

## **Hiroshima, City of Water**

Built on the delta of the Ota River and facing the Seto Inland Sea, Hiroshima has always been a city of water. The city is literally shaped by the river's six channels, which divide central Hiroshima into five main islets, knitted together by more than 80 bridges. Even the name "Hiroshima" means "wide island." From Hiroshima's beginnings as a port city to its water taxis and the ceremonial boats of the Sumiyoshi Festival, the rivers are as much a part of city life as the streets.

Hiroshima has shaped the surrounding waterways to its advantage as well, with extensive land reclamation projects dating back to the Edo period (1603–1867). These have significantly altered the coastline and progressively expanded the city. Tides are strong in the Seto Inland Sea, meaning that even without the benefits of modern technology, Hiroshima's engineers could simply build sea walls at low tide and fill soil in behind them to create more land.

Since the end of World War II, Hiroshima has focused on making its rivers, which were already an important part of the city's economy, into recreational spaces, too. As part of the city's reconstruction efforts, public parks were placed along riverbanks, with established walkways and bicycle paths. Cafes and restaurants have replaced old storehouses, turning the riverbanks into relaxed spaces where people can sit and enjoy the movement of the city.