



Dotonbori: Eat Until You Are Bankrupt



That's actually the slogan of South Osaka's fabulous Dotonbori entertainment district, famous throughout Japan. Turn a corner off a wide, vehicle-choked boulevard crossing the Dotonbori River, and you are blinded by the district's bright lights, shown at left. A lot goes on at ground level and up and down the stairs and elevators, but Yoshi and I, as always, prefer the quaint alleys, such as above. More like the days of our youth. Unlike Tokyo, Osaka makes little concession to foreign visitors. English-language signs are few and far between. Like Chicago, Osaka has a gangster reputation, partially deserved. Many merchants think *yakuza* are good for business. More dangerous in my mind than gangsters is the blowfish offered on the menu at the restaurant advertised in light blue characters at above left. The chef must be extensively trained and licensed. Otherwise, the customer dies in 20 minutes. I don't eat blowfish. The emperor is banned by law from eating it. That's good enough for me.

Jackson Sellers, Lake Forest, California, May 2006