

JAPAN TRIP NOTES

The most distinctive of all Asian countries, Japan has an original identity that is instantly engaging and delightfully full of enigma and contradiction. Throughout Japan, the visitor will find tradition and modernity, simplicity and intricacy, elegance and ostentation. One can experience the adrenaline rousing rush of Tokyo in the morning, and be calmed by the timeless beauty of Kyoto in the afternoon. Japanese cuisine is now internationally revered and Tokyo has the most Michelin star restaurants of any city in the world. In addition to enjoying some exquisite meals, why not take a cooking class and learn how to make some favorite dishes at home?

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Visitors from the US and Canada in possession of a passport with at least 6 months' validity from date of return and one blank visa page, will be granted an entry stamp on arrival, at no cost. Stays of up to 90 days are allowed. People of other nationalities must inform your travel agent who will advise on your requirements.

CURRENCY

The Japanese yen (¥ or ¥; code: JPY) is the official currency of Japan.

A convenient currency converter can be found at <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

CREDIT CARDS

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, American Express less so. Cash is needed for shopping at small local restaurants and shops. ATMs are easily found outside banks, in major hotels and some convenience stores.

TIME DIFFERENCE

Tokyo is 13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and 16 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

SHOPPING

Japan is known for high quality pearl jewelry, knives, wood block prints, kimono, pottery, lacquerware and fans.



ELECTRICITY

The voltage in Japan is 100 Volt, which is slightly different from North America (120V) and may require a voltage adaptor for some devices. Japanese electrical outlets take two, straight pins, just like the US. For more information on plugs and voltage, please visit <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

LANGUAGE

Japanese is the official language of Japan. English is a mandatory subject in school but the cultural reserve of the Japanese people makes them hesitant to speak English with visitors. Simply phrased, polite questions prefaced by "Excuse me, ..." are recommended.

CLIMATE

Japan is mostly temperate. June and July are hot and rainy, and in September, the country experiences heavy rain and typhoons.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

It is not customary to tip in Japan. Trying to tip might even cause embarrassment and/or confusion. Liberal use of the phrase 'thank you' is always understood, appropriate and appreciated.

ETIQUETTE

Shoes: Remove your shoes and use the visitor slippers provided to enter homes, Japanese inns and other public places. Sometimes, a second set of slippers that are only used to enter the toilet room are provided. Wearing socks and easily removable shoes is a good idea.

Bathing: In Japan, one washes before entering the soaking tub; never using soap in the tub. Sit on the small footstool, and use the bucket or hand held shower to wet your body. Lather body, shampoo hair, shave, rinse off. Then enter the tub to soak and relax with a completely clean body.

BAGGAGE FORWARDING (Takkyubin)

If you are traveling on the bullet train, please note that there is no dedicated baggage storage, other than an overhead rack, which is designed for bags up to 12" by 20" by 30" only. There is limited storage in Green or 1st class cabins, but it fills up quickly. If your bag does not fit on the overhead rack, you must store it between your knees and the back of the seat in front of you. To avoid this situation, we highly recommend using *Takkyubin*, a convenient and uniquely Japanese service. For about \$20 - \$25 per bag, you can forward your bags to another hotel, overnight.

This service is facilitated by all major hotels. The hotel concierge can assist you in filling out the form and making payment. You must know the name and postcode of the receiving hotel. Please should ensure your bags are clearly labelled with your full names to make retrieving them at the receiving hotel easier. As you will be without your bags for one night, please plan to bring a smaller bag with a change of clothes, medication, and toiletries. Make sure to keep your passport with you.

This information is provided as a guideline to the country you will be visiting, and is up to date to the best of our knowledge. The latest information is available at

<https://jp.usembassy.gov/services/welcomebacktojapan/>