

DMO TOKYO Marunouchi/DMO Osaka Umeda Joint Tour

The gateway to Tokyo and Osaka at the leading edge of urban development in Japan
An enjoyable two-day tour providing insight into urban development in Marunouchi and Umeda

DMO TOKYO Marunouchi has planned and carried out MICE excursion tours held in Marunouchi, including tours of the Japanese countryside and Minami-Boso in Chiba, as well as tours of Sawara, a town in Chiba where urban development is driven on a concept of fermentation. This marks the first one-night, two-day monitoring tour of Marunouchi and Osaka Umeda that has been held with DMO Osaka Umeda.

Thirteen foreign-born businesspersons residing in Tokyo took part in the tour as monitors. These monitors came from a broad range of industries, from journalists to persons involved in the human resources, hotel, and trade industries.

Participants gathered at the DMO TOKYO Marunouchi Marketing Suite on the morning of Thursday, November 2 at 9:30 AM to be given a slide presentation on urban development in Marunouchi following a general orientation.



The first topic focused on the history of Marunouchi as a business center.

The site that was once lined with mansions owned by feudal lords during the Edo period (1603-1867) was sold off to the private sector by the government following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. This tract of land was purchased by Mitsubishi and transformed into a modern business center on par with those in Europe

and the United States. Tour participants were given an insight into the spirit driving this urban development project, which aspired to serve as a 'model town' for others to follow, something that has been passed on from generation to generation at Mitsubishi, while continually redeveloping the urban environment to meet the needs of the times and society.



The second topic of conversation focused on the significant transformation the area has undergone over the past 20 years.

Where streets were once lined with banks and securities firms and the lobbies of corporate headquarters, where people would disappear over the weekend, the area has since been transformed into a bustling metropolis even on weekends, with footpaths widened and cobbled to encourage pedestrian traffic, and street trees replanted to provide shade for a spectacular array of shops, cafes, and restaurants.



The third topic covered the use of public spaces, innovative facilities aimed at driving new business creation, and the installation of fully-featured shared floor spaces in support of a diversity in working styles as part

of new urban development initiatives amidst a period of sweeping changes in lifestyles and business styles following the COVID-19 pandemic.



(Otemachi Building 7F Shared Lounge)

Following the 50-minute presentation, the floor was opened to a lively Q&A session featuring questions on topics such as sustainability measures in urban development.

Following the presentation in the conference room, participants went outside to walk the streets of Marunouchi.

After leaving their luggage on the bus, tour participants joined a tour led by a guide steeped in knowledge about the architecture of the area.



The first port of call was a slit park developed in the space between two old buildings. The space to the rear of the buildings, which had been used until recently as a parking space for bicycles, had been remodeled into a new communication space. The space, decorated by artists, was a new discovery for those on the tour, and took them by surprise.



Moving from the slit park to the adjacent building. This is the Shin-Tokyo Building, built in the Showa Era amidst Japan's rapid economic boom. Tour participants were treated to an architecturally valuable space that retained a retro flavor, with a lavish display of marble and art covering the floor and walls of the passageway that intersects the first floor of the building.



The tour continued north along Nakadori Avenue, and they took in an explanation of the redevelopment

work done on the Tokyo Station building on Gyoko Avenue before arriving at the terrace of Marunouchi House on the seventh floor of the Shin-Marunouchi Building.



This terrace offers spectacular panoramic views of the Tokyo Station building, where redevelopment work was completed in 2012.

Everyone could hardly restrain themselves from taking pictures of the surrounding scenery from every angle.



The tour group descended from the Shin-Marunouchi Building to ground level, and proceeded further north along Nakadori Avenue. The group was given a description of the Otemori “forest” that suddenly comes into view amidst the urban surroundings, before proceeding to the Otemachi Building.



This building has undergone extensive renovations, and is unique in that it is divided into small subdivisions, a characteristic that is leveraged to serve as an office space for startups and various incubation facilities.

Participants toured the building, and were given direct presentations from representatives of Finolab on the fourth floor and Inspired.Lab on the sixth floor.



The Marunouchi city walk tour ended with a visit to Sky Lab, which is located on top of the Otemachi

Building. This open space affords workers in and around the building the chance to take a break, chat, or work on something under the blue sky. This space offers a relaxing respite from the hustle and bustle. The eastern corner features a garden managed by workers in the building, which offered an original blend of fresh herb tea featuring lemon grass and rosemary picked from the garden.





The tour group then boarded the bus for Tokyo Station, and departed for Osaka on the 12:48 Shinkansen bullet train.



Lunch boxes picked up from the Tokyo Station Hotel before boarding were provided inside the Shinkansen. This lunch box, which was primarily made from local ingredients and food produce, proved a big hit among the tour participants.



At 3:15 PM, everyone arrived safely at Shin-Osaka Station. Tour participants were greeted by staff from DMO Osaka Umeda, and promptly boarded the tour bus.



Immediately after checking in at the Hilton Hotel in front of Osaka Station, the group traveled to the presentation room showcasing the development of the “Umekita 2nd Project” on the middle floors of Grand Front Osaka.



After viewing a film in the theater room giving an overview of the “Umekita 2nd Project” development, the group proceeded to the model room.

The view from the room window provided a birds-eye view, overlooking the expansive “Umekita 2nd Project” development site currently under construction. Detailed plans for the site were outlined in front of the model. Many of the tour participants were quite impressed, and expressed a great deal of interest in the plan to place such a major green park right in front of Osaka Station, the central station in the area, which prompted a number of questions.





After touring the presentation room, the group moved to the lower floors of Grand Front Osaka. In addition to shops and restaurants, lab functions, a feature of the innovation site design, were concentrated here. The group paid a visit to the Knowledge Lab, which offers the opportunity to get hands-on with new technologies and ideas, backed by industry, government, and academic bodies. The group received an explanation from a representative.



The Osaka Food Lab Spanish Fair reception happened to be nearby, where tour participants indulged in a light meal before closing out the day.

(Day 2)

The tour group congregated at the lobby of the hotel at 10:00 AM the following morning. The tour group passed through the recently redeveloped underground shopping area on the south side of Osaka Station, paid a visit to the Ohatsu-Tenjin Shrine, famous for being the setting of the traditional Japanese play “Sonezaki Shinju (Love Suicides at Sonezaki)”, and followed this up with a stroll around the retro Showa-era (1926-1989) stylings of the surrounding area. Tour participants enjoyed the contrast between the lively, traditional shopping streets that Osaka is renowned for, immediately next to an area where the cutting-edge development is rapidly progressing.



The group then moved to Twin Towers South, a building complex featuring office space and department stores that opened in 2021.

The group was directed to the office floor, where they were given an explanation on the origins of the name “Umeda”, and the development efforts and changes that have taken place in the vicinity of Osaka Station over the past decade.



The group then took the elevator up to the 12th floor to Welco, a shared space for tenant workers. Complete with an expansive and luxurious living space, napping rooms, and a gym space, these amenities provided a convincing argument that this space would “attract workers back to the office” in line with the times.





Lunch was served on the ninth floor of the building, in a private room in the Hanshin Food Hall food court serving up many Osaka favorites. Tour participants picked from a number of menu options featuring Osaka specialties, including okonomiyaki, and enjoyed lunch together.



After lunch, it was on to the final itinerary item on the tour. Tour participants were guided through Nakazaki-cho, located next to the Umeda district. This popular area is teeming with chic cafes and variety stores recently opened by young people, while still retaining its distinct vintage Showa townscape flavor. The group enjoyed wandering through the streets while getting a quick coffee takeout from a local cafe.



The tour concluded with a gathering at the entrance to Shin-Umeda Shokudogai, located at the foot of Osaka Station. The tour ended a bit after 3:00 PM, and the group disbanded.

While the schedule proved too tight to properly convey each attraction in detail, the tour monitors were able to learn about the past, present, and future of urban development in Tokyo Marunouchi and Osaka Umeda, two major urban centers representing both east and west Japan, as well as establish a feel for where urban development in Japan is heading over the two days.