

Asakusabashi and the Kanda River

The Kanda River flows for approximately 25 kilometers from Mitaka, in western Tokyo, to connect with the Sumida River in the Asakusabashi area near the Ryogoku Bridge. In addition to travel, shipping and fishing, the partially man-made Kanda River provided water for the moat of Edo Castle and drinking water for city residents.

The Asakusabashi area was once home to a thriving geisha quarter. Pleasure boats would anchor along the canal; some enterprising anglers would fish on the river and fry up their catch on board for hungry customers. Other patrons would visit local restaurants to get a bite to eat, have something to drink, and enjoy the company and culture of the geisha quarter. These days the area is quite peaceful, and the boats docked near Yanagi Bridge are mostly small sightseeing vessels that transport passengers up and down the Sumida River.

Asakusa Bridge was originally one of the main points of entry into Edo and was the location of the Asakusa Mitsuke, one of 36 lookout points constructed to guard Edo Castle; samurai would inspect travelers there. The many wholesale warehouses in the area were once frequented by peddlers who sold goods to visitors headed for Sensoji Temple. Edo-dori, the main thoroughfare paralleling the Sumida River, was full of doll and toy shops, some of which are still in business today.