



### **CAPITAL CITY**

The capital city of Japan is Tokyo.

### **SIZE**

Inland area: 377,975 km<sup>2</sup>

### **GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION**

Japan is an island nation located in East Asia, off the eastern coast of the Asian mainland. It is situated east of the Korean Peninsula and China. The country itself is located between the Sea of Japan (to the west) and the Pacific Ocean (to the east). Japan's topography consists of about 73% mountainous, with the Japanese Alps in the central part of Honshu and Mount Fuji being the most famous peaks. Japan is located on the Ring of Fire, an area with frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity due to the tectonic plate boundaries surrounding the Pacific Ocean. There are four major islands—Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku—and over 6,800 smaller islands.

### **POPULATION**

In 2025, Japan's population was estimated to be around 123.3 million. The population density is 323/km<sup>2</sup>, more than 5 times the global average. Most of the population resides in urban areas, particularly on the island of Honshu. The Greater Tokyo Area has ~37 million inhabitants (about 30% of Japan's entire population), making it the world's largest metropolitan area.

The country has been experiencing a population decline since 2008, primarily due to low birth rates and an aging population, which poses significant challenges, including a shrinking workforce and increased pressure on social security systems. The number of senior citizens (those ages 65 and up) reached 36.25 million (as of 2023), making up roughly 29.3 percent of the entire population.

### **LANGUAGE**

Japan's official and primary language is Japanese, which is spoken by the vast majority of the population. The language uses a combination of three writing systems: Kanji (Chinese characters), Hiragana, and Katakana (both phonetic scripts). While Japanese is the dominant language, English is commonly taught in schools and used in business, tourism, and international communication, though fluency varies.

### **CURRENCY**

The currency of Japan is the yen (¥). As of March 2025, the exchange rate is approximately

- 1 USD = 148 JPY
- 1 EURO = 164 JPY

ATMs are ubiquitous, but many local bank ATMs don't accept foreign cards, so be sure to use a convenience store ATM. These can be found at Convenience Stores such as 7-Eleven, Lawson & Family Mart, Japan Post Bank or International airports (e.g., Narita, Haneda, Kansai) and major train stations.

Sometimes however even the Global ATMs may not accept your foreign card so it's wise to have a second source of money for those times. Be sure to stock up on cash before heading to the countryside. Credit card acceptance, on the other hand, is very good, and all but the very cheapest restaurants and motels will take Visa and MasterCard.

Please note that some hotels may need an imprint of your credit card as a deposit during your stay, which is a normal procedure. However, this deposit can be made in cash and will be refunded upon check-out.

### CLIMATE

- **Spring** (March–May) brings mild temperatures ranging from 10–20°C, making it a pleasant season to explore. The highlight is the breathtaking cherry blossoms (*sakura*), which typically bloom in April, drawing crowds to parks and festivals. While the weather is generally comfortable, occasional rain showers add a refreshing touch to the season.
- **Summer** (June–August) is hot and humid, with temperatures ranging from 25–35°C. The season starts with the rainy season (*Tsuyu*), lasting from mid-June to mid-July, bringing frequent showers and high humidity. As summer progresses, typhoon season begins in late August, bringing strong winds and heavy rain, especially in coastal areas.
- **Autumn** (September–November) is cool and comfortable, with temperatures ranging from 15–25°C. The season is famous for its stunning fall foliage (*Koyo*), attracting visitors to scenic spots across the country. However, typhoons may still occur in September, bringing occasional heavy rain and strong winds.
- **Winter** (December–February) varies by region, with cold temperatures in the north and milder conditions in the south. Heavy snowfall blankets Hokkaido and the Japan Alps, making them popular destinations for winter sports. In major cities like Tokyo and Osaka, temperatures range from 0–10°C, while Hokkaido experiences much colder weather, ranging from -5 to -15°C.

*Japan, located on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world. The Tōhoku earthquake in 2011, with a magnitude of 9.0, marked recent history by its intensity and consequences. In response to these seismic risks, Japan applies some of the strictest construction standards in the world and has particularly advanced warning and disaster management systems.*

### LOCAL TIME

Japan is 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

### ELECTRICITY

The standard voltage in Japan is 100 volts.

The Type A outlet with two flat pins and is the same type used in the U.S. and Canada.



### WATER

Japan’s tap water is safe, clean, and high-quality. The country has strict water purification standards, making tap water drinkable anywhere, including cities and rural areas.

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

For calls to Japan, the country code is +81. Mobile phone coverage is generally excellent, with 4G LTE available nationwide and 5G expanding rapidly in urban areas as one of the most reliable and fastest networks in the world. The country has three service providers: NTT Docomo, au (by KDDI), and SoftBank. They offer prepaid mobile phone services (pre-paid service, PPS) in Japan. Incoming calls are free. Prepaid services can be acquired at electronics stores or service counters at airports. You will be able to find a Wi-Fi network in a wide range of public areas including Airports & Train Stations and most hotels (However, speeds may vary, especially in budget accommodations.)

### HEALTH & MEDICAL FACILITIES

Finding English-speaking medical facilities in Japan can be challenging due to language barriers. However, several hospitals and clinics catering to international patients with English-speaking staff like Tokyo Medical & Surgical Clinic, Osaka General Medical Center, and Kyoto University Hospital are recommended.

### TRANSPORTATION

Transport in Japan is renowned for its efficiency, punctuality and comfort. Here's an overview of the main modes of transport:

**Train:** The Shinkansen (high-speed train) is undoubtedly Japan's most emblematic means of transport. It links the country's main cities, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hiroshima, at speeds of up to 320 km/h. Trains are very punctual. Local trains and subways (especially in Tokyo and Osaka) are also very popular for urban and suburban travel. These lines are well served, although peak times can be very congested.

**Metro and bus:** The metro is an excellent way to get around major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

Buses are also an option, although slower due to traffic. They can be useful in areas less well served by the metro.

**Taxis:** Taxis are available everywhere, but prices are relatively high compared with public transport.

### DRIVING

An International Driving Permit (IDP) may be used to drive around Japan. In general, Japan has well-maintained roads, clear signage, and a highly developed highway system, making driving relatively smooth. However, traffic congestion and narrow streets in cities can be challenging. Japan follows international road sign standards, with most signs in Japanese & English.

### CUISINE

Japanese cooking is known for its seasonal ingredients, delicate flavors, and artistic presentation. It ranges from home-cooked meals to elaborate Kaiseki cuisine. Japanese food is largely based on Rice (Gohan), Soy Sauce (Shoyu), Miso, Dashi, Mirin & Sake, and Seaweed (Nori, Wakame, Kombu). Meals in Japanese cuisine follow the Ichiju-Sansai principle, which consists of one soup (such as miso soup), three side dishes (including vegetables, fish, or tofu), and a main dish of rice or noodles. This balanced approach ensures a variety of flavors and nutrients while emphasizing low-fat, high-protein foods like seafood, tofu, and fresh vegetables, contributing to a healthy and nutritious diet.

Well-known dishes are Ramen – Wheat noodles in a flavorful broth, Sushi – Vinegared Rice with Toppings, Bento – Balanced Lunch Box, Japanese Curry, and Tempura - Seafood and vegetables deep-fried. Popular alcoholic drinks are Sake – Japanese Rice Wine, Shochu (Stronger than Sake), and beer. There are special cuisines for side dishes (otsumami) accompanying alcoholic beverages.

### CUSTOMS AND HABITS

Bowing is a common greeting in Japan and a sign of respect, with deeper bows conveying greater reverence. When exchanging business cards, it is customary to use both hands and take a moment to read the card before carefully putting it away. In public spaces, especially on trains, maintaining a quiet demeanor is expected, as loud conversations are considered impolite.

Before eating in Japan, it is customary to say “Itadakimasu” as a gesture of gratitude for the meal, and after finishing, “Gochisousama deshita” to show appreciation. Chopsticks should never be stuck upright into rice, as this resembles a funeral ritual. Unlike in some cultures, slurping noodles is not considered rude but rather a sign of enjoyment.

Always remove your shoes when entering homes, temples, and certain traditional restaurants, as it is a sign of respect.

### SHOPPING

Japan is a shopping paradise, offering everything from high-end luxury brands to unique souvenirs, traditional crafts, and the latest tech gadgets. Cash is still widely used, but credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, JCB) are accepted in major stores. Unlike many other countries, bargaining is not common in Japan. However, there are a few exceptions where you might be able to negotiate a discount like Electronics Stores, Flea Markets, or Second-Hand Shops. When bargaining in Japan, always be polite and respectful, as aggressive haggling is frowned upon. Buying in bulk may increase your chances of getting a small discount, especially in flea markets or second-hand shops.

**TIPPING**

Tipping is not customary in Japan and can even be considered rude or confusing. Excellent service is already included in the culture, and employees take pride in their work without expecting extra money.

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**ACCESS**

Please find below a list of carriers offering services into Japan:

- ✓ All Nippon Airways (ANA)
  - ✓ Japan Airlines (JAL)
  - ✓ Singapore Airlines
  - ✓ British Airways
  - ✓ Etihad Airways
  - ✓ Qantas
  - ✓ Alaska Airlines
  - ✓ Peach Aviation
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**VISA AND PASSPORT**

Japan allows visa-free entry for 90 days for citizens of over 60 countries (France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, etc.). A form must be completed on arrival (distributed on the plane or available at the airport).

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**BEFORE GOING**

For safety reasons, we advise travelers not to leave valuables in vehicles during their journey.



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