



Japantown

Yoshioka Norihiko

The term “Japantown” is used for the sake of convenience to mean areas in foreign countries where Japanese people have settled as communities. Famous historical Japantowns in Southeast Asia include Ayutthaya of Thailand (14th-18th centuries), and Hoi An of Vietnam (around the 17th century), among others. From as old as the tale of waka poet Abe no Nakamaro (660-724) being stranded off the coast of Vietnam, ancient records of our predecessors living in foreign countries resonate passionately with the current local Japanese residents and conjure up a sense of historical romance. An exceptional example is Ayutthaya, Thailand, where the Thai-Japanese Association bought the land where Japantown formerly existed for the purpose of preservation, and continues to further its development every milestone year as a symbolic place for Japan-Thailand exchange. The area has been passed down to the current generation as the “Japanese Village,” which houses a Japanese garden, a lounge, and the Ayutthaya Historical Study Center. There are still many towns and villages across Southeast Asia that are recognized by the local people as “Japantowns” where Japanese people currently gather and reside. However, since the 21st century, places such as the “Hinoki Land” in Chiang Mai or the “Tokyo floors” inside the “Terminal 21” shopping mall found in cities across Thailand have emerged, where Japanese-oriented contents detached from the history and the people of Japan are packaged as kitsch mish-mash for commercial design purposes.



The stone monument inscribed “The Site of the Ayutthaya Japantown” and the Ayutthaya Historical Study Center

Source: <https://www.thailandtravel.or.jp/japanese-settlement/>



The Lai Vien Kieu (the bridge of remote friends) in Hoi An, also known as the “Japanese Covered Bridge” Source:

[https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%9D%A5%E9%81%A0%E6%A9%8B#/media/%E6%A9%8B#:File:Japanese_Covered_Bridge.JPG](https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%9D%A5%E9%81%A0%E6%A9%8B#/media/%E6%9D%A5%E9%81%A0%E6%A9%8B#/media/%E6%A9%8B#:File:Japanese_Covered_Bridge.JPG)



"Hinoki Land," a Japanese-style theme park in Chiang Mai
Source: <http://www.hinokiland.com/>



The "Tokyo Street" inside Terminal 21 (Pattaya store)

Related Links

- The Ayutthaya Japantown <https://www.japanesevillage.org/jp/>
- The Center For Culture, Sports, Radio & Television of HỒI AN City
<http://www.hoianworldheritage.org.vn/ja/news/culture-and-arts/hoyianno-no-ri-62.hwh>
- Hinoki Land (Thai) <http://www.hinokiland.com/>
- Terminal 21 (English · Thai) <https://www.terminal21.co.th/>