



“View of Edo” (left screen) (17th C.) From the collection of the National Museum of Japanese History.

Introduction

Urban Development in the Edo Period

The origins of Tokyo (1590s-1860s)

Daimyo lords of domains throughout Japan gathered in Edo, making it one of the world’s largest cities with a population surpassing 1 million.

Edo, which prospered as the center of politics, was also a city of water where a network of rivers and canals crisscrossing the urban area supported the economic activities and lives of the people.

Fires broke out frequently, as can be expected of a densely built-up area, but while taking measures against fires, the city of Edo gradually expanded its developed area, forming the pattern for what is Tokyo’s central ward area today.

The outline of the city built during the Edo period will pass through the turbulent times of the final days of the Edo government, to be carried on in the Meiji era.

[Highlights of the Edo Period]

- 1590** ▶
 - Tokugawa Ieyasu enters Edo
- 1603** ▶
 - Tokugawa Ieyasu becomes a shogun and establishes the Edo shogunate government
- 1635** ▶
 - Establishment of the *sankin kotai* system in which the feudal lords spend alternate years between their home domains and their residences in Edo
- Around 1636** ▶
 - Construction of the outer compound of Edo Castle
- 1657** ▶
 - Great Fire of Meireki
- 1853** ▶
 - Commodore Perry’s fleet of black ships arrive in Uraga
- 1867** ▶
 - Restoration of Imperial rule
- 1868** ▶
 - Establishment of the Meiji government