Tokushima City is made up of a number of small islands formed by rivers, streams and canals. As a result the city became known as a “City of Water”. Over one hundred waterways flow through the greater city area, including the Yoshino River, one of Japan’s three great rivers. A number of bridges have been built over the years to help people get around while the course of the rivers has been altered to prevent flooding.

In the days before road transport, waterways were vital in connecting the southern reaches of Tokushima Prefecture with the rest of Japan. Goods were transported along these streams and rivers in both directions while steam ferries connected Kaifu with Osaka, a journey that took almost twenty-four hours. The automobile and road construction has had a significant impact on day-to-day life in Tokushima Prefecture, just as land reclamation and flood prevention has changed the natural course of the rivers and the appearance of the coast.
Kougen-ji River 興源寺川

The Kougen-ji River squeezes between Suketo-3-chome and 4-chome and under small Suketo Bridge. Though it has since been reduced to little more than a ditch the construction work on the Yoshino River, the Kougen-ji was once much wider, and had much heavier water flow passing through it. Horsetail grass used to pop up on both sides of the river come autumn, which children would come to pick. In the summer, flowers would open their yellow petals in the morning sun, glowing tangerine later in the day as they slide their petals back shut against the high afternoon sun. The shallow parts of the river along the bank were
home to reeds swaying with the Yoshino breeze, while the deeper parts in the river’s middle were where the boats could always be found coming and going – trawling for fish, carrying rice and vegetables in from Itano, transporting goods such as firewood, the sound of their oars to be heard even at night.

Now the boys who used to plunge into the water from the small Suketo Bridge are long gone, and the river can only be called a river in name. All that remains of its lush plant life are the bulrushes that crop up in summer.
There had been a ferry crossing at this point since the Hansei period, but
it did not operate in strong winds and heavy rain. People often had to make a significant detour from Sumiyoshi to Fukushima, and then from there to Suketo to cross the river. A wooden toll bridge was built towards the end of the Meiji era, run by a resident of Josan-jima who worshipped at Jinmei Shrine, hence the bridge’s name. The toll was one *sen* per person and two *sen* for a horse and cart. In 1919, the bridge was donated to Tokushima City, and was then rebuilt the next year. It then went on to become a concrete bridge in 1966.
Ooka River  大岡川

The river between Sumiyoshi and Josan-jima is called Ookagawa. In the Hansei period, the feudal lord of Tokushima resided in Edo (Tokyo) every other year to fulfil the requirements of the sankin kotai (a policy introduced by Toyotomi Hideyoshi to control the daimyo). Ships passed
under this bridge as they transported the feudal procession to Osaka, en route to Edo. It became known as ‘the Ooka High Bridge’ because it was built high enough for the feudal lord’s ships to pass beneath it. Lush pine trees on both banks were reflected in the water and white herons flew overhead. The Jinmei Bridge erected at the end of the Meiji period was a toll bridge, but it failed to receive enough traffic to even cover the costs of repairs. The few pines that remain on the south bank now stand face to face with willows on the expanded north bank, across the narrowed Ooka.
Suketo Bridge 助任橋

The Suketo Bridge used to be where the current New Suketo Bridge stands; it was first moved to its current location in 1847. At the time it was a granite bridge, 90 metres long and four metres wide, divided into north and south halves from the blue-stone base supporting it at its centre. The longest stone bridge in the country at the time, it also became known as ‘ear-cut bridge’ because of the sharp pain people felt as the cold wind blew on their ears while crossing the bridge.

A row of pines stood along the Josanjima bank from Suketo Bridge to
Jinmei Bridge, and just outside from there was a lumberyard. Through the growths of reeds on the river shore, white sailboats silently passed by. Later, the river would become narrowed by land reclamation, and in 1938 the bridge was rebuilt with reinforced concrete. Time has since passed by, and cars now speed along the bridge without pausing to consider the beauty in the river’s surface.
Suketo River  助任川

The Sumiyoshi side of the juncture between the Ooka and Suketo Rivers was called Itaba ("Board Place"), because of how it was used to store lumber during the Hansei period. The top of the bank was covered in bushes, and people would come to gather shellfish when the tide was out. As the river was clean and wide, the pupils of Terashima Elementary School held swimming lessons there during the summer, while Tomida Elementary School students practiced swimming down in the river’s
south, where the Suketo River and Shinmachi River met.
Akui Konnyaku Bridge　鮎喰こんにゃく橋

Konnyaku is a gelatinous food made from devil’s tongue starch which is popular in Japan. This wooden bridge was named after konnyaku because
it was a little unsteady and used to wobble as people walked across it.

One autumn evening, a boy saw a woman standing at the end of the bridge. She had thin eyes and a prim face, but no fox’s tail. Despite a lack of wind, the boy saw the tall grass swish and sway, and when he looked back up, the woman had vanished. Upon reaching home and telling his grandfather and grandmother his story, the two craned their necks in puzzlement and drawled in the local dialect, “Odd – there shouldn’t be any foxes ‘round these parts.”
Akui Toll Bridge 鮎喰の賃取り橋

The Kami-Akui Bridge was originally a wooden bridge, the construction of which was privately funded by indigo merchant Harimaya Kumagorou in order to transport the indigo made in Myodo-gun and Myozai-gun. Made entirely of wood from top to bottom, its planks clattered as people passed over them, but the bridge was so convenient that it saw plenty of traffic regardless. It was originally without a toll, but one was eventually introduced in order to cover the cost of flood repairs; locals, however,
remained exempt. A small toll booth stood near the bank on the west side, and when the river started to flood, laborers would carry it up to the top of the bank, along with the bridge’s planks.
Uwani boats

Uwani boats were small freight boats that could carry a load of sen-gan (3750kg). They resembled Takase flatboats, but they were a little shorter and had flatter bottoms, so they could make their way north through the shallow mountain rivers. Hirata boats, meanwhile, were somewhat longer
boats used for going up and down the Yoshino River. Takase and Hirata boats disappeared once trucks became a common form of transport, but a handful of survivors of the sturdily built Uwani boats could still be seen along the river as late as the 1960s.
Houses for samurai were established on the south side of Sumiyoshi when Tokushima Castle was built. The bridge was built to allow the samurai easy access to the castle – they would cross the Sumiyoshi Bridge, then the Fukushima Bridge, and then from there it was off to the castle. It is recorded as being 41.5 metres long and 3.6 metres wide. A new wooden bridge was built in 1881, this one had a raised middle section that became a diving spot for children looking to swim and play in the water in summer. The water was clean and the river bed was sandy, making it a great place to go clamming. This lasted on into the Taisho period and
beyond, until 1936, when the bridge was rebuilt with reinforced concrete; its guardrail posts shaped like artillery shells, the new bridge was a symbol of the bellicose mood of the early Showa period. It went on to stand through the war and post-war eras, but by 1991 it was starting to deteriorate and was replaced with the current Sumiyoshi Bridge.
The Pine Tree at Kitahama

There was a big pine tree at the west end of Tokuzumi Bridge, which is between central Tokushima-cho and Sumiyoshi. The big pine trunk leaned toward the river like it was jumping in, its branches nearly touching the water at high tide, pine needles scattering on the river surface on windy days. The bank of the river was on the east side of central Tokushima-cho. The old name of this riverside was called “Kitahama” – north shore. The many pine trees standing along the bank had been there since the Hansei period, when the feudal lord’s retainers
would use the trees to hang banners to welcome the lord’s return or to see him off as his boat made its way down the river. The big pine sticking out toward the river has since withered and was cut down years ago. At first it felt as if a gaping hole had opened up at that west end of Tokuzumi Bridge, but as time passed by and people busied themselves with their day-to-day lives, they became used to it. One of the classic scenes of Japan’s natural beauty: white sand, green pines. It all keeps changing – throughout the entire country, and under our very noses.
**Terashima River**  寺島川

West of Kachidoki Bridge, this canal branches off from Shinmachi River and flows westward until it rejoins the Shinmachi again just east of Jinshin Bridge. Though this river is small, it was used to float lumber, and cargo boat traffic was frequent.
The Mitsuai Bridge  三ツ合橋

The Mitsuai Bridge was preceded by a toll bridge called Suzue Bridge that was built by Tamiya resident Sakichi Suzue in 1917. From Maegawa (present day 5-chome, Minami-Maegawa) it split off into two directions: A bridge built toward Dekijima-honcho (present day 4-chome, Dekijima-honcho) and a bridge to Shimonose, Tamiya-son (present day 2-chome, Minami-Tamiya). To cross this bridge, it cost 5 rin for a person (students and children under six were free), one sen for a passengerless rickshaw, one sen and five rin for a rickshaw plus passenger, and one sen and five rin for a cow or ox together with its owner. Later on, Tokushima
City got the controlling rights to the bridge and had it rebuilt with reinforced concrete in 1932, starting by erecting the bridge’s base in the middle of the Shinmachi River and then building bridges from Tamiya, Maegawa and Dekijima connecting to it. The bridge got its name from this merger of the three bridges: Mitsuai Bridge, “Meeting-of-Three Bridge”. The bridge deteriorated with the flow of the river and time, so it was eventually remodeled in 1975.
Yoshino Bridge 吉野橋

In 1924, the Yoshino Bridge was built between Yoshino-honcho in Shimo-Suketo and Nishino, Suketo-Nishimachi. The Yoshino Bridge was a simple wooden bridge, 3.6 metres wide, but it was much more convenient than the ferry for reaching the Tamiya Kaido, one of the city’s main thoroughfares. People were so pleased with the completion of the bridge that they spent hours pounding mochi for the traditional mochi-throwing ceremony for the bridge’s opening celebrations.
Kamo-mura became a town in 1933. It came to be called Kamo-cho, Myoudo-gun, but it still remained a mostly agricultural area. The area around Tenjin Bridge had only sparse houses, surrounded by rice paddies and vegetable fields.
Nyuta Bridge 入田橋

Nyuta-cho was divided into north and south halves by the Akui River, and it was the Nyuta Bridge that connected the two. A simple, shabby bridge made of wood, it was washed away every time the river flooded. A concrete submersible bridge was built in 1951, but it became unusable during floods and became a real problem for people. Later, in 1980, the present-day Kasuga Bridge was completed, and traffic between the north and south was no longer an issue.

A giant camphor tree stood at the ruins of the Kasuga Shrine at the bridge’s south end. Twenty metres high and eight metres around, it was
said to be 500 years old and look like an entire small forest in itself. It was eventually designated a Natural Monument of Tokushima City. The bridge has changed, as has the appearance of Nyuta’s north and south, but that giant camphor watching the Akui River and the clouds above Mt. Kinji for these five hundred years remains the same.
Shin River  新川

Years ago, the drainage was bad around Tokushima City's Kaminokata area. The area would always flood after rain, damaging crops and keeping people from getting about town. About one hundred years ago, the townspeople decided after much discussion to open a waterway to drain the surplus water into the Sonoze River; it was this waterway that became "Shinkawa" or "the new river." The Sonoze, Tatara and Katsuura Rivers were intricately linked at different points, and to make matters worse, the dams were weak, so people always had to worry about flooding whenever the area received heavy rain; after finishing construction on the
Shin River, though, the various river ways were organised and the banks reinforced. With flooding no longer a problem, the town of Nishi-Shinhama located between the Kamioono and Shimoono Bridges came to be filled with houses. The wooden bridge behind Ryuou Shrine changed to an iron bridge, and the dragonflies and tiny fish which were once chased by children have since disappeared.
Shimoono Bridge 下大野橋

A person who lived at Shimo-Hachiman-son, Shimoono, Myodo-gun (present day Nishi-Shinhama-cho) built a wooden toll bridge in 1910, over the Sengiriyama branch of the Katsuura River. The original size of the bridge and toll cost are unknown, but in 1925 it cost 1 sen for one person, 2 sen for a bicycle, and 3 sen for a rickshaw or cart.

A concrete bridge was built in 1958, forty-five metres in length and eight meters wide. Back then, all that could be seen west from the bridge were the towering “Benten pines”, a few telephone poles, and then, farther in the distance, the pines along the bank of the Sonoze River. The area was
otherwise paddy fields as far as the eye could see, so flat that you could see the foot of Mt. Bizan. Going down the Tokushima highway connecting Shimoono and Kamiono now, the Nishi-Shinhama area is lined with buildings, most of them residential. The forty-some years have passed by in no time.
Yamashiroya Bridge       山城屋橋

Around the end of the Meiji period, between Yamashiroyahama, Hachiman-son, Myodo-gun, (present day Nishi-hama-houji, Yamashiro-cho) and Saitsu-son (present day 5-chome, Showa-cho), there was a special sort of ferry used to cross the Gozabune River. A small box-like boat with a long rope attached to its front and back, people crossed the river in it by pulling the front rope into the boat, coiling it as they pulled their way to the other side, and leaving the rope on the boat’s other side to hang into the water behind them. The boat and its passengers used to get wet in the process, which could make things
arduous, especially in winter.

The Yamashiroya Bridge was built toward the end of the Taisho period, but it was not wide enough and it was prone to holes forming, so one had to be careful crossing it at night. The bridge there now, known as the Yamashiro Bridge, is wider and receives plenty of traffic. With Asty Tokushima to the east and Bunri University to the south, the vista there has undergone great change, and the ordeal of that old rope ferry crossing is now just an old story.
Kotoshi River

There was a small canal called the Kotoshi River, cutting longitudinally through Showa-cho and connecting the Sonoze and Shinmachi Rivers. Flat-bottom boats carried miscellaneous goods for daily use to mountain villages via the Katsuura River, and then from the mountain villages they
carried charcoal and firewood. There were many boat workers living around the Kotoshi River, working on as many as two hundred transport boats. The river also saw fishing boats come through, and even wedding boats on Taian Kichijitsu, the day of the year thought traditionally to be the luckiest for marriages.
Takimi Bridge 滝見橋

There was a river called the Terashima. This river started from where the Tokushima East Police Station now stands and flowed out northward, and then west between Tokushima train station and Mt. Shiroyama, until changing direction north of the present Awa·Gin Hall and flowing south
into the Shinmachi River. Takimi Bridge was built over Terashima River a little north of Awa-Gin Hall. To its north is Maegawa Bridge, to the south-west is Jinshin Bridge, and to the east there is Tokushima Station, making the Takimi Bridge a key traffic point.

In spring, the cherry blossoms on Otakiyama (Mt. Bizan) were near enough that one could admire them from the bridge. At the north of the bridge, Tokushima Upper Elementary School was opened in 1886 (Meiji 19), but in 1925 (Taisho 14) it was newly built at the vacant lot where the indigo-dying plant used to be. After the Asia Pacific War, the school system changed and ‘Tokko’, as the school was often called, was closed down in March 1947 (Showa 22), after producing over 9,000 graduates during its sixty years.
Nakabayashi Coast  中林海岸

An entry titled ‘Nakabayashi-yama’ was listed in the Naka County section of Ishige Kennosuke’s ‘Guide to Scenic Places in Awa’, published in 1908, according to which, “The view was picturesque: below, a collection of islands and rock outcrops — Marushima, Eboshi-iwa, Nakatsushima,
Aoshima, Ishima – while stretches of white sand and green pines extend outward on both sides.” With the sandy beaches of the Japanese islands on the wane nowadays, Nakabayashi’s white sand and pine woods serve as an invaluable reminder of the fact that people and nature live together.
Omiko Coast  大神子海岸

Long ago, field trips were more like what is implied by the kanji in the Japanese word – *ensoku*, written with the kanji for “far” and “leg” – and consisted of walking a long distance somewhere, lunch bundled up and water canteen slung over one’s shoulder, feet shod in straw sandals.
Over time, the cloth bundles for carrying lunch were replaced with rucksacks and the straw sandals were replaced with sport shoes, but still school trips were decidedly made on foot. The Omiko coast, being a suitable distance from Tokushima and Komatsushima, was full of children gathered there during the spring and autumn school trip seasons. The beach ran approximately 400 metres long north to south, with a width of up to 80 metres at its widest. It was not large, but the beautiful rocky beach led up to a pine forest, where people would rest in the shade during summer. On the horizon, past Wada Cape, the mountains of Kii could be clearly visible some days, depending on the weather. The steamships heading for Kansai from Komatsushima could be seen too, little dots in the distance.
Utebi River  打樋川

Before the 1932 completion of the industrial highway between Tokushima and Komatsushima, it was very inconvenient to go to Ohara and Ronden from Tokushima. Most families living along the Katsuura and Utebi Rivers had small boats, with which they would carry crops to Tokushima and bring back fertilizer and everyday commodities.
Tsuda Pontoon Bridge  津田舟橋

In 1893, a toll bridge replaced the ferry service at Tsuda. On the southern end it was too deep in places to erect piers, so boats were put in place to support the bridge instead. The resulting pontoon bridge rose and fell together with the ebb and flow of the tides, swayed back and forth on windy days, and even on calm days made a disconcerting rattling sound whenever an ox cart or horse cart would pass over. The bridge was thus nicknamed the *konnyaku* bridge of Tsuda for its wobbliness. The toll fee was one *sen* per person, three *sen* for a horse and cart. In 1927 a
reinforced concrete bridge was built and the era of the Konnyaku Bridge came to an end.
Many people used to come to view the cherry blossoms that bloomed near the main hall. A group of geisha from Tomida-machi would parade their way over, the sound of their shamisen and singing voices heard late into the night. The eight large pine trees that stood along the river were said...
to be over one hundred years old, towering darkly overhead in the pale moonlight, but have since been lost to infestation by bark beetles. Before, there used to be another stream quietly flowing nearby during spring. Cherry blossom petals floating on its surface, small fish playing underneath, bamboo-leaf boats carrying children’s dreams downstream, it flowed quietly onward.
Okawa Bridge in Mugi-cho

The mouth of the Mugi River was known as Okawa. The riversides were thick with reeds, from which the call of reed warblers could be heard chirping in May, while the white flowers of multi-flora roses bloomed atop the bank. The Mugi Inlet seen from the Okawa Bridge would sparkle in the early summer sun, its waters the same light blue as the sky above. The bridge was replaced with a reinforced concrete one in 1933. The reeds were gradually lost due to construction work on the harbour, and the crimson umbrellas fluttering atop the old bridge have also disappeared.
along with that sky blue season.
The shipping routes in the prefecture’s south started in April 1892, when Tomida resident Keitaro Yagi launched his ferry, the Heishinmaru, running between Tokushima City and Kannoura. Unfortunately, the route failed to attract much business and ceased operations in June that year. After that, the steamship companies and management in the area...
repeatedly changed hands. Setsuyo Shosen (a branch of the Osaka Shosen Merchant Shipping Company) eventually started a daily round trip between Osaka and Kannoura. Later, the route was absorbed by Tosa Shosen and extended to Urato, in Kochi City, but it too later ceased operations in 1940 due to the development of transportation via land.
The upper reaches of the Naka River pass through one of the primary forestry areas in the whole of Japan. Lumberjacks started using the river to carry the timber downstream around 1881. At first, they used to bundle three to five pieces of lumber together and set them afloat, but the
bundles used to break apart when they hit rocks, scattering and damaging the lumber, so they eventually started floating the wood down without sawing it into boards. At Iwawaki, Furujo and Nakashima near the calm-watered river mouth, there were lumber markets. In 1901, the mechanisation of the lumber industry began, and the river mouth area of the Naka River was filled with the sound of saws and the smell of fresh wood.
An old text describes this area as a “sprawling grassy beach”. Land reclamation started in the Tenpo period and continued apace into the Meiji period, and yet the sandbar between the Naka River and the Kuwano River was still littered with reeds on its east side, billowing in the winds blowing in from the sea. The Meiji period led to the Taisho, and the Taisho to the Showa, but still the reeds at the delta’s head surged in the western wind like waves in the ocean. There is no sprawling
wilderness there now, though: the grassy beach has disappeared, and now a concrete industrial area stretches out into the sea.
The Iihara Kazuo Collection  Rivers, Bridges, Seas and Ports  川と橋と海と港

The mouth of the Naka River  那賀川河口

The source of the Naka River can be found near Mt. Tsurugi (Kenzan), one of the highest peaks in Shikoku. Second only to the Yoshino River in length in Tokushima, the Naka flows through Konose Gorge, Kito, and Aioi before emptying into the Kii Channel at Anan City. An alluvial fan is formed in the lower reaches of the river, spreading out around Kamiono in Anan and Komo in Hanoura like the head of a traditional Japanese fan. The arc of this fan head makes up the coastline, extending from
Komatsushima Bay in the north to Tachibana Bay down south. The history of this region is one of struggle against the threat of flooding, with the erection of various levees throughout the years. Flood defences were eventually completed in the Showa period, but still on windy days the reedy fields at the river’s mouth were whipped around frenetically like ocean waves.
Nasa Bay  那佐湾

Down the coast south from Awa and along Yasaka Yahama, Asakawa Bay, and the mouth of the Kaifu River, the waves of the Pacific Ocean directly break against the beaches, bays, pine forests and riverheads. Nasa Bay lies along the shoreline from Kaifu-cho and Shishikui-cho, and is quite
long, sheltered by Chichinosaki Cape bending out over it. The bay was described in the 1908 Guide to Scenic Places in Awa as being “well suited for ships taking shelter from strong winds and high waves thanks to its sheltered length, and so the bay is never without a few anchored ships.”
Asakawa Inlet  浅川浦

Yasaka Yahama (literally “eight hills, eight beaches”) along the Tosa Kaido is a sight of great beauty, but in the past it was also a difficult place to reach. The lack of roads at the time made traveling by land difficult, so the natural harbour of the Asakawa Inlet was used as a port of call for the
steamships that connected the region. The system went through several changes, but steamships called at various places: Osaka, Hyogo, Nushima, Yura, Fukura, Muya, Tokushima, Komatsushima, Tachibana, Tsubakidomari, Abe, Yuki, Hiwasa, Mugi, Tomo, Shishikui, Kannoura. During the Taisho period, the ship departed Asakawa at 4:00 am and arrived at Kunitsu Bridge in Osaka at 2:00 am the next morning. Though the water in the V-shaped bay is calm, Asakawa has historically been vulnerable to tsunamis – as many as 85 lives were lost in the Nankaido earthquake in 1946.