

Osaka, Japan's Most Dangerous City Safe Compared to USA?

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Exploring Tokyo: As statistics show from Odomon Japan Statistics (stats-japan.com), Osaka has the highest crime rate in Japan both as a city and a prefecture with more rapes and murders than any other city. While this may come to a surprise to foreigners it certainly does not surprise the locals who are all uniformly weary of a certain location in Osaka: Nishinari-ku, a district which is notorious for being the most dangerous place in the city, serving as a hide-out for criminals, hangout for the Yakuza (Japanese Mafia) and home to Japan's largest Red Light District (Tobita).

Nishinari is home to an overwhelming population of homeless people who reside in Kamagasaki, a district of Nishinari-ku. 10,000 of Osaka's 15,000 homeless population reside within Kamagasaki, meaning nearly 10% of Nishinari-ku's population is homeless. Since 1961 twenty three riots have occurred in Kamagasaki, most of them minor, and most of them involving said homeless population. In an effort to escape this stigma the city renamed Kamagasaki to Airin-chiku in 1966.

Compounding the homeless problem is a significant presence of the Japanese Mafia (Yakuza); the Japan National Police Agency's recent 2012 white paper (npa.go.jp/hakusyo/h22/honbun/pdf/22p02000.pdf) confirms the presence of the Sakaume-gumi and the Azuma-gumi, two yakuza gangs that are headquartered in Nishinari-ku.

"From these impressions Osaka and Nishinari seem like a very dangerous place. However, records from the Osaka Prefectural Police (police.pref.osaka.jp) paint a different picture. In 2007 Osaka Prefecture had approximately 79 murders out of approximately 10,000,000 people, which equates to .79 for each 100,000. And 109 rapes out of 10,000,000 people which equates to .1 for each 100,000 respectively", Exploring Tokyo's Osaka Correspondent, Sasaki expounds.

"In order to maintain perspective, Detroit has 4.3 murders for every 100,000 and 5.7 rapes. To continue this comparison we choose America's safest city according to MSNBC: Plano, Texas", he continued.

"Plano Texas: two murders for every 100,000 and twenty rapes for every 100,000 respectively. Right away you can see the contrast with Osaka Prefecture, with .79 mur-

ders and .1 rapes per 100,000", he revealed.

"This is all well and good but how about the crime level in Nishinari, Japan's hot bed for crime? Out of the 130,000 occupants of Nishinari-ku, in 2011 According to Osaka Prefectural Police records there were: 11 murders, 84 robberies, 1 mugging, 36 auto thefts and 11 pockets picked. Out of Plano Texas' 256,000 occupants there were 4 murders, 1,237 robberies and 386 cases of motor auto theft. Aside from murders, despite the high homeless population, presence of gangsters, criminals and houses of ill repute, Nishinari-ku has less crime than one of America's safest cities, and the City of Osaka as a whole has less crime in all departments"

"Japan is one of the safest countries in the world; so safe that the Japanese themselves are over sensitive in their perception of crime. If they think Osaka is bad they should take a trip to Juarez, Mexico", Sasaki stated.

"Tourists should feel no apprehension about visiting Osaka. It is a fantastic city with so much to offer travelers. It is the culinary and entertainment capital of Japan. In fact, Osaka is directly connected to three of the top cities to visit: Kobe, Kyoto and Nara, all within 30 minutes of each other by train."

This Summer Exploring Tokyo Travel Guide is branching out from Tokyo and will be doing reviews, articles and travel guides for the Kansai region of Japan, which includes: Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and Kobe.

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