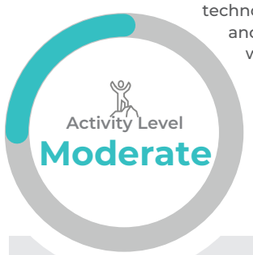
Discovering *Japan*

An archipelago comprising of four main islands, the Land of the Rising Sun promises an eclectic mix of ancient Samurai traditions with impressive landscapes and towering futuristic charms.

Japan offers a window into a world of amazing contrasts. Here you'll find the home of cutting-edge technology and ancient temples where people flock to share a peaceful moment. It's a destination where pristine gardens showcasing the beauty of nature sit in the shadows of soaring steel-clad skyscrapers, and the delicate and fragile beauty of cherry blossom in the spring months is flooded by neon light as the sun goes down. Sample sushi from a conveyor belt, savour the warm, crisp flavours of Sake, and soak in an open-air hot spring– Japan is full of surprises.

Its restless capital, Tokyo, mixes the enthralling blend of ultra-modern technology and futuristic skyscrapers with ancient tradition. Escape the kaleidoscopic colours and frenzy of the streets to discover magnificent Mount Fuji, one of Japan's three sacred mountains and the country's tallest peak.



Visa Process

You can get a visa on arrival in Japan for tourism or business for up to 90 days. You do not need to apply before you travel.

Currency

The official currency of Japan is the Japanese Yen (JPY). Banknotes are available in denominations of ¥1,000, ¥5,000, and ¥10,000. The most frequently used coins are ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100, and ¥500.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards like Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in the major towns and cities in Japan, however American Express and Diners club are rarely accepted. Cash is accepted almost everywhere.

Plug Sockets

Japan uses Type A plugs, which have two flat parallel pins. The country operates on a 100V supply voltage with a frequency of 50/60Hz.

Check in Process

Have your passport or a valid form of identification ready for check-in.

Check in is usually from 5pm local time.

Gratuities

Tipping is not apart of the Japanese culture. Most restaurants, hotels, and other service establishments include a service charge in the bill. The price you see is usually what you pay.

Instead of tipping, expressing appreciation through respectful gestures, such as a sincere thank you or a bow, is more in line with Japanese customs.



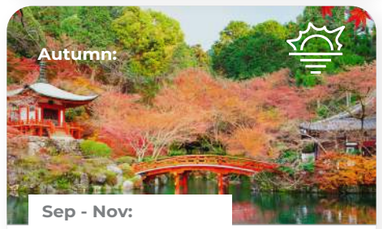
Japan has four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.



Mar - May:
Renowned for its cherry blossoms, temperatures remain quite chilly until mid-April.
Average **10-24°C**



Jun - Aug:
Summer is hot and humid, with occasional rain.
Average **10-24°C**



Sep - Nov:
Brings cooler temperatures and vibrant autumn foliage
Average **10-24°C**



Dec - Feb:
From mild in southern regions to cold and snowy in the northern areas such as Hokkaido.
Average **10-24°C**



Cultural Norms

Japanese cultural norms emphasise respect, politeness, and social harmony. Here are some key aspects to be aware of:

Bowing: Bowing is a common greeting and sign of respect. The depth and duration of the bow can vary depending on the situation and relationship between people.

Shoes Off Indoors: It's customary to remove your shoes when entering someone's home, certain traditional accommodations (like ryokan), and some restaurants. You'll often find designated slippers to wear indoors.

Quietness: Japanese people generally value quiet and reserved behaviour in public spaces. Speaking loudly or making a lot of noise can be considered disruptive.

Politeness: Use polite language and gestures. Phrases like "Arigatou" (thank you) and "Sumimasen" (excuse me) are important in daily interactions.

Chopstick Etiquette: Don't point with chopsticks, stick them upright in a bowl of rice, or pass food directly from one set of chopsticks to another, as these actions are associated with funerals.

Handling Money: Pay with both hands when giving or receiving money or items. This is considered more respectful.

Respect for Traditions: Show respect for traditional practices and ceremonies. For example, when visiting temples or shrines, follow proper etiquette such as washing hands and mouth at the purification fountain.



Emergency

Dial 119 from any phone for emergency assistance, including ambulance and fire services. For police assistance, dial 110. Both numbers are free to call from landlines and mobile phones. It's important to keep a copy of your passport and other key documents in a safe place, and have the contact details of the nearest British embassy or consulate readily available.

Transportation

Japan has an efficient and extensive public transportation network, with all announcements and signs in both Japanese and English making it easy to navigate. Local trains, buses, and taxis are also widely available.

Navigating Stations: Tokyo's stations are large and can be complex, so follow signs carefully and use station maps.

Tickets: Buy single-journey tickets (cash only) or use an IC card (e.g. 'Suica' or 'Pasmo', which can also be downloaded into your phone's wallet for both Apple and Android users).

Rush Hours: Trains can be very crowded during rush hours, so plan your travel times accordingly. Japan's transportation system is known for its punctuality and cleanliness, making it easy to get around both Tokyo and other parts of the country.



Dining

Dining in Japan is a blend of delicious food and cultural etiquette. Meals often begin with the phrase "Itadakimasu" (I humbly receive) and end with "Gochisousama deshita" (Thank you for the meal). Chopstick etiquette is important—avoid pointing with them, sticking them vertically into rice, or passing food directly to others. When eating rice or miso soup, hold the bowl close to your mouth to avoid spills. You can eat sushi with your hand or with chopsticks, while sashimi is only eaten with chopsticks. It's also good to note that the tap water is safe to drink throughout Japan, and that includes the water found in parks, gardens, and public bathrooms.

What to pack

Essentials:
Passport & Visa: Ensure you have your passport, visa, and any necessary travel documents.
Travel Insurance: Always a good idea for unexpected situations.
Money: Cash (especially small denominations) and credit/debit cards. ATMs are widely available.
Health Kit: Any prescription medications, over-the-counter medicines (Ensure that you travel with these in your hand luggage)

Clothing:
Pack lightweight and breathable clothes for summer (June to August), and warmer layers for spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November). Winter (December to February) requires heavier clothing, especially in northern regions like Hokkaido.
Comfortable Shoes : For walking and exploring. Sandals are also useful for less intense activity days.

Personal Items:
Toiletries: Basic items like toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and any specific personal items you use.
Sunscreen & Sunglasses: Protection from the strong sun is crucial.
Insect Repellent: Especially important in rural or tropical areas.

Electronics:
Adaptor/Converter: Power adaptor suitable for Japanese outlets (Type A or Type B)Phone & Charger: With a local SIM card, you can have better connectivity and avoid high roaming charges.
Camera: To capture your travels (with extra memory cards and batteries).

Other Useful Items:
Small Backpack/Daypack: For day trips and carrying essentials.
Hand Sanitiser: For cleanliness on the go.

