1.5 hours · $15-30 USD / person

Back in Osaka by early evening, with Namba's dense grid of izakayas, ramen counters, and takoyaki stalls left open to wander without a reservation.

Overnight — Sheraton Grand Hiroshima Hotel

From $180-230 USD / night, for 2 people

Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter

~2.5 hours, self-guided · Ohara Museum of Art ~$12 USD / person

A merchant town built around a willow-lined canal once used to ship rice and cotton, its white-walled warehouses now holding cafes, craft shops, and the Ohara Museum of Art — Japan's first Western art museum, with a surprising collection of Monet, El Greco, and Picasso.

Bullet Train — Okayama to Shin-Osaka

~45 minutes · Sanyo Shinkansen, covered by the rail pass

The last leg of the pass's coverage, arriving back in Osaka by early evening.

Overnight — Hotel Monterey Osaka

From $140-180 USD / night, for 2 people

A final night back in the same Dotonbori-area rooms.

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