



Visit Japan

Handbook For School Trip Organizers



Japan. Endless Discovery.



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Introduction

Table of contents

Introduction	3	Airports	
Cross Cultural Education		Accessibility	
Understanding Japan's Cultural Values		Affordability	
The Handbook – Second Edition		Luggage	
Chapter One – The Organizer	7	Getting a Bearing	
Introduction		Food	
Types of Tours		Cash	
The Principal at Heart		Balancing your Itinerary	
Teacher Co-coordinator		Kyoto and Tokyo at a Glance	
The Travel Company		Kyoto	
Student Selection		Kyoto Day Trips	
Application Form		Tokyo	
The Interview		Tokyo Day Trips	
Fundraising		Glimpses of Japan	33
Preparation		Terry Watada	
Chapter Two – The Itinerary	14	Kelly Schmidt	
Getting Started		Terumi Kuwada	
Types of Accommodation		Conclusion	40

Welcome to Japan!

Japan is an ideal destination for student trips. The country is safe, clean, efficient and YES surprisingly affordable. A trip to Japan is as economically competitive as an average student trip to European or American destinations. The misconception of Japan as an expensive travel destination prevents people from fulfilling a long held dream. Careful budget planning will make Japan a reality today!

The Japan National Tourism Organization reports that the number of foreign visitors to Japan in 2017 was 28,690,900, up from 24,039,700 in 2016. The expectation for 2018 is that this upward trend will continue.

Cross-Cultural Education (CCE)

CCE is an immersion-based education that places students with other cultures in new environments. CCE allows students to appreciate the differences

and similarities of various cultures, thereby increasing their knowledge and acceptance of the differing realities. The interaction with other cultures will raise awareness of global issues. As the students experience the challenge of having to communicate in Japanese, they will become appreciative of the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by *English as a Second Language* students in their own school. It is believed that knowledge grows through active transformative experiences. Experiential learning through travel creates student empathy and a greater understanding of the political and economic forces that shape societies. Cultural immersion will help to dispel the stereotype of Japan as an 'exotic' and 'mysterious' nation.

In the preparatory year, there will be opportunities for subject teachers to infuse Japanese topics or stand alone units into existing courses and to work with teachers in other disciplines by offering cross-curricular units of study.



Ninenzaka slope, Kiyomizu

Understanding Japan's Cultural Values

Visitors will be frequently immersed in Japan's three main, interdependent values. Your students will develop an understanding and respect for the unique cultural traditions of Japan but also realize the common social norms and values shared by all members of our global community.

These three values are:

Character

Character is developed through the native religion of Shinto and the Indian religion of Buddhism introduced via China and Korea. The Japanese value the importance of community over individual needs as it creates bonds of good will; the foundation of Japanese life. Compassion towards others is taught in both religions and best reflects the Japanese character.

Common Life

The Japanese respect for the simple and understated elegance of everyday life is known as "wabi". The changing of the seasons evokes "sabi" which speaks of the transient, impermanent nature of the life cycle where everything new becomes old and faded but each cycle contains its own intrinsic beauty. The esthetically simple arrangement of traditional cuisine is a feast for the eyes as it is for the stomach.

Creation

Japan's creative tradition is best reflected through its more traditional arts. Although limited by the technology of the feudal period, artists of that era were able to maximize the available resources and tools to create exceptional works of art - some which cannot be duplicated today. In the late 1800's in Europe, there grew an interest in Japanese creative and performing arts known as Japonism that influenced Western art. Papermaking, sword forging, ceramics and other arts captivated and influenced the European artistic tradition.



Kiyomizu-dera Temple

We can best illustrate Japanese cultural values by using a visit to the venerable Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto:

As one navigates the rustic stone street of Kiyomizu zaka, we see many shops selling traditional handicrafts unique to Kyoto such as pottery, kimono, dolls etc. These traditional crafts speak to the Japanese value of **Creation**. As one ascends towards Kiyomizu Dera, it is common to be greeted warmly by shopkeepers who patiently take the time to explain their products and - in broken English - how the product was created. Here in full practice is the Japanese saying that "the customer is King" and illustrates the Japanese value of **Character**. The value of **Character** is also seen in

their religious practices. Kiyomizu Temple is always filled with the smell of incense offered by worshippers. The Japanese love of children is evident in an area adjacent to the Temple that has many tiny statues of Jizo bosatsu (saint) devoted to protecting the spirit of lost children - each Jizo bosatsu is adorned with children's clothing and toys. Finally, the value of **Common Life** is evident outdoors throughout the year in celebration of the seasonal changes. They are reflected in ingredients used in foods, peoples dress or cultural events that mark the annual cycle.

We are pleased to present the second edition of the Teachers Handbook after 10 years. The original Handbook provided suggestions on how to organize in-school fund raising campaigns, student recruitment and orientation courses.

Each school and boards of education have differing policies governing international trips and the necessary protocol to be followed. Please consult your school principal and the appropriate board officials before proceeding. The recommendations in the Handbook have been gathered from teachers who have organized trips to Japan; from a small group of 10 to large sports teams and musical groups numbering up to one hundred students, ten staff members and a mountain of musical equipment!

On average, student trips will require a minimum of one year of preparatory work and ideally two years for larger groups. A concern with a two-year timeline will be the declining student interest requiring teachers to create activities that will sustain the momentum.

Ongoing cultural and language programs, concerts and Japan Day activities will raise funds and maintain the interest level.

Chapter two is new and contains essential travel tips for teachers for use in their preparation. We believe that they will help to eliminate the unexpected as much as possible. As the old saying goes, **“To be forewarned is to be forearmed”**.

Please note that the new chapter has been written for teachers who have never visited Japan and is a supplemental resource to be used in conjunction with many excellent travel books and guides available on the Internet. We have focused on the largest of the Japanese Island of Honshu and used the cities of Kyoto and Tokyo for your first student tour. As you plan your itinerary, we encourage you to use the JNTO website that has extensive and excellent information on all aspects of travel information.

JNTO Website: Japan: the Official Guide: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/>



JAPANESE ISLANDS The nation of Japan is comprised of over 6,500 islands but the four main islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu combined total the greatest number of people.

Introduction

The Haitorei Edict of 1876 banned the wearing of swords, thus bringing an end to feudalism and Japan’s full adoption of Western learning and technology. Ironically, it was the fear of Western colonization that convinced Japanese leaders to do so to insure the autonomy of the nation.

Although Japan is an ancient civilization with a rich past, it is at the forefront of modern science and technology. It is a nation that has managed to harmonize the lessons of the past with the realities of today for a better future.

First time visitors will be surprised to see Romanized English signs and Japanese youth who have a rudimentary knowledge of English phrases. Japanese students take English courses from grade seven to the final year of high school and English words have become part of their everyday lexicon. You will find English-capable staff at every service counter once you exit the custom gates at one of Japan’s international airports

Canadian students are familiar with manga, anime and innovation in electronics and robotics. In major Canadian cities, a large number of non-Japanese students take Saturday morning Japanese language classes. Such interest will make them eager members ready to learn more substantive information about Japan.

If your city has a sister-city relationship with a municipality or city in Japan, it may be possible to have officials arrange a school visit. Please keep in mind that the Japanese school year begins in April and consists of three terms that are broken by short holidays in the spring and winter. Summer holidays are only



Mt. Fuji and Bullet Train

one month in August; therefore, early July is an ideal month for Canadian students to see a school in session. Please consult sources for specific National Holidays.

Japan’s literacy rate between 2008 and 2014 for those 15+ has remained stable at 99.0% (*World Data Atlas*) out of a total population of 127.3 million people (*UN estimate, 2017*). After the Second World War, Japan’s educational system was changed and is now made up of six years of elementary school, three years of junior and three years of senior high school. University is four years and two years for junior college. The Japanese educational system has great impact on children during the formative years. On average, they will spend 240 days a year in school that is 60 days more than American students (*FSI Stanford*) although not all are confined to the classroom. On average 30% of all Japanese students attend “juku” or cram schools and it is estimated that that figure is double that number in major cities such as Tokyo (*ASCD*).

Let's Get Started

A Trip Tailor-Made for You



Downtown Osaka

Types of Tours

Short Term Student Tour

The two-week educational/cultural trip seems to be the most popular duration. Due to the loss of two days in transit, you will only have twelve full days. The students will have enough time to sample traditional Japanese culture, visit historic, commercial and geographic sites. The initial itinerary will evolve once a school planning committee has been created and a reputable travel agency selected. It is important for the sake of the parents that they are given an initial cost to help them begin saving for the trip. The cost of all chaperones should be built into the budget. Keep in mind that the teachers are responsible for the safety and well being of students during the entire duration of the trip, and it is not fair to have them pay.

Student Exchange Program

If a visit to a Japanese school can be arranged through official channels, it may provide an opportunity for the development of a sister school relationship in the future. Canadian students interested in the one-year exchange should consult with their guidance counselor to determine if some of the courses taken in the Japanese school will be granted a matching credit upon return. The home school usually has the latitude to issue open credits, although mandatory subjects may not have the same flexibility. Some students may opt to take a summer credit course prior to leaving to reduce the number of courses that they will need to make up upon return. Many boards of education offer Distance Education credits, but students are warned that this may be a heavy workload on top of the course demands of their host school.

Teacher Study Tour

Summer teacher study tours for educators are enjoyable and highly recommended. There is comfort in traveling with colleagues, and the time together allows for the sharing of classroom resources, discussion of pedagogy and exchange of observations.

Summer Credit Courses

A project for consideration is the intensive summer credit courses abroad. Some Canadian travel agents, in co-operation with local boards of education (i.e. Continuing Education Department), offer a system-wide intensive summer credit course that is usually of a three-week duration. Students can be recruited from within and outside the sponsoring board's jurisdiction. In exchange for teaching the course, the teacher's flight and room and board are covered. Many teachers organize a series of pre-departure



classes in order to free up more time for daily excursions. If there are no travel agents with such a summer program available, perhaps you can take the initiative. You will require board approval to run the off-campus course and a host school that will allow you to use a classroom for the duration of the course.

The Principal at Heart

The support of the school principal is critical to the success of any international trip! They will act as the gatekeeper to the senior board administrators and trustees. The principal can provide advice and assistance in the area of budget, internal and external funding sources, as well as helping to steer you through the bureaucracy and mountain of paperwork. As the leader of the school, they will ensure that the project has the support of school staff and parents.

The daily demands of managing a school makes it impossible for the principal to take on the leadership of the trip. The principal should select - through an interview process - a teacher coordinator(s) who will organize all aspects of the trip and will travel with the group. The principal should also be an ad hoc member of any committees formed.

Teacher Coordinator

Like the Greek god Atlas, the teacher coordinator will feel as though they are carrying the whole world on their back most days. Luckily, that burden will not be for a lifetime (just a year or two) and it does have the reward of great memories and lasting friendships.

QUALITIES IN THE TEACHER COORDINATORS:

- creative
- fair and firm disciplinarian
- participates in extracurricular activities
- works well with students
- organized
- good fundraiser
- good communication skills
- compassionate
- reasonably good health

The Travel Company

The first order of business for the coordinator is to select a Canadian travel agent to assist in planning the itinerary, the budget and establishing a schedule of payments. Shop around for a reputable agent. It is important that the travel company has representatives in Japan who will be able to deal with unexpected issues during your stay. Invite the travel company to become an active member of the parent/teacher committee.

Qualities in a travel agent:

- their service rating
- the number of years in the travel business
- office or agents in Japan
- able to provide referrals
- past experiences in booking group tours



Larger travel agencies may have the flexibility to offer monetary incentives. If your student group is large, the agency may offer to cover the cost of one or more teachers. Large groups may lower the cost of airfare and accommodations, conversely the smaller the group, the higher the cost.

The budget should include the following: air and ground transportation, hotel, Japan Railpass (recommended), luggage service, admission to facilities and guided tours and trip cancellation. Medical insurance is the responsibility of the student although one company should be recommended and used. Similar to the travel agency it is convenient to purchase insurance from a company that has agents in Japan who will pay all up front medical expenses.

Gift and pocket money can be estimated separately but should be noted to parents as an extra cost. It is wise to estimate slightly higher budget than the amount suggested by the travel agent in order to allow for fluctuation in currency exchange rates and unexpected costs.

Determine if the agency can guarantee a fixed cost against future increases. Most airlines and hotel will not release their

fee schedule until January of the New Year. Once the initial itinerary and costs have been determined, publicize the Japan Trip in your school. The student application form should follow your board's guidelines on international travel.

Your principal will advise you of the board application deadlines for approval of international trips. Without having some idea of the number of students participating in the trip, it may be premature to seek board approval prior to the first parent meeting.

Student Selection

The ability to pay for a trip should not be the sole criteria for student selection. Some students may not be suitable representatives of your school abroad due to their level of maturity. It is suggested that the candidates be screened in a two-step process.

Step 1: Application Form

Beside the basic family and medical information, the application should ask for the following information:

- their academic history,
- community service,
- interests and hobbies,
- two letters of recommendation (one current and one former teacher, or one community representative) and
- a minimum 500-word essay that asks, "What are your expectations for the trip and how would you use the knowledge gained in Japan?"

Promising candidates should be invited to the interview. The Application Form should state clearly the expectations of a successful candidate, and they must be aware of the contracts that they will be required to sign upon acceptance.

Step 2: The Interview

The interview process will allow the candidate to expand on the information they provided on the application form and essay. Several hypothetical scenarios should be posed that touch upon the issue of leadership, group consensus and self-image. The candidate should be able to clearly articulate their reasons for wishing to visit Japan and what they hope to learn. Upon acceptance, students and their parents/guardian should sign the following agreements:

- a participation Agreement & Code of Conduct
- Fundraising Contract
- payment Schedule Contract

Qualities in a Successful Student Candidate:

- self-motivated
- consensus builder
- flexible
- trustworthy
- reasonable academic standing
- able to work in groups
- patient
- compassionate
- willingness to participate in school fund raising campaigns
- reasonable health

Successful candidates must be informed that participation in the trip is a "privilege" that may be revoked if their academic standing is in jeopardy, if they are found to exhibit inappropriate behaviour, or if they have developed a serious medical problem.

Once the students have been selected, the coordinator should create a parent/teacher committee and a student committee. Although a student committee may seem to be redundant, it is important that their participation is respected and their ideas are discussed with their peers. The head of the student

committee will sit as a representative on the parent/teacher committee and there should be a teacher advisor on the student committee.

Fundraising

A famous saying speaks of a journey of a thousand miles starting with the first step. It is natural to feel overwhelmed when you see the total cost of the trip for the first time. If you have set aside at least one year for the trip, then it is possible to come close to covering half of the budget; to do so will require a vigorous and energetic fundraising campaign with full participation of the students. Concentrate on one fundraising event at a time and you will be surprised how quickly the funds accumulate.

Fundraising is an important component of any international trip even if parents are able to finance the entire trip. Additional funds will mean upgrades in accommodation, some guided tours, payment of entrance fees, and perhaps a school jacket or a group T-shirt. Fundraising activities give the students clear benchmarks and will help to increase interest and sustain the momentum.

All students should sign a Fundraising Contract that will commit them to participate in the campaign. Except for unique circumstances, no exceptions should be made. In order to monitor student participation, a tracking sheet should be created that will record volunteer hours and dollars raised by each participant as well as their payment history. Ongoing, private meetings should be held with each student to encourage and reinforce the student's commitment towards the trip.

Volunteer time can be converted as a monetary credit toward the cost of the

trip. Fundraising will also allow more equitable student participation by those who may not have the economic means to pay for all or a portion of the cost by giving them the option of working more volunteer hours. Schools may also have discretionary funds to provide financial assistance to those in need.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS:

- car wash
- school dance
- Japan concert or a Japan Day Fair
- plant sales
- chocolate candy and almond sales
- silent auction (in conjunction with a concert or fair)
- seasonal specialty sales (Christmas, Easter, etc.)
- cash (or in kind) donations from service clubs
- school juice/soda dispensing machines
- board-wide karaoke competition for teachers and support staff
- funding or in-kind donations from service organizations such as your local district of the Rotary or Kiwanis club

Invite your travel agent to become an active participant in your fundraising campaign. The agent may be able to provide you with complimentary prizes for various draws and for special events as incentives. The success of the fundraising campaign is also in their interest.

School soda and juice dispensing machines do generate a substantial amount of money for the manufacturer.



A meeting with a sales representative may create some innovative ways of generating money for the trip.

The campaign should involve the entire school population. It is important that the larger community be given the opportunity to show their support as well. A subcommittee in charge of publicity should be responsible for news releases and media relations. The tour group should be promoted as ambassadors of the school, the community and Canada.

The school should establish a separate bank account with the principal as one of the co-signers. Consideration should be given to depositing the money raised into a short-term, high interest bearing investment or account if the campaign is over one year. Sports teams and school bands will require more preparation time.

Preparation

Student Meetings

An effective way of maintaining the momentum is to have regular student meetings. Meetings should be held on a specific day of each month, with mandatory attendance. The following topics should be discussed:

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

- fundraising update
- travel and itinerary updates (itinerary and handouts to be kept in a binder by each student)
- passport and visas (to be obtained well in advance)
- gifts to take and bring home
- travel tips
- currency exchange
- rules of conduct
- dress code
- packing tips
- orientation schedule
- journals (students should write daily journals while in Japan)
- hotel information
- spending money
- insurance
- electronic devices
- airport procedures
- safety/emergency information

One regular meeting per month should be set aside for after school orientation classes - parents should be welcomed to attend. The workshops can cover such topics as:

- introductory Japanese language
- Three Values of Japan (Character, Common Life, Creation)
- history, religion and geography

- gender roles and issues
- foods and food etiquette
- bathing
- transportation
- shopping
- currency
- Japanese school system

Travel Documents

The teacher coordinator must insure that they have the following photocopied documents from all participants:

- copies of student passports
- medical plan and number
- extended health care information
- travel medical and insurance information (if purchased by parents)
- special medical and dietary requirements
- passports
- Visas for non-Canadians (contact the local Japanese consulate)

One set should be taken on the trip, and the second set should remain with the home school.

In addition, the coordinator should provide the school with a copy of all contact names, telephone numbers and addresses in Japan and of the travel agent.

Chapter Two – The Itinerary

Time management is critical in planning overseas student trips. Veteran travel guides recommend that one must factor in travel times between sites and the mode(s) of transportation being used. Rather than trying to see everything in a day, it may be more effective to visit a few representative sites to allow students an opportunity to explore and fully appreciate the sites and to give them a chance to interact with local citizens. Be sure to include participatory handicraft activity and plan to allow them to enjoy the delicious flavours of Japan.

In order to create student engagement and ownership of the Japan itinerary, encourage them to come up with sites of interest for the tour and the rationale for the recommendation.

Using a Quadrant

Be efficient with your time and budget by placing the sites that you wish to visit into a city quadrant. This will allow you to eliminate having to return to the area.

Getting Started

Teachers are wonderful organizers and they all know the importance of detailed preparation. Having students in tow, on a budget, with strict timelines demands careful preparation and teachers have the skill and experience to be up to the challenge.

As noted earlier, for a comprehensive planning guide, we suggest that you visit the JNTO website: JNTO Website: Japan: the Official Guide: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/>

The site offers you the following tabs:

- Places to Go;
- Itineraries;
- A Trip Planner; and

- In-Depth information on Japanese Culture and the Seasons. Canadian teachers can visit the JNTO Toronto Website: <http://ilovejapan.ca/home/about-jnto-toronto-office/>

1. Types of Accommodation



A wide range of accommodation is available in Japan and your selection will be determined by your budget and accessibility to your planned sites. Prices are estimates only.

Business Hotels (~5,000 to 10,000 yen)

Rooms are small with snacks available from vending machines and usually with no meal service. Most business hotels are in close proximity to major transit lines but the rooms may be very small.

Hostels and Dormitories (~1,500 to 4,000 yen per person)

There are more than 300 hostels across Japan. Lodgings usually do not include meals.

Ryokan (~6,000 to 30,000 yen per person)

Traditional inns with Japanese style rooms and normally includes breakfast and dinner. Please check, as they may not be able to accommodate student groups

Minshuku (~4,000 to 10,000 yen)

Japanese style “bed and breakfast” accommodation that is usually family-run and may include one or two meals in the price. Please check to see if they can accommodate student groups.

Western Style Hotels (~8,000 to 50,000)

Most hotels will be in the highest price range of accommodations. Your travel company may have the leverage to offer competitive rates.

JNTO Website: Accommodation Guide: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/accommodations/index.html>

2. Airports



Airlines offer direct flights to Tokyo Haneda International Airport, Narita International Airport, Kansai International Airport, and Chubu International Airport. These flights depart from major Canadian cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary. The number of serviced airports, together with the increasing frequency of direct flights, will allow for added flexibility in your arrival and departure planning.

Websites:

Narita: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/discount-tickets/nationwide-railway.html>

Kansai: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/international-airport/kansai-international-airport-osaka.html>

Haneda: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/international-airport/haneda-airport-tokyo.html>

Chubu: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/international-airport/central-japan-international-airport-nagoya.html>

3. Accessibility

Japan has an excellent public and private transit system that is a major asset to international travellers. Staying close to a major rail station or a department store will give you access to a greater range of services but it may be at the expense of higher accommodation cost.

As you will be travelling with lots of luggage, it is important to work out the most convenient means of getting from the airport to your accommodation after a long international flight. The Narita Express Train and the Kyoto Haruka Limited Train are the fastest means of international airport access. Another option is to take the Airport Limousine Bus that will either take you directly to your accommodation or nearby. Please visit their website for further information. Life is less hectic if the bus stops at or close to your hotel/accommodation but that will be determined by your budget.

Websites:

Kansai: <https://www.kyotostation.com/traveling-between-kyoto-and-kansai-international-airport/>

Limousine Bus Kansai: <http://www.okkbus.co.jp/en/index3.html>

Tokyo Narita Express: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/international-airport/narita-airport-tokyo.html>

Limousine Bus Narita: https://www.limousinebus.co.jp/en/bus_services/narita/index

Chubu: http://www.centrair.jp/en/to_and_from/

Japan Railpass



Shinkansen Bullet Train Tokyo

If your group is in Japan for more than 7 days, then the Railpass is an affordable way to travel. It is available in 7, 14 and 21 day durations. The Pass is only available to foreign visitors and the voucher should be in your possession prior to your departure for Japan. You have the option of purchasing the Standard Car Pass or the Green Car Pass. Though the Green Car is more comfortable and usually has more available seating, it should be noted that seat reservations can be made using either of the passes.

JNTO Website: Transportation Site
<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/discount-tickets/nationwide-railway.html>

<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/transportation/railway-services/japan-rail-pass.html>

Activating your Railpass in Japan

Regardless of which city you begin your trip in, an important decision for you will be when to activate your Railpass. You will need to take individual vouchers to the JR Railpass Exchange office to convert it to a Passbook. Maximize your Railpass by activating it on the first day you take day trips outside the city. The activation date and the expiry date will be stamped inside the Railpass. You may

wish to consider purchasing day passes to explore the city first. The activation process is as follows:

1. While your students are properly supervised, begin the lengthy process of filling in Railpass forms for your group at the nearest JR Railpass Exchange office.

2. Fill in an application form to convert all vouchers for Passbook – don't forget to bring **everyone's** passports with you. Once completed, go to a JR official who will process the Railpass. If making seat reservations for your group, it may be more efficient to obtain Shinkansen (Bullet train) tickets for all planned trips at the same time. Though somewhat time-consuming, it is well worth not having to make repeated visits to the Shinkansen ticketing office (*Midori no Mado Guchi*). Prior to leaving at the start of each day, get into the routine of checking that all students have their Railpass and any other transit tickets needed.

3. Rather than going through the turnstile at the station, show your Railpass at the station kiosk to board any JR bus, train or ferry

Reserving seats on the Shinkansen (Bullet Train) Green Car

1. Go to the *Midori no Mado Guchi* ticket office with a green sign of a seated person.

2. Make sure you have determined which seat, smoking/non-smoking carriage and time. For trains and times, refer to a Bullet train schedule. It is recommended that you book your tickets 3-4 days in advance of the trip in the event it falls on a national holiday.

Website: <http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/>

Day Passes

There are different combinations of day passes and discount passes available in cities with municipal transit systems such as Tokyo or Osaka.

IC Transport Card

IC cards are rechargeable cards that allow you to board public transit systems. In Tokyo, major buses and railways honour the card in the metropolitan area and the card can be used on the Kyoto city bus. There is a total of 10 IC cards that are compatible and as information is changing on a regular basis, you are asked to visit the website links noted.

JNTO Website: http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/ic_card.html

Japan Guide Website: http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/topics/2013/topics130402_iccard.html

Suica and Pasma Card Website: <https://www.japan-rail-pass.com/common-questions/what-is-a-pasmo-or-a-suica-card>

4. Affordability

Affordability may mean that your accommodation will be further away from major transit lines. Work with your Canadian travel agent to find the best balance between accessibility and affordability. If the amount of time that you can spend in Japan is less than 7 nights, then you may have to pay higher rates in order to be closer to services and major transit lines.

5. Luggage – Takkyubin (or Takuhaibin)

Packing only essential clothing and toiletries is important for international travellers. Packing less means more luggage space for gifts and souvenirs. Lightweight clothing that washes and dries overnight is a must along with

comfortable walking shoes. Japanese trains are not designed to accommodate international travellers so storage space is very limited. The overhead compartment on the Bullet train or local trains is not wide enough for large luggage and the only space available will be in front of your seat. This is where the luggage forwarding service – Takkyubin - comes in handy. Most hotels will assist you with the arrangements if the luggage is dropped off early in the morning around breakfast time. Depending on the distance, it may arrive at your next accommodation later that same day or around mid-afternoon the next day. Inquire if your hotel(s) offers this convenient service. On average, a regular suitcase (80cmx40cmx30cm, less than 25kg) from Tokyo to Kyoto will be around 1900 yen.

In the 1970, Yamato Transport or in Japanese "Kuro Neko" (Black Cat) began this service.

6. Getting a Bearing

An investment in a portable compass is advised. If you are blessed with an internal compass, then consider yourself fortunate, as most of us are not. Your cell phone may also have a compass but keep in mind of the data usage charge. Going into a new environment, all streets, buildings, stations and sites begin to look the same. If this occurs – stop and ask for help. It is always a good practice for everyone to have a hotel address card or the address of your accommodation written in Japanese.

Stay connected with family and friends via Pocket Wi-Fi and SIM cards (data-only) that can be rented at all international airports. In addition, there

are many free Wi-Fi networks available in Japan. **JNTO is proud to announce the official travel application that is now available for your convenience.**

JNTO Official Travel App: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/smartapp/eng/>

JNTO Internet access: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/basic-info/basic-info/internet.html>

JNTO SIM card information: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/wifilist.html>

7. Food



Bento box and yakitori (grilled chicken)

A wide selection of food is available in Japan. Your students will find fast, affordable and convenient foods catering to every taste from sandwiches, to ramen (noodles), yakitori (broiled skewered chicken) and much more. Perhaps the most portable Japanese food is the bento (takeout lunch) box offering a sampling of tasty treats. Food that is compact and quick is ideal for your students.

Major Department Stores

Depachika ('Depa' is slang for department store and 'Chika' means underground). It refers to the basement floor of department stores that has the food market. Most hours from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm with perishable foods like sushi being discounted around 5:00 pm.

Fast Food Outlets

MacDonald's
Kentucky Fried Chicken
Starbucks
Others

Street Stalls



Food stall - yakitori chicken

Found by train stations and other locations.

Vending Machines



Vending Machines

To be found literally on every street and offering a wide variety of foods, drinks and snacks.

Convenience Stores

Known as "konbini" in Japanese, the three most popular convenience stores are: 7-Eleven, Family Mart and Lawson.

EATING ETIQUETTE

Please try not to eat in public while walking.

Ekiben ("Eki" – station "Ben" – bento, boxed lunch)

As your students will be riding on Japanese trains do not miss the opportunity to sample the many delicious boxed lunches sold at outlets inside major train stations. Each stall has sample lunches on display besides the packaged ones for sale. Bentos that specialize in regional ingredients and flavours are also available.

JNTO Website: http://japan-magazine.jnto.go.jp/en/1603_ekiben.html

Website: <https://www.japan-rail-pass.com/japan-by-rail/travel-tips/west-ekiben>

8. Cash

Very few international travellers use traveller cheques today and you will find that businesses still prefer cash. This is very true in areas outside of major cities. International Automated Teller Machines (ATM) are readily available at major train stations, post offices as well as at certain convenience stores. Note that some International ATMs are not open 24 hours so please plan ahead. If you take travellers cheques, you can convert them to Yen at the airport, the front

desk of your hotel or a bank but you will need to have your passport handy and be warned that there may be some wait time involved. Taking cash or using International ATMs are clearly the best options.

JNTO Website: ATM

<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/basic-info/basic-info/atms.html>

Other Websites:

7-Eleven Japan Website: <http://www.sevenbank.co.jp/oos/adv/intlcard02/en/>

Lawson Japan Website: http://lawson.jp/en/product_service/service/

9. Balancing your itinerary



As you will be crossing several time zones, jetlag must be taken into consideration. If your trip is during the summer, please be prepared for high temperatures. Both factors will affect the energy level of the students during the course of a day. Outdoor activities and standing for long stretches – such as visits to temples and museums – should be restricted to the morning hours and afternoon activities should be moved indoors and have students engaged in programs that are hands on and interactive – such as at craft centres. Ensure that your students are properly hydrated and wearing hats.



Tenryu-ji-Temple



Traditional Kyoto Kaiseki Dish



Lantern, Kyoto

Kyoto and Tokyo at a Glance

Tokyo and Kyoto are geographically positioned so that they can be used as home bases to take day trips to outlining areas of interest. Hiroshima and Miyajima Island can be visited while staying in Kyoto. Tokyo positions you close to Mt. Fuji, Hakone, Nikko and Kamakura. Kansai International Airport in Osaka is 1 hour and 30 minutes by bus and 75 minutes on the Japan Rail Limited Express Haruka train to Kyoto. The Narita International Airport is 2 hours to Tokyo by bus and 1 hour by the Narita Express. Haneda Airport is approximately 30 minutes to downtown Tokyo via monorail.

KYOTO - Historical Glance

Kyoto is the quintessential destination for experiencing traditional Japanese culture. Although Nara was the first capital city in 710, Kyoto became Japan's capital in 794. In the eighth century, the Emperor came under the control of the first military dictator (shogun), Minamoto Yoritomo (1192-1199) who moved his headquarters to Kamakura to be away from the influence of the Imperial court. Successive shoguns would follow this practice.

First time visitors will be surprised to find that Kyoto is a modern city but one that has maintained its connection to the historic and cultural past. It is easy to transport oneself back into time when visiting the serene temples and calm gardens.

If you plan to visit Kyoto in summer, please note that the Gion Festival starts on July 1 and continues for one month. The festival was begun in 869 in the hopes for divine intervention against an epidemic that had hit the city.

JNTO Websites: Kyoto
Kyoto-Nara Guide: http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/pdf/travelguide_kansai.html

http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/pdf/travelguide_kansai.html

Japan Anime Map Back Page: http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/pdf/viewer.html?file=animemap/ANIMemap_back.pdf

Public Transportation

Please note that the Kyoto Shinkansen line is on the south side of the station.

Kyoto Station Website: https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/transfac/kyoto_station.html

Kyoto's subway system is made up of two lines – the east-west Tozei line and the north-south Karasuma line that runs through Kyoto Station.

Unlimited day passes are recommended for their value. Here are some of the pass options available:

All day city bus

Bus and Subway – one or two day pass

Bus, subway, Keihan line, Hankyu line and other participating transit lines

Passes are available at the Kyoto Bus Information Centre (near the Kyoto Station), convenience stores and information centres.

Pasmo and Suica IC cards are accepted on the Kyoto bus line.

Kyoto Websites:

Discover Kyoto <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/kyoto/>

Inside Kyoto <https://www.jnto.org.au/plan-your-trip/transport/train-passes-and-discounted-tickets/useful-tickets-in-kansai/>

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/model-route/kansai/for-those-travelling-to-kyoto-for-the-first-time.html>

Convenience Stores



As Kyoto Station is an important destination, both Lawson and 7-Eleven are in or near the station and open 24 hours. Lawson Kyoto Station is located north of the station and the 7-Eleven Kyoto Station store is located inside the north station near the JR Kyoto Isetan Department Store. Other locations are available.

Department Stores

Typical hours of operation are from 10:00 am until 8:00 pm. Shijo Dori Street is the location for Takashimaya and Daimaru department stores and the Isetan department store occupying thirteen floors is located on the north side of Kyoto station. The Isetan food court is located on the basement floors B1 and B2.

ATM location at Kyoto Train Station

ATM machines have audio and visual instructions in English. The Kyoto Central Post Office is open 24 hours and the 7-Eleven Convenience Store ATM is located on the north side of the Station building as you exit the central ticket gates next to the Cube Shopping Mall. Other locations are available.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Please check the hours of operation for all Museums and religious sites as well as national holidays.

SOCKS AND SHOES

Shoes are allowed only in public areas of temples, shrines and historical buildings. Please take your cue at the front entrance. If you see shoes lined up neatly, then please remove them. Some facilities may have slippers for use but you may wish to travel with a pair of socks if you are barefooted.

UMBRELLA ETIQUETTE

Dripping wet umbrellas pose a safety risk inside buildings. On rainy days, please leave your umbrella on a rack inside the main entrance or there will be plastic sleeves that can be slipped onto the umbrella so that you can take it with you.

SUGGESTED KYOTO SITES

Kyoto International Manga Museum

The Museum's collection of 300,000 artifacts goes back to the Meiji Period (1868-1912). There are three public areas for you to visit.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/museum/kyotomanga.html>

Kiyomizu Temple

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Temple was founded in 778. The current buildings were built in 1633. Using a system of Japanese joinery, the Temple structure was built without the use of a single nail. Inside the Temple complex is the popular Jishu Shrine (jinja) for youth dedicated to love and matchmaking.

Website: <http://www.kiyomizudera.or.jp/en/visit/>

Gion district



Gion Festival

This district is synonymous with the city and one finds stores selling traditional crafts beside contemporary stores. If you are fortunate, you may spot student geishas (Maiko) in this district.

JNTO Website: https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/festival/gion_matsuri.html

Shijo Kawaramachi Shopping Area

A major shopping district of Kyoto's city centre where one will find department stores such as: Takashimaya, Hankyu as well as the Nishiki food market. The area grew in the feudal period, as this was the only area where the authorities allowed the Kabuki theatre to be performed. The major streets are: Shijo, Kawaramachi, Ponto-cho, Kiyamachi, Shin-kiyogoku and Nishiki koji. You may also be able to find more budget-friendly hotels here:

Website: https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/kyoto/gion_kawaramachi.html

Sanjusangendo Temple

The Temple houses 1001 wooden statues of the goddess of mercy, Kannon bosatsu. The Temple was founded in 1164 and rebuilt 110 years later after destruction by fire. Archery competition used to be held during the feudal period and one can see the remains of

arrowheads embedded in the Temple pillars. This competition (Toh-shiya) is still performed on or around January 15 as part of the New Year celebrations.

JNTO Website: http://us.jnto.go.jp/heritage/sat_kyoto.php?sat=1

<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/festival/tohshiya.html>

Kyoto National Museum

The Museum's central collection focuses on the history of Kyoto during its period as the capital of Japan from 794 to 1868. The Museum was founded in 1897 and portions of the building have been designated as Important Cultural Property.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/museum/kyotonational.html>

Nijo Castle



Nijo Castle

Built in 1603, the castle was the principle residence of the first Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu on his visits to Kyoto.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/castles/nijo.html>

Kyoto Craft Centre



Kiyomizu pottery, Kyoto-style fan

Students will be able to view traditional Kyoto crafts being made at the Centre. Folding fans, pottery, kimono, Kyoto dolls, cloisonné, woodblock prints and many more. Some hands-on activities are also offered.

Some of Kyoto's famous arts and crafts are: Kyo-shikki (Kyoto lacquerware), Bamboo articles, Combs and Hairpins, Metal works, Folding fans, umbrellas, Kiyomizu Pottery, Yuzen dyeing and Nishijin Weaving.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/handcraft/kyotohandicraft.html>

<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/handcraft/index.html>

Kinkaku-ji Temple

The Golden Temple is a World Heritage site and was the villa of Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in the thirteenth century. The name comes from the gold leaf applied to the outside and inside of the second and third floors. It became a Buddhist Zen Temple upon the death of Yoshimitsu in 1408.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/shritemp/kinkakuji.html>

Ryoan-ji Temple



Ryoan-ji Temple

The famous site began life as a villa for a noble and became a Zen Temple in 1450. Visitors will be surprised at the small size of the iconic Temple garden that is composed of white sand and 15 stones. The rocks represent islands in a vast ocean that is further amplified by the earthen wall surrounding the abstract landscape.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/gardens/ryoanji.html>

Kyoto Day Trips

If you do not have enough time, it is possible to visit Miyajima Island and the Hiroshima Peace Museum in one day if you leave for Miyajima early in the morning.

Miyajima Island and Itsukushima Shinto Shrine

Miyajima and Itsukushima are synonymous names used for the Island. When the tide is in, the Shrine and the red Torii gate seem to be floating on water. Check the high tide schedule for the day you will be in Miyajima.

Using your Railpass take the local train from Hiroshima station to Miyajima-guchi station. From there, it is a short walk to board the Japan Rail ferry (Note: there are other ferries) to the Island. Although there is Tram #2 that runs from Hiroshima Station that will take you to Miyajima, you cannot use the Japan Railpass. From the Island ferry dock; Itsukushima Shrine is a ten-minute walk.

Walk along Omotesando shopping district and historic Machiya-Dori. Be sure to sample the famous foods such as sweet red bean in Castella Cake (Portuguese travellers in the 16th century brought the popular sponge cake to Japan), Miyajima oysters and Nigiri Ten

Miyajima Island storefront



Itsukushima Shinto Shrine

(cooked fish paste cake). Along with Buddhist temples, there is an aquarium as well as other tourist and historic sites.

CAUTION:

You are strongly advised not to feed the free roaming deer and monkeys on the Island.

Shinto is the native religion of Japan. Large "tori" gates mark the shrine entrance. Please note that photographs of the main altar in any shrine is not allowed. It is said that Shinto is the religion of life and Buddhism is that of death. Near the main altar in both religions is a large cord attached to a bell and an offering box. The shaking of the bell is said to draw attention to the deity.

HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima is the capital city of the Prefecture. The city was established as the seat of the powerful warlord, Mori Terumoto, in 1589 but being on the losing side against Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), the domain was given to Masanori Fukushima who ruled until 1619 when it came under the rule of the main branch of the Asano Clan.

As the key centre of the military war effort during World War II, the city was a frequent target for American bombing missions. After the fire bombing of Tokyo, the residents of Hiroshima were ordered by the military to take measures against similar attacks, little realizing that it would be the site of the first atomic bombing in history on August 6, 1945. On that day, the American Super fortress bomber, "Enola Gay" dropped the bomb nicknamed "Little Boy" killing 70,000 people instantly and by the end of the year that number had risen to 166,000 people due to radiation poisoning. In 1955, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum were created.

Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park Museum

The Park is on the site of the first atomic bombing. The Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, or better known today as the Atomic Bomb Dome, was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1996. The building was 160 metres from the hypocenter of the explosion.

HIROSHIMA LOOP BUS

Every 30 minutes, Japan Railpass holders can ride the Maple Loop bus that connects Hiroshima Station with Shukkeien, Hiroshima Castle and the Peace Memorial Park.

Web: <http://www.chugoku-jrbus.co.jp/teikan/meipurupu/en/>

Hiroshima Castle

The original castle was destroyed in the atomic bombing and the current structure, made of ferroconcrete was completed in 1958. The castle may be an interesting point of student discussion for comparison to Nijo castle if both sites are on your itinerary.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/castles/hiroshima.html>

Osaka

The city of Osaka is the capital of Osaka prefecture with a population of around 2.7 million people. In the past, the city has been known as the centre of mercantilism and still retains that reputation today. Here are some Osaka sites for your consideration: Osaka Aquarium, Osaka Castle, Universal Studios, Minami (Namba) downtown area, and Tenma with the two kilometer long Tenjinbashi-suji Shopping Street – the longest in Japan and the Science Museum. Osaka is 12 minutes on the Bullet train from Kyoto.

JNTO Website: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/osaka/>

Nara

Nara, the first permanent capital, has eight Unesco World Heritage sites. One of the Heritage sites is Todai-ji Temple constructed in 752, and home to the largest indoor Buddhist statue made of bronze. Kofukuji and Horyuji temples should also be added to your itinerary.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/nara/index.html>

Hikone Castle



Hikone castle

Hikone Castle is located in Shiga Prefecture beside Lake Biwa. Construction began under Lord Ii Naomasa in 1603 and completed in 1622. It is one of five castles to be designated as a National Treasure by the Japanese government. To reach the city of Hikone, you have several options on which JR train to take. Please consult available sources.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/castles/hikonejo.html>



Hagoita market

TOKYO

Tokugawa Ieyasu, having consolidated control of Japan after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 was appointed shogun in 1603 by the Emperor Go-Yozei. Ieyasu, in the tradition of other shoguns, moved his capital to Edo; a small village surrounded by marshland. The Tokugawa shogunate was to rule Japan for over 200 years. In 1867, the shogunate was overthrown by an alliance of western lords ushering in the Meiji restoration. Emperor Meiji moved his seat of power from Kyoto to Edo and renamed the capital Tokyo or Eastern Capital.

JNTO Websites: Tokyo

Tokyo & Vicinity: http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/ttp/se/tokyo_day1.html

Map of Tokyo: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/pdf/map/tokyomap.pdf>

Tokyo & Vicinity Walking Guide: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/pdf/viewer.html?file=/eng/location/rtg/pdf/pg-305.pdf&la=en>

Japan Anime Map: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/animemap/index.html>

Public Transportation

IC Transport Cards
Suica and Pasma Cards can be used in Tokyo

Suica Website: <http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/suica.html>

Pasma Website: <https://www.japan-rail-pass.com/services/pasmocard>

Day Passes

There is a wide range of day passes and combined passes available in Tokyo. Please visit the Official Tokyo Travel Guide Website: <http://www.gotokyo.org/en/tourists/info/profit/index.html>

JR East - Yamanote Line



Keio Line Shinjuku Station

Running through the core of downtown Tokyo is the Japan Rail Yamanote Line. Out of 29 stations only 2 do not connect to major centres and a complete circle route may take up to 65 minutes. Students, who become separated from their group, can simply stay on the Line, as it will eventually take them to their station of origin. The Line also links to other rail lines and subways. An additional convenience to travellers is the easy access to major department stores.

Subways

There are a total of 13 subway lines managed by the Tokyo Metro and the Toei Subway. It has its own colour and the first initial of the name of the line to help distinguish each other.

Rush Hour in Tokyo

When taking the train on weekdays, plan your itinerary to avoid the peak hours between 8am to 9 am and 5 pm to 6 pm.

Convenience Stores

As in Kyoto, the top three convenience stores are: 7-Eleven, Lawson and Family Mart.

Department Stores



Isetan Department Store

Three of the top ten department stores in Tokyo are: Isetan Department Store in Shinjuku, Ginza Mitsukoshi in Chuo and Seibu Ikebukuro Main Store in Toshima.

Isetan Website: http://isetan.mistore.jp.ez.hp.transer.com/store/index.html?_ga=2.41307490.1964441682.1514401630-1780174260.1514401630

Ginza Mitsukoshi Chuo Website: <http://mitsukoshi.mistore.jp.ez.hp.transer.com/store/ginza/index>

Seibu Ikebukuro Website: https://www.gotokyo.org/en/kanko/toshima/spot/s_617.html

ATM location

Please visit the JNTO website locator for further information.

<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/basic-info/basic-info/atms.html>

SUGGESTED TOKYO SITES

Odaiba

Odaiba is an artificial island built in the 1850s as protection against foreign warships. Today it is a major entertainment area and a popular destination for tourists. Given the multitude of attractions available, one can spend an entire day here. The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation is one of the highlights.

Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/tokyo/odaiba.html>

Harajuku

Takeshita-dori (street) in Harajuku caters to the fashion trends and tastes of Japanese youth. Beside the JR Harajuku Station is the Meiji Shrine, a peaceful oasis from the noise and the pedestrian traffic that surrounds it. Nearby you will find the Ota Memorial Museum of Art that has an extensive collection of 12,000 Japanese woodblock prints (Ukiyo-e) collected by the late Seizo Ota V.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/model-route/kanto/visiting-tokyos-temples-shrines-and-museums.html>

https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/tokyo/harajuku_omotesandou_aoyama.html

Ota Museum Website: <http://www.gotokyo.org/en/kanko/shibuya/spot/8.html>

Imperial Palace

The Palace has been the residence of Emperors since the Meiji restoration. It is located in Chiyoda Ward of Tokyo and is set in a park like setting that is ringed by busy traffic. It is close to the National Diet Building and other government buildings.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/histarch/imperial-palace.html>

Asakusa & Ueno Park Area

The Asakusa area is home to the Ameya-Yokocho Market, Kappabashi Street for kitchenware and plastic foods and the Nakamise shopping stalls that lead up to the Sensoji Temple. Ueno Park is home to the Tokyo National Museum, the National Museum of Western Art, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, the National Science Museum and the Ueno Zoo

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/tokyo/asakusa.html>

Edo-Tokyo Museum

The museum covers the 400-year history of the city as the political, mercantile and cultural centre of Japan. There are many interesting displays, models and artifacts that help capture the spirit of the feudal period under the Tokugawa shoguns. In close proximity is the Sumo Hall.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/museum/edotokyo.html>

Museum Website: <http://www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp/en/>

Kokugikan (Sumo Hall)

A wide array of Sumo related artifacts are on display in the Hall. The collection consists of 3,700 woodblock prints dolls and articles of clothing worn by high ranked sumo wrestlers.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/museum/sumo.html>



Ginza



Akihabara

Akihabara

Akihabara is well known to fans of the latest electronics, anime and manga. If you are planning to purchase electronic equipment, it is recommended that you do some research into comparative prices prior to leaving for Japan to determine if there are true saving after currency conversion.

Website: <https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3003.html>

Ginza

Ginza is the iconic street known to people around the world as the centre of consumerism. You may wish to give your students extended time to have a leisurely walk along this famous street.

While in the district, be sure to visit the JNTO Tourist Information Centre as they offer free Wi-Fi service as well as free "cultural experience opportunities" in kimono, origami, calligraphy and many more.

JNTO Website: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/attractions/shopping/shopping/ginza.html>

TOKYO DAY TRIPS

Mount Fuji and Hakone



Mt-Fuji

Mount Fuji is an hour's distance from Tokyo. The dormant volcano is one of the symbols of Japan.

Less than 100 kilometres from Tokyo, Hakone is a part of a National Park. A day visiting Mt. Fuji and Hakone will allow the students to enjoy the wonders of nature. During the Edo Period, Hakone was a major checkpoint for travellers along the Tokaido Road that connected Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto and there are still remnants of the road that can be viewed. There are all-inclusive day packages with English speaking guides available so please search the web for the right package for your group. The inclusive package may be the most efficient way to visit both sites.

Website: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/indepth/scenic/mtfuji/>

Fuji, Hakone, Kamakura, Nikko:
<https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/regional/kanagawa/hakone.html>

Kamakura



Great Buddha (Daibutsu) of Kamakura

The famous bronze statue (131 tons, 11.3 metres) of the Buddha (Kamakura Daibutsu) was built in 1252 and is the most famous symbol of this city. Kamakura was the ruling seat of the first Shogun, Minamoto Yoritomo, and is one hour by local JR train. The city has many historic and religious sites and one can easily spend an entire day here.

JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/shritemp/kamakuradaibutsu.html>

Nikko National Park

Aside from its natural beauty, Nikko is the site of the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu and Toshogu shrine dedicated to his spirit. Travel to Nikko is little under two hours from Tokyo but please check the JR train service when using your Railpass.

JNTO Website: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/tochigi/nikkousinai.html>

Glimpses of Japan



PERSONAL INSIGHTS

Presented here are personal perspectives from three people who have varying degrees of familiarity with Japan.

Terry Watada is a well-known Toronto based Japanese Canadian writer, who has travelled from the north to the south of Japan many times. He loves the cuisine of the country and writes about his observation of the Japanese people as a Canadian of Japanese ancestry

Kelly Schmidt is originally from Saskatchewan who has lived in the City of Himeji in Hyogo Prefecture since 1990. Himeji is home to the World Heritage "White Heron" Castle. Kelly has created a short list of advice on the "Dos" and "Don'ts" around Japanese etiquette.

Terumi Kuwada has been a long time social justices advocate in the City of Winnipeg. The visit to Japan in the fall of 2012 was the first visit to her ancestral Japan. She shares with us her thoughts on the social and cultural norms of the Japanese people along with her moving impressions of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.



Ramen noodles

Terry Watada

Otera Dining

Japan is full of odd and interesting restaurants serving outlandish and delicious food. During my recent trip, I managed to seek out and partake of some fascinating establishments only found in a country that prides itself on service and perfection. From the amazing variety of Ramen Stadium to the fruit extravaganza of the *Takano Fruit Bar* to the spirituality of the *Tera Cafe*, the trip was a smorgasbord of specialty food that rivaled the variety of a Japanese hotel's baikingu.

The term "stadium" is quite popular in Japan. It denotes a collection of something; for example, *Foodium* (a play on stadium) is a massive grocery store with branches seemingly all over the country. It features an array of goods not seen in North America. Certainly outpaces a place like Uwajimaya in Seattle. In any case, *Ramen Stadium* is blocks away from the Hakata train station (Fukuoka) situated on the fifth floor of the shopping mall, *Canal City*. It competes openly with Ramen Street in

Tokyo (a place I have to visit next time).

In the "stadium", eight ramen shops ply their trade. The eight represent various regional styles from all over Japan. We only had one chance to enjoy a meal so we chose *Hide-Chan*, highly recommended by friends in Toronto. Hideto Kawahara opened his first ramen shop in 1993. His father started in the business with *Daruma Ramen*, established over fifty years ago. Today, Hideto operates 15 stores in Japan, one in Akasaka, Tokyo. He has also expanded to New York City.

I ordered the tonkotsu ramen, Hakata's representational gourmet delight. The large bowl came with a generous portion of noodles, char shiu, green onions, and other condiments. But it was the soup, made out of pork bones and fried pork fat, which took the breath away. One taste of the creamy, thick liquid and I was transported to a Nirvana of delight. Tasty is too weak a word to describe what I experienced. Word of warning, however, it was extremely rich. After a while it became cloyingly rich. By the end, I felt like I was going to come down with a case of gout. So one bowl was sufficient to

experience Hakata.

In Tokyo (and 34 other locations around Japan) stands the temple to fruit: *Takano Fruit Bar*. The cafe/baikingu represents the perfection of fruit. Very popular, we went at 2:00 in the afternoon hoping to get a table, we barely just. We by-passed the buffet, dominated by fruit of course, but had other dishes, and went to the cafe for afternoon dessert. Too bad it wasn't peach season because I have never eaten a bad peach in Japan (at \$5.00 a peach minimum, I had better not) and so was hoping to taste the ambrosia again. But it was not, so I settled for a strawberry parfait. It did not disappoint.

First of all, it was large. Certainly worth the \$20 Canadian it cost. The berries not only looked perfect (a word I have overused here, I know, but there is no other word), they were sweet, aromatic and juicy. Unbelievable.

The company *Takano Fruit Company* started in 1885 by Shinjuku Takano. It was located appropriately enough just outside the Shinjuku Station, which opened the same year as the fruit company.

The *Takano Fruit Company* constantly invents ways to present fruit in original ways to sell to the public. I can see why tourists and locals make this a place for celebrations and pilgrimages.

The *Tera Cafe* in Tokyo's Daikanyama district brings Buddhist traditions into the dining experience. Membership in the Buddhist Church has declined in recent times not only in Japan but also in the 21st century world. Of course, Buddhism is not the only religion seeing shrinking memberships and a creeping indifference to traditional spiritualism. But Japan has been arguably the centre of it since it was imported in the 6th century.

In order to link the tenets of Buddhism to the lives of contemporary Japanese,

Buddhist monks opened a relaxed and comfortable place to enrich their customers' lives. What better place to start than Tokyo, the modern megalopolis so prominent in the world?

There is a butsudhan that dominates the dining room, but there is a patio that exposes the place to the unusually quiet street. Monks and others staff the place and can be a source of counseling if needed. After-hour and off-location courses, workshops and lectures are also offered, but never forced on patrons. There is no proselytizing like a Christian mission may attempt. Instead, *Tera Cafe* is a calm spiritual refuge from the daily pressures of modern life.

The menu features light snacks and coffee of course. A typical variety consists of grilled mackerel, assorted tempura, fried octopus and tsukemono. The cafe also offers a vegetarian set menu based on the dietary restrictions of Buddhist monks. There are four essential elements: rice (a boiled dish), a grilled dish, a salad of chopped vegetables and a Japanese soup to cleanse the palate.

My experience with *Tera Cafe* was very calming. I felt very much at home, reminding me of my youth at the Toronto Buddhist Church. It was good to go back for a while anyway.

So that in a nutshell is my latest eating adventure in Japan, and I've only scratched the surface. Like my first experience with baikingu. Upon hearing the term, I thought it had something to do with germs and not food. Turns out baikingu is derived from the word Viking. And what are the Vikings said to have invented? Not sure if it's true but the smorgasbord. So the baikingu is a smorgasbord featured mainly in hotels like the *Prince* and the *Hotel Shiroyama* in Kagoshima. See how Japanese cuisine goes beyond sushi. Simply fascinating.



Nakasu food stalls

Kelly Schmidt

Faux Pas

I've looked through several different lists of faux pas in Japan, but no list is comprehensive or wholly relevant. Above all, just use common sense. As a foreigner, you are not expected to know everything, so don't worry. Here are just some random points for your consideration:

1. Keep in mind that when you are in a foreign country, many things will be different from your own country. This is the reason why we travel - to learn something new. Therefore do not complain that things are different, or that they should be this way or that way. If you want things to be like they are back at home, then stay home.
2. As a continuation of the above, be open minded. Be ready to try new things - new foods, new language, new ways of doing things.
3. Try to learn at least the basics of the target language - at least greetings. It doesn't matter where you go, people will always appreciate a little bit of

effort. In Japan, politeness is extremely important. So learn greetings!

4. Remember that you are a representative of your own country. Therefore, be on your best behavior and leave a good impression. Dress and act properly, according to the occasion, and always think from the other person's point of view. Japanese people always consider what other people think of them. It's a group-oriented society, so one must always consider others' point of view. A famous saying goes "the nail that sticks up gets pounded down" so don't stick out too much...
5. When you don't know, ask. People are always happy to share their culture with you. Failure to ask questions will result in many missed opportunities to learn!
6. There are, literally, millions of different manners and small traditions, from how to eat at a table, to how to act in the subway, to how to write a greeting card, etc. It is always best to just hang back a few seconds, observe, and do as the natives do. When in Rome....



Nishiki Market Kyoto

Terumi Kuwada

My First Trip to Japan

Here are some recollections of my impressions as a first-time visitor to Japan. The 2012 tour was 8 days in duration that included the Kansai Region (Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, Biwako Kobe) and Hiroshima. Three friends and I extended our stay in Japan, with a visit to Tokyo, for 4 days.

The days were full of new sights and adventures (temples, castles, parks, shopping areas, Bullet train rides, ferry rides, cooking lessons, etc.), sprinkled with much laughter and joy amongst new friends. We saw tourists dressed as Maiko (Geisha in training) and later in the Gion District of Kyoto; saw true Geishas, who were treated like celebrities by many tourists. We learned how to make soba noodles, so articulately mastered by the chefs of this noodle house in Kita Hiroshima. We even got to enjoy the fruits of our labour, albeit much enhanced by the master chefs, who could make any noodle look good. The generosity and friendliness were so much a part of the many

people we encountered in Japan who welcomed us with warm hospitality. The staff of hotels we stayed in, as well as many restaurant owners, bid us a warm "sayonara" as we departed from their facilities.

An added bonus for some of us was visiting a house that was 150 years old that had been damaged by less than 3 metres of wet snow. The owner, a very humble and skilled craftsman, was restoring the house to its original design and structure. He showed us many aspects of the restoration process, which was a lesson in patience, grace and perseverance. As a dog lover, I was most taken by the owner's dog, "Sam" a well-trained and friendly Newfoundlander, a rarity in Japan where most of the dogs weigh about 3 lbs.

Food is an art form in Japan. The artistic presentation, colour and texture of various items are wondrous. Even the idea that many ordinary restaurants display their menu items in plastic models is artfully arranged. A lot of us, who could not read the menu, often resorted to finger pointing to the plastic models and hoped that we had chosen an appropriate dish. At times, we were



Shopping in Harajuku Tokyo

surprised, but for the most part, this method worked well for us.

Japan is well known for its orderliness and civility. This was ever present wherever we went. The only place that I can remember that was not as orderly was the Harajuku area of Tokyo, where much of the population are young, dressed in various attire (think Gwen Stefani's back up group), selling all sorts of products that most people over 40 would not be inclined to purchase and playing loud music in the streets. Having said that, at one of the street corners, was a huge selection of kimonos and all the accessories that go with wearing a kimono. I have never seen such a wide selection or reduced prices. Apparently, the younger generation in Japan is similar to North American youth who are not that interested in family heirlooms of the older generation.

While in Tokyo we travelled to the Ginza district, a very popular place of high end shops, restaurants, theatres, etc. At one intersection, it is a scramble corner and I have never witnessed the orderliness of the pedestrians, no pushing, running or loud talk or music.

I was also taken by the traffic as well. I never heard the sounds of a horn or cars running red lights, etc. The number of cyclists in Tokyo also amazed me. Two incidents were particularly amazing. A deliveryman on a bicycle dressed in a white server jacket, with one hand upright, holding a tray of food and the other hand on the handle bar. There was also a young mother, with one child on the back of the bicycle, the other in front in a basket, while she carried two grocery bags on both sides of the handlebars. Amazed, I was tempted to follow her. And speaking of cyclists, a wonderful thing happened to us on our way back to the Family Inn we stayed at in Tokyo. The taxi driver got lost getting us there and was obviously in distress. I asked him to stop and let us out, thinking we could figure out our way back to the Inn, which was a bit foolish on our part. Along came a woman in her 80's cycling along the street that looked vaguely familiar. I stopped her and in my best-broken Japanese, asked her for help. She was terrific, said, "Follow me" in Japanese and took us to our destination. Turned out she was a messenger in the War.



Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

Two things surprised me in Japan. WIFI connections were difficult to find, in the public areas. In the hotels, we ended up using their business centre computers for sending emails. As well, I was surprised in the hotels that many staff people were not fluent in English. Having said that, I do know that others have found navigating in Japan to be quite manageable regarding communication.

The most memorable time for me was visiting Hiroshima. As an individual who has spent many years in the social justice areas, I was most impacted by the visit to Hiroshima. I was struck by the magnitude of the devastation to Hiroshima and the resiliency of the people of Japan to rebuild the city and create such a powerful message of world peace. In particular was a monument to a tree that survived the destruction of

the A-Bomb, the "Phoenix Tree", which is a Chinese Parasol tree. This tree, which was in the epicentre of the bomb, was not expected to survive. Slowly, however, people noticed that leaves appeared within the charred remains of the tree and it was a message of hope and renewal. The tree was replanted to its current location in the Peace Park and the seeds from this tree are sent to schoolyards all over Japan to send a message to children, of hope and peace. Apparently in the Millennium year, there was a call to songwriters to write a song about celebrating Japan in the new century. Many songs were submitted, but the one that was chosen, was a song about the tree, that was written and sung by a 7-year-old girl. One of the lines of the song, (translated), "gathering courage, we make a vow.... to create countries that do not fight"

Conclusion

There you have it! Certainly this is not a comprehensive Handbook, but we hope that it has inspired you to believe that a student trip to Japan is possible. A successful trip will require a systematic plan of action, a supportive administration, supportive staff, a competent travel agent, and energetic students and parents. **Others have done so, why not you?**

If you are fortunate to have access to a Japanese language school or Japanese cultural groups in your city, they will most certainly assist you in putting together orientation workshops. A good preparation of your students will help them make a positive transition to Japanese culture that will insure a memorable experience for them.

If you are a teacher, take this organizer to your principal with a proposal. If you are an administrator, pass this organizer to that energetic teacher who might make an excellent trip coordinator.

Lastly, the Japan National Tourism Organization in Toronto is a phone call or e-mail away. Please contact us for resource support and extra encouragement, and say **Yes! to Japan.**

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Gotokuji Temple, Tokyo



***Note:** Portions of the Handbook is based on information collected from educators who have had extensive experience in organizing school trips to Japan. Any errors or omissions are not the responsibility of the Visit Japan School Campaign or the Japan National Tourism Organization. The opinions expressed on page 33 of "Personal Insights" may not reflect those of JNTO. All photographs appearing in the Handbook are the property of JNTO and cannot be used without permission.*



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