

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

Japan offers a wide range of accommodation, from cheap guesthouses to first-class hotels. In addition to the Western-style accommodation, you'll also find distinctive Japanese-style places like ryokan (traditional Japanese inns; see p788) and *minshuku* (inexpensive Japanese guesthouses; see p787).

In this guide, accommodation listings have been organised by neighbourhood and price. Budget options cost ¥6000 or less; midrange rooms cost between ¥6000 and ¥15,000; and

top-end rooms will cost more than ¥15,000 (per double).

Of course, there are some regional and seasonal variations. Accommodation tends to be more expensive in big cities than in rural areas. Likewise, in resort areas like the Izu-hantō, accommodation is more expensive during the warm months. In ski areas like Hakuba and Niseko, needless to say, accommodation prices go up in winter and down in summer.

## Reservations

It can be hard to find accommodation during the following holiday periods: Shōgatsu (New Year) – 31 December to 3 January; Golden Week – 29 April to 5 May; and O-Bon – mid-August. If you plan to be in Japan during these periods, you should make reservations as far in advance as possible.

Tourist information offices at main train stations can usually help with reservations, and are often open until about 6.30pm or later. Even if you are travelling by car, the train station is a good first stop in town for information, reservations and cheap car parking.

Making phone reservations in English is usually possible in most major cities. Providing you speak clearly and simply, there will usually be someone around who can get the gist of what you want. For more information on making accommodation reservations in Japan, see the Japanese Accommodation Made Easy boxed text (p786).

The **International Tourism Center of Japan** (formerly Welcome Inn Reservation Center; [www.itcj.or.jp/indexwel.html](http://www.itcj.or.jp/indexwel.html)) is a free reservation service that represents hundreds of *minshuku*, ryokan, inns and pensions in Japan. It oper-

### BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

## PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers & Magazines:** There are three main English-language daily newspapers in Japan: the *Japan Times*, *Daily Yomiuri* and *Asahi Shimbun/International Herald Tribune*. In the bigger cities, these are available at bookstores, convenience stores, train station kiosks and some hotels. In the countryside, you may not be able to find them anywhere. Foreign magazines are available in the major bookshops in the bigger cities.
- **Radio:** Recent years have seen an increase in the number of stations aimed specifically at Japan's foreign population. InterFM (76.1FM) is a favourite of Tokyo's expat community, and the Kansai equivalent is FM Cocolo (76.5FM).
- **Electricity:** The Japanese electric current is 100V AC. Tokyo and eastern Japan are on 50Hz, and western Japan, including Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka, is on 60Hz. Most electrical items from other parts of the world will function on Japanese current. Japanese plugs are the flat two-pin type.
- **Video Systems:** Japan uses the NTSC system.
- **Weights & Measures:** Japan uses the international metric system.

ates counters in the main tourist information offices in Tokyo (see p109) and Kyoto (see p313), and at the main tourist information counters in Narita and Kansai airports. You can also make reservations online through its website (which is also an excellent source of information on member hotels and inns).

The **Japanese Inn Group** ([www.jpinn.com/index.html](http://www.jpinn.com/index.html)) is a collection of foreigner-friendly ryokan and guesthouses. You can book member inns via its website or phone/fax. Pick up a copy of its excellent mini-guide to member inns at major tourist information centres in Japan.

If you make a reservation and then change your plans, be sure to cancel the reservation. One reason foreigners occasionally have a hard time with accommodation is because others who have gone before them have made reservations and then pulled no-shows. It is common courtesy to cancel a reservation if you change your plans and it makes things easier for those who come after you.

## Camping

Camping is possible at official camping grounds across Japan, some of which are only open during the summer high season of July and August. Camping is also possible year-round (when conditions permit) at camping grounds in the mountains or around certain mountain huts (p787). 'Wild' or unofficial camping is also possible in many parts of rural Japan, but we recommend asking a local person about acceptable areas before setting up your tent.

## Cycling Terminals

Cycling terminals (*saikuringu taminaru*) provide low-priced accommodation of the bunk-bed or tatami-mat variety and are usually found in scenic areas suited to cycling. If you don't have your own bike, you can rent one at the terminal.

Cycling terminal prices compare favourably with those of a youth hostel: at around ¥3000 per person per night or ¥5000 including two meals. For more information, check out the website of the **Bicycle Popularization Association of Japan** ([www.cycle-info.bpaj.or.jp/english/begin/st.html](http://www.cycle-info.bpaj.or.jp/english/begin/st.html)).

## Hostels

Japan has an extensive network of youth hostels, often located in areas of interest to travellers. The best source of information on youth hostels is the *Zenkoku Youth Hostel no Tabi* booklet, which is available for ¥1365 from **Japan Youth Hostels, Inc** (Map pp112-13; JYHA; ☎ 03-3288-1417; [www.jyh.or.jp/english](http://www.jyh.or.jp/english); 9th fl, Kanda Amerex Bldg, 3-1-16 Misaki-chō, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0006). Many youth hostels in Japan sell this handbook.

The best way to find hostels is via the JYHA website, which has details in English on all member hostels, and allows online reservations. Another option is the *Youth Hostel Map of Japan*, which has one-line entries on each hostel. It's available for free from JNTO and travel information centres (TICs) in Japan.

## MEMBERSHIP, PRICES & REGULATIONS

You can stay at youth hostels in Japan without being a member of either the JYHA or

### JAPANESE ACCOMMODATION MADE EASY

More than one foreign traveller has turned up unannounced in a ryokan or *minshuku* and been given a distinctly cold reception, then concluded that they have been the victim of discrimination. More than likely, they simply broke one of the main rules of Japanese accommodation: don't surprise them. Unlike some countries, where it's perfectly normal to rock up at a place with no reservation, in Japan, people usually make reservations, often months in advance. With this in mind, here are a few tips to help you find a bed each night in Japan. Note that these also go for hotels, although these are generally a little more flexible than traditional accommodation.

- **Make reservations whenever possible** – Even if it's a quick call a few hours before arriving, if you give the place a little warning, you'll vastly increase your chances of getting a room.
- **Fax** – The Japanese are much more comfortable with written than spoken English. If you fax a room request with all your details, you will find a warm welcome. You can always follow it up with a call, once you're all on the same page.
- **The baton pass** – Get your present accommodation to call ahead and reserve your next night's accommodation. This will put everyone at ease – if you're acceptable at one place, you'll be just fine at another. Remember: this is a country where introductions are everything.
- **Tourist information offices** – In even the smallest hamlet or island in Japan, you'll find tourist information offices, usually right outside train stations or ferry terminals. These people exist just to help travellers find accommodation (OK, they also give brilliant directions). They will recommend a place and call to see if a room is available, and then they will tell you exactly how to get there. This is another form of introduction.

Lastly, there will be times when you just have to slide that door open and hope for the best. Even the surprise-averse Japanese have to resort to this desperate move from time to time. The secret here is to try to minimise the shock. Smile like you're there to sell them insurance, muster your best *konbanwa* (good evening) and try to convince them that you actually prefer futons to beds, green tea to coffee, chopsticks to forks, and baths to showers.

the International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHA). You can purchase a one-year IYHA membership card at youth hostels in Japan for ¥2800.

Hostel charges currently average ¥3000 per night; some also add 5% consumption tax (see p799 for more information). Private rooms are available in some hostels from ¥3500 per night. As a friendly gesture, some hostels have introduced a special reduction – sometimes as much as ¥500 per night – for foreign hostellers.

Average prices for meals are ¥500 for breakfast and ¥900 for dinner. Almost all hostels require that you use a regulation sleeping sheet, which you can rent for ¥100 if you do not have your own. Although official regulations state that you can only stay at one hostel for three consecutive nights, this is sometimes waived outside the high season.

Hostellers are expected to check in between 3pm and 8pm to 9pm. There is usually a curfew of 10pm or 11pm. Checkout is usually before 10am and dormitories are closed between 10am and 3pm. Bath time is usually between 5pm

and 9pm, dinner is between 6pm and 7.30pm, and breakfast is between 7am and 8am.

### Hotels

You'll find a range of Western-style hotels in most Japanese cities and resort areas. Rates at standard midrange hotels average ¥9000 for a single and ¥12,000 for a double or twin. Rates at first-class hotels average ¥15,000 for a single and ¥20,000 for a double or twin. In addition to the 5% consumer tax that is levied on all accommodation in Japan, you may have to pay an additional 10% or more as a service charge at luxury hotels in Japan.

### BUSINESS HOTELS

These are economical and practical places geared to the single traveller, usually lesser-ranking business types who want to stay somewhere close to the station. Rooms are clean, Western style, just big enough for you to turn around in, and include a miniature bath/WC unit. Vending machines replace room service.

Cheap single rooms can sometimes be found for as low as ¥4500, though the average rate is around ¥8000. Most business hotels also have twin and double rooms, and usually do not have a service charge.

### CAPSULE HOTELS

One of Japan's most famous forms of accommodation is the *capsu* *hoteru*. As the name implies, the 'rooms' in a capsule hotel consist of banks of neat white capsules stacked in rows two or three high. The capsules themselves are around 2m by 1m by 1m – about the size of a spacious coffin. Inside is a bed, a TV, a reading light, a radio and an alarm clock. Personal belongings are kept in a locker room. Most capsule hotels have the added attraction of a sauna and a large communal bath. The average price is ¥3800 per night.

Capsule hotels are common in major cities and often cater to workers who have partied too hard to make it home or have missed the last train. The majority of capsule hotels only accept male guests, but some also accept women (see p148 and p151).

### LOVE HOTELS

As their name indicates, love hotels are used by Japanese couples for discreet trysts. You can use them for this purpose as well, but they're also perfectly fine, if a little twee, for overnight accommodation.

To find a love hotel on the street, just look for flamboyant façades with rococo architecture, turrets, battlements and imitation statuary. Love hotels are designed for maximum privacy: entrances and exits are kept separate; keys are provided through a small opening without contact between desk clerk and guest; and photos of the rooms are displayed to make the choice easy for the customer.

During the day, you can stay for a two- or three-hour 'rest' (*kyūkei* in Japanese) for about ¥4000 (rates are for the whole room, not per person). Love hotels are of more interest to foreign visitors after 10pm, when it's possible to stay the night for about ¥6500, but you should check out early enough in the morning to avoid a return to peak-hour rates. There will usually be a sign in Japanese (occasionally in English) outside the hotel, announcing its rates. Even if you can't read Japanese, you should be able to figure out which rate applies to a 'rest' and which applies to an overnight stay.

Most love hotels are comfortable with foreign guests, but some travellers have reported being turned away at the odd place. Same-sex couples may have more trouble than one man and one woman.

### Kokumin-shukusha

*Kokumin-shukusha* (people's lodges) are government-supported institutions offering affordable accommodation in scenic areas. Private Japanese-style rooms are the norm, though some places offer Western-style rooms. Prices average ¥5500 to ¥6500 per person per night, including two meals.

### Minshuku

A *minshuku* is usually a family-run private lodging, rather like a Western-style B&B, except that you get both breakfast *and* dinner at a *minshuku*, making them extremely convenient for the traveller. The average price is around ¥6000 per person per night (with two meals). *Minshuku* are particularly common in rural areas and on the outer islands of Japan, where they may be the only accommodation option. For information on staying in a *minshuku*, see p788.

### Mountain Huts

Mountain huts (*yama-goya*) are common in many of Japan's hiking and mountain-climbing areas. While you'll occasionally find free emergency shelters, most huts are privately run and charge for accommodation. These places offer bed and board (two meals) at around ¥5000 to ¥8000 per person; if you prepare your own meal that figure drops to ¥3000 to ¥5000 per person. It's best to call ahead to reserve a spot (contact numbers are available in Japanese hiking guides and maps, and in Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Japan*), but you won't be turned away if you show up without a reservation.

### Pensions

Pensions are usually run by young couples offering Western-style accommodation based on the European pension concept. They are common in resort areas and around ski fields. Prices average ¥6000 per person per night, or ¥8500 including two meals.

### Rider Houses

Catering mainly to touring motorcyclists, rider houses (*raidā hausu*) provide extremely

basic shared accommodation from around ¥1000 per night. Some rider houses are attached to local *rāmen* restaurants or other eateries, and may offer discounted rates if you agree to eat there. You should bring your own sleeping bag or ask to rent bedding from the owner. For bathing facilities, you will often be directed to the local *sentō* (public bath).

Rider houses are most common in Hokkaidō, but you'll also find them in places like Kyūshū and Okinawa. If you can read some Japanese, spiral-bound *Touring Mapple* maps, published by Shobunsha and available in Japan, mark almost all of the rider houses in a specific region, as well as cheap places

to eat along the way. Japanese readers will also find the **Rider House Database** ([www.tabizanmai.net/rider/riderdate/k\\_db.cgi](http://www.tabizanmai.net/rider/riderdate/k_db.cgi)) useful.

### Ryokan

Ryokan are traditional Japanese lodgings, usually fine wooden buildings with traditional tatami-mat rooms and futons for bedding. Ryokan range from ultra-exclusive establishments to reasonably priced places with a homey atmosphere. Prices start at around ¥4000 (per person per night) for a no-frills ryokan without meals and climb to ¥100,000 for the best establishments. For around ¥10,000 per person, you can usually find a very good

#### STAYING IN A RYOKAN OR MINSHUKU

Let's face it: a hotel is a hotel wherever you go. Just as you want to try local food when you're on the road, you probably also want to try a night in traditional local accommodation. Unfortunately, in most of Asia, this is a lot more difficult than it sounds. Sure, if you happen to be on the steppes of Mongolia, you can bed down in a *gher* without too much trouble, but try finding good traditional accommodation in, say, Thailand, Vietnam or China. Fortunately, Japan is the exception here. Indeed, Japan may be the only country in Asia where you can easily sleep in traditional local accommodation.

In Japan you'll find two kinds of traditional accommodation: ryokan and *minshuku*. Ryokan (written with the Japanese characters for 'travel' and 'hall') are usually fine old wooden Japanese buildings, with tatami mats, futons, gardens, deep Japanese bathtubs, traditional Japanese service and kitchens that turn out classic Japanese cuisine. *Minshuku* (written with the Japanese characters for 'people' and 'accommodation') are simpler versions of the same, sometimes private Japanese homes that have a few rooms given over to guests, other times purpose-built accommodation.

Due to language difficulties and unfamiliarity, staying in a ryokan or *minshuku* is not as straightforward as staying in a Western-style hotel. However, with a little education, it can be a breeze, even if you don't speak a word of Japanese. Here's the basic drill:

When you arrive, leave your shoes in the *genkan* (foyer area) and step up into the reception area. Here, you'll be asked to sign in and perhaps show your passport (you pay when you check out). You'll then be shown around the place and then to your room where you will be served a cup of tea, or shown a hot water flask and some tea cups so you can make your own. You'll note that there is no bedding to be seen in your room – your futon is in the closet and will be laid out later. You can leave your luggage anywhere except the *tokonoma* (sacred alcove), which will usually contain some flowers or a hanging scroll. If it's early enough, you can then go out to do some sightseeing.

When you return, you can change into your *yukata* (lightweight Japanese robe) and be served dinner in your room or in a dining room. In a ryokan, dinner is often a multi-course feast of the finest local delicacies. In a *minshuku*, it will be simpler but still often very good. After dinner, you can take a bath. If it's a big place, you can generally bathe anytime in the evening until around 11pm. If it's a small place, you'll be given a time slot. While you're in the bath, some mysterious elves will go into your room and lay out your futon so that it will be waiting for you when you return all toasty from the bath.

In the morning, you'll be served a Japanese-style breakfast (some places these days serve a simple Western-style breakfast for those who can't stomach rice and fish in the morning). You pay on check-out, which is usually around 11am.

The only problem with staying in a good ryokan is that it might put you off hotels for the rest of your days! Enjoy.

place that will serve you two excellent Japanese meals.

See the websites of the **International Tourism Center of Japan** (formerly Welcome Inn Reservation Center; [www.itcj.or.jp/indexwel.html](http://www.itcj.or.jp/indexwel.html)) and the **Japanese Inn Group** ([www.jpinn.com/index.html](http://www.jpinn.com/index.html)) for information about the ryokan booking services they offer. For information on staying in a ryokan, see the boxed text (opposite).

### Shukubō

Staying in a *shukubō* (temple lodging) is one way to experience another facet of traditional Japan. Sometimes you are allocated a simple room in the temple precincts and left to your own devices. Other times you may be asked to participate in prayers, services or *zazen* (seated meditation). At some temples, exquisite vegetarian meals (*shōjin ryōri*) are served.

Tokyo and Kyoto TICs produce leaflets on temple lodgings in their regions. Kōya-san (p417), a renowned religious centre in the Kansai region, includes more than 50 *shukubō* and is one of the best places in Japan to try this type of accommodation. The popular pilgrimage of Shikoku's 88 sacred temples also provides the opportunity to sample *shukubō* (see p630 for more information).

Over 70 youth hostels are located in temples or shrines – look for the reverse swastika in the JYHA handbook. The suffixes *-ji*, *-in* or *-dera* are also clues that the hostel is a temple.

### Toho

The **Toho network** ([www.toho.net/english.html](http://www.toho.net/english.html)) is a diverse collection of places that has banded loosely together to offer a more flexible alternative to youth hostels. Most of the network's 90 members are in Hokkaidō, although there are a few scattered around Honshū and other islands further south. Prices average ¥4000 per person for dormitory-style accommodation, or ¥5000 with two meals. Private rooms are sometimes available for about ¥1000 extra.

### ACTIVITIES

Japan may be best known for its cultural attractions, but it's also a great place to ski, climb, trek, dive, snorkel and cycle. And, needless to say, it's a great place to pursue martial arts like jūdō, aikidō and karate.

### Cycling

Bicycle touring is fairly popular in Japan, despite the fact that most of the country is quite

mountainous. See p815 for more information on cycling in Japan. See also p785 for information on places to stay.

### Diving & Snorkelling

Popular diving destinations include the Okinawan islands (p736), in the far southwest of Japan, and the chain of islands south of Tokyo, known as Izu-shotō (Izu Seven Islands; p231). Other dive sites in Japan include the waters around Tobi-shima (p546), off northern Honshū, and the Ogasawara-shotō (p235).

As you would expect, diving in Japan is expensive. Typical rates are ¥12,000 per day for two boat-dives and lunch. Courses for beginners are available in places like Ishigaki-jima (p773) and Iriomote-jima (p778) in Okinawa, but starting costs are around ¥80,000. Instruction will usually be in Japanese.

### Hiking & Mountain Climbing

The Japanese are keen hikers, and many national parks in Japan have hiking routes. The popular hiking areas near Tokyo are around Nikkō (p187) and Izu-shotō (p231). In the Kansai region, Nara (p400), Shiga-ken (p367) and Kyoto (p309) all have pleasant hikes.

Japan comes into its own as a hiking destination in the Japan Alps National Park, particularly in Kamikōchi (p267), the Bandai plateau (p505) in northern Honshū, and Hokkaidō's national parks (p567).

While rudimentary English-language hiking maps may be available from local tourism authorities, it's better to seek out proper Japanese maps and decipher the kanji. Shobunsha's *Yama-to-Kōgen No Chizu* series covers all of Japan's most popular hiking areas in exquisite detail. The maps are available in all major bookshops in Japan.

Serious hikers will also want to pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Japan*, which covers convenient one-day hikes near major cities and extended hikes in more remote areas.

### Martial Arts

Japan is the home of several of the world's major martial arts: aikidō, jūdō, karate and kendō. Less popular disciplines, such as *kyūdō* (Japanese archery) and sumō, also attract devotees from overseas. It is possible for foreigners to study all these disciplines here, although it's sometimes difficult to do so as



a traveller. If you are really keen, we suggest living for a short spell near your *dōjō* (training place) of choice.

**All Japan Jūdō Federation** (Zen Nihon Jūdō Renmei; ☎ 03-3818-4199; www.judo.or.jp in Japanese; c/o Kodōkan, 1-16-30 Kasuga, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo)

**All Japan Kendō Federation** (☎ 03-3211-5804; www.kendo-fik.org/english-page/english-top-page.html; c/o Nippon Budokan, 2-3 Kitanomaru-kōen, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo)

**All Nippon Kyūdō Federation** (☎ 03-3481-2387; www.kyudo.jp/english/index.html; 4th fl, Kishi Memorial Hall, 1-1-1 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo)

**International Aikidō Federation** (☎ 03-3203-9236; www.aikido-international.org; 17-18 Wakamatsu-chō, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo)

**Japan Karate Association** (☎ 03-5800-3091; www.jka.or.jp/english/e\_index.html; 2-23-15 Kōraku, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo)

**Japan Karate-dō Federation** (☎ 03-3503-6640; www.karatedo.co.jp/index3.htm; 6th fl, No 2 Nippon Zaidan Bldg, 1-11-2 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo)

**Nihon Sumō Kyōkai** (☎ 03-3623-5111; www.sumo.or.jp/eng; c/o Ryōgoku Kokugikan, 1-3-28 Yokoami, Sumida-ku, Tokyo)

## Skiing

Japan is the best place to ski in Asia and it boasts some of the most reliable snow in the world. For more information, see the Skiing in Japan chapter (p80).

## BUSINESS HOURS

Department stores usually open at 10am and close at 6.30pm or 7pm daily (with one or two days off each month). Smaller shops are open similar hours but may close on Sunday. Large companies usually work from 9am to 5pm weekdays and some also operate on Saturday morning.

Banks are open 9am to 3pm weekdays. For information on changing money, see p798.

Restaurants are usually open from 11am to 2pm and from 6pm to 11pm, with one day off per week, usually Monday or Tuesday. Some stay open all afternoon. Cafés are usually open 11am until 11pm, with one day off per week, usually Monday or Tuesday. Bars usually open around 5pm and stay open until the wee hours.

## CHILDREN

Japan is a great place to travel with kids: it's safe and clean and there's never a shortage of places to keep them amused. Look out for *Japan for Kids* by Diane Wiltshire Kanagawa and Jeanne

Huey Erickson, an excellent introduction to Japan's highlights from a child's perspective. In addition, Lonely Planet publishes *Travel with Children*, which gives the lowdown on getting out and about with your children.

## Practicalities

Parents will find that Japan is similar to Western countries in terms of facilities and allowances made for children, with a few notable exceptions. Cots are available in most hotels and these can be booked in advance. High chairs are available in many restaurants (although this isn't an issue in the many restaurants where everyone sits on the floor). There are nappy-changing facilities in some public places, like department stores and some larger train stations; formula and nappies are widely available, even in convenience stores. Breast feeding in public is generally not done. The one major problem concerns child seats for cars and taxis: these are generally not available. Finally, child-care agencies are available in most larger cities. The only problem is the language barrier: outside Tokyo, there are few, if any, agencies with English-speaking staff.

## Sights & Activities

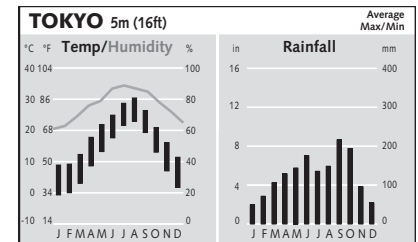
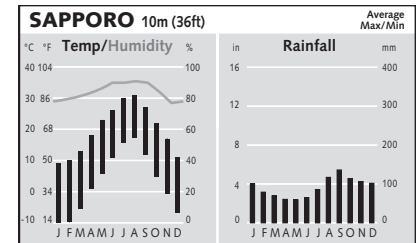
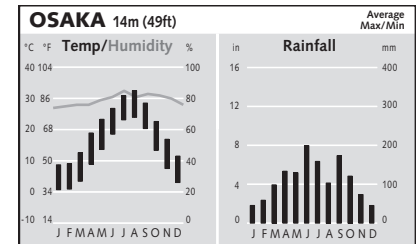
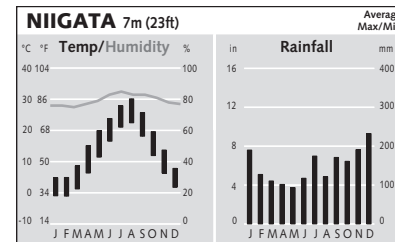
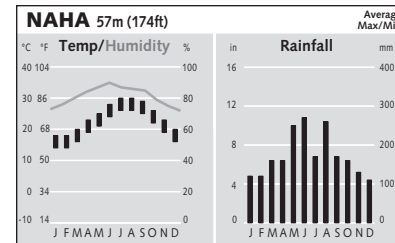
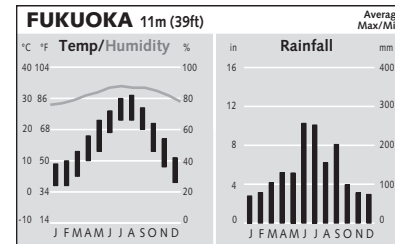
Tokyo has the most child-friendly attractions in Japan, including Tokyo Disneyland (p142); for more information, see Tokyo for Children (p144). In Kansai, popular attractions for the young 'uns include Osaka's Universal Studios Japan (p383), Osaka Aquarium (p382) and Nara-kōen (p401) in Nara, with its resident deer population.

Children who enjoy the beach and activities like snorkelling will adore the islands of Okinawa (p736) and the Izu-shotō (p231).

## CLIMATE

The combination of Japan's mountainous territory and the length of the archipelago (covering about 20° of latitude) makes for a complex climate. Most of the country is located in the northern temperate zone, which yields four distinct seasons. In addition, there are significant climatic differences between Hokkaidō in the north, which has short summers and lengthy winters with heavy snowfalls, and the southern islands, such as Okinawa in Nansei-shotō (Southwest Archipelago), which enjoy a subtropical climate.

In the winter months (December to February), cold, dry air-masses from Siberia move



down over Japan, where they meet warmer, moister air-masses from the Pacific. The resulting precipitation causes huge snowfalls on the side of the country that faces the Sea of Japan. The Pacific Ocean side of Japan receives less snow but can still be quite cold, while the big cities of Honshū like Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Kyoto have winters with highs in the single digits or even low teens and lows a few degrees above zero (Celsius). The odd January or February day will be colder, but these cold snaps usually don't last.

The summer months (June to August) are dominated by warm, moist air currents from the Pacific, and produce high temperatures and humidity throughout most of Japan (with the blissful exception of Hokkaidō). In the early part of summer, usually mid-May to June, there is a rainy season lasting a few weeks that starts in the south and gradually works its way northward. Although it can be

inconvenient, this rainy season is not usually a significant barrier to travel. August, September and October is typhoon season, which can make travel in Okinawa, the Izu-shotō and Ogasawara-shotō difficult.

In contrast to the extremes of summer and winter, spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) in Japan are comparatively mild. Rainfall is relatively low and the days are often clear. These are, without a doubt, the very best times to visit the country.

## COURSES

A course is a great way to deepen your appreciation of Japanese culture. Kyoto and Tokyo are the best places to find courses taught in English. Cultural activities visas require applicants to attend 20 class-hours per week. Those wishing to work while studying need to apply for permission to do so. For more

information on cultural activities visas, visit the website of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan** ([www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/visa/04.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/04.html)).

For information on food and cooking courses, see p102.

### Japanese Language

While you can study Japanese in most cities in Japan, you'll find the best selection of schools and courses in Tokyo, Kyoto, Nagoya, Osaka and Kōbe. In Kansai, you'll find lots of ads for language courses in *Kansai Time Out* magazine. In Tokyo, any of the many English-language magazines will have ads for courses. Alternatively, ask at any tourist information office.

Costs at full-time private Japanese language schools vary enormously depending on the school's status and facilities. There is usually an application fee of ¥5000 to ¥30,000, plus an administration charge of ¥50,000 to ¥100,000 and the annual tuition fees of ¥350,000 to ¥600,000. Add accommodation and food, and it is easy to see why it may be necessary to work while you study.

### Traditional Arts

Many local cultural centres and tourist offices can arrange short courses in Japanese arts, such as ceramics, *washi* (Japanese papermaking), *aizome* (indigo dyeing), wood working, *shodō* (calligraphy), ink painting and ikebana (flower arranging). The best place to pursue these interests is Kyoto (p309), where the TIC (p313) or the International Community House (p312) can put you in touch with qualified teachers.

### CUSTOMS

Customs allowances include the usual tobacco products plus three 760mL bottles of alcoholic beverages, 56mL of perfume, and gifts and souvenirs up to a value of ¥200,000 or its equivalent. You must be over the age of 20 to qualify for these allowances. Customs officers will confiscate any pornographic materials in which pubic hair is visible.

There are no limits on the importation of foreign or Japanese currency. The export of foreign currency is also unlimited but there is a ¥5 million export limit for Japanese currency.

Visit **Japan Customs** ([www.customs.go.jp/index\\_e.htm](http://www.customs.go.jp/index_e.htm)) for more information on Japan's customs regulations.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES Earthquakes

Japan is an earthquake-prone country, although most quakes can only be detected by sensitive instruments. If you experience a strong earthquake, head for a doorway or supporting pillar. Small rooms, like a bathroom or cupboard, are often stronger than large rooms but even a table or desk can provide some protection from falling debris. If you're in an urban area, do not run outside as this could expose you to falling debris.

All Japanese hotels have maps indicating emergency exits, and local wards have emergency evacuation areas (fires frequently follow major earthquakes). In the event of a major earthquake, try to stay calm and follow the locals, who should be heading for a designated safe area.

For more information on what to do in the event of an earthquake in the Tokyo area, see p110.

### Fire

Although modern hotels must comply with certain safety standards, traditional Japanese buildings – with their wooden construction and tightly packed surroundings – can be real firetraps. Fortunately, most old buildings are low-rise, but it's still wise to check fire exits and escape routes.

### Noise

In Japanese cities the assault on the auditory senses can be overwhelming: you'll hear announcements on buses, escalators, elevators, on sidewalks, in shopping malls, even at popular beaches and ski resorts. Earplugs can help, particularly when you're trying to sleep.

### Size

Even medium-sized foreigners need to mind their heads in Japanese dwellings. The Western frame may make it hard to fit into some seats and those with long legs will often find themselves wedged tight. Toilets in cramped accommodation necessitate contortions and careful aim (be warned!). Bathtubs are also sometimes on the small side and require flexibility on the part of the bather.

### Theft

The low incidence of theft and crime in general in Japan is frequently commented on. Of course, theft does exist and its rarity is no

reason for carelessness. It's sensible to take the normal precautions in airports and on the crowded Tokyo rail network, but there's definitely no need for paranoia.

Lost-and-found services do seem to work; if you leave something behind on a train or other mode of transport, it's always worth inquiring if it has been turned in. The Japanese word for a lost item is *wasure-mono*, and lost-and-found offices usually go by the same name. In train stations, you can also inquire at the station master's (*eki-chō*) office.

### DISCOUNT CARDS Hostel Cards

See p785 about obtaining a youth hostel membership card.

### Museum Discount Card

The **Grutt Pass** ([www.museum.or.jp/grutto/about-e.html](http://www.museum.or.jp/grutto/about-e.html)) is a useful ticket that allows free or discounted admission to almost 50 museums in the Tokyo area. For more information see p109.

### Senior Cards

Japan is an excellent place for senior travellers, with discounts available on entry fees to many temples, museums and cinemas. To qualify for widely available senior discounts, you have to be aged over 60 or 65, depending upon the place/company. In almost all cases a passport will be sufficient proof of age, so senior cards are rarely worth bringing.

Japanese domestic airlines (JAS, JAL and ANA) offer senior discounts of about 25% on some flights (for airline contact details, see p814). Japan Rail (JR) offers a variety of discounts and special passes, including the **Full Moon Green Pass** ([www.japanrail.com/JR\\_discounttickets.html#a4](http://www.japanrail.com/JR_discounttickets.html#a4)), which is good for travel in Green Car (1st-class) carriages on *shinkansen* (bullet trains), regular JR trains and sleeper trains. The pass is available to couples whose combined age exceeds 88 years (passports can prove this). The pass costs ¥80,500/99,900/124,400 per couple for five/seven/12 consecutive days of travel. They are available at major JR stations within Japan from 1 September to 31 May, and they are valid for travel between 1 October and 30 June (with the exception of 28 December to 6 January, 21 March to 5 April, and 27 April to 6 May). Note that these dates may change slightly from year to year. See the above website for details.

### Student & Youth Cards

Japan is one of the few places left in Asia where a student card can be useful, though some places only offer discounts to high school students and younger, not to university and graduate students. Officially, you should be carrying an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) to qualify for a discount, but you will often find that any youth or student card will do.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES Japanese Embassies & Consulates

Diplomatic representation abroad:

- Australia** Canberra (embassy; ☎ 02-6273 3244; [www.japan.org.au](http://www.japan.org.au); 112 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, Canberra, ACT 2600); Brisbane (consulate; ☎ 07-3221 5188); Melbourne (consulate; ☎ 03-9639 3244); Perth (consulate; ☎ 08-9480 1800); Sydney (consulate; ☎ 02-9231 3455)
- Canada** Ontario (embassy; ☎ 613-241 8541; [www.ca.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.ca.emb-japan.go.jp); 255 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 9E6); Calgary (consulate; ☎ 403-294 0782); Montreal (consulate; ☎ 514-866 3429); Toronto (consulate; ☎ 416-363 7038); Vancouver (consulate; ☎ 604-684 5868)
- France** (☎ 01 48 88 62 00; [www.fr.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.fr.emb-japan.go.jp); 7 ave Hoche, 75008 Paris)
- Germany** (☎ 493-021 09 40; [www.de.emb-japan.go.jp/index.html](http://www.de.emb-japan.go.jp/index.html); Hiroshimastrasse 6, 10785, Berlin)
- Hong Kong** (consulate; ☎ 852-2522 1184; [www.hk.emb-japan.go.jp/eng/index.html](http://www.hk.emb-japan.go.jp/eng/index.html); 46-47/F, One Exchange Sq, 8 Connaught Pl, Central, Hong Kong)
- Ireland** (☎ 01-202 8300; [www.ie.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.ie.emb-japan.go.jp); Nutley Bldg, Merrion Centre, Nutley Lane, Dublin 4)
- Netherlands** (☎ 70-346-95-44; [www.nl.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.nl.emb-japan.go.jp); Tobias Asserlaan 2 2517 KC, Den Haag)
- New Zealand** Wellington (embassy; ☎ 04-473 1540; [www.nz.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.nz.emb-japan.go.jp); Level 18 & 19, The Majestic Centre, 100 Willis St, PO Box 6340, Wellington); Auckland (consulate; ☎ 09-303 4106)
- South Korea** (☎ 822-2170 5200; [www.kr.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.kr.emb-japan.go.jp); 18-11, Jhoonghak-dong, Jhongro-gu, Seoul)
- UK** (☎ 020-7465 6500; [www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp); 101-104 Piccadilly, London, W1V 9FN)
- USA** Washington DC (embassy; ☎ 202-238 6700; [www.us.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp); 2520 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20008); Los Angeles (consulate; ☎ 213-617 6700); New York (consulate; ☎ 212-371 8222)

### Embassies & Consulates in Japan

Diplomatic representation in Japan:

- Australia** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-5232-4111; [www.australia.or.jp/english](http://www.australia.or.jp/english); 2-1-14 Mita, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Fukuoka (consulate; ☎ 092-734-5055; 7th fl, Tenjin Twin Bldg, 1-6-8 Tenjin, Chūō-ku, Fukuoka); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6941-9271; 16th fl, Twin 21 MID Tower, 2-1-61 Shiromi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**Canada** Tokyo (embassy; ☎ 03-5412-6200; www.canada.net.or.jp/english.shtml; 7-3-38 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Fukuoka (consulate; ☎ 092-752-6055; 9th fl, FT Bldg, 4-8-28 Watanabe-dōri, Chūō-ku, Fukuoka); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6212-4910; 12th fl, Round Cross Shin-saibashi Bldg, 2-2-3 Nishi Shinsaibashi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**France** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-5420-8800; www.ambafrance-jp.org; 4-11-44 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-4790-1500; 10th fl, Crystal Tower, 1-2-27 Shiromi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**Germany** Tokyo (Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-5791-7700; www.tokyo.diplo.de/ja/Startseite.html; 4-5-10 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6440-5070; 35th fl, Umeda Sky Bldg Tower East, 1-1-88 Ōyodonaka, Kita-ku, Osaka)

**Ireland** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-3263-0695; www.embassy-avenue.jp/ireland/index\_eng.html; Ireland House, 2-10-7 Kōji-machi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6204-2024; c/o Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited, 4-1-1, Doshō-machi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**Netherlands** Tokyo (embassy; Map p119; ☎ 03-5401-0411; www.oranda.or.jp/index/english/index.html; 3-6-3 Shiba-kōen, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6944-7272; 33rd fl, Twin 21 MID Tower, 2-1-61 Shiromi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**New Zealand** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-3467-2271; www.nzembassy.com/home.cfm?c=17; 20-40 Kamiyama-chō, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6373-4583; Umeda Centra Bldg, 2-4-12 Nakazaki-nishi Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8323)

**South Korea** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-3452-7611; www.mofat.go.kr/ek/ek\_a001/ek\_jpjp/ek\_02.jsp; 1-2-5 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Fukuoka (consulate; ☎ 092-771-0461; 1-1-3 Jigyōhama, Chūō-ku, Fukuoka)

**UK** Tokyo (embassy; Map pp112-13; ☎ 03-5211-1100; www.uknow.or.jp/index\_e.htm; 1 Chibana-chō, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6120-5600; 19th fl, Epson Osaka Bldg, 3-5-1 Bakurumachi, Chūō-ku, Osaka)

**USA** Tokyo (embassy; Map p119; ☎ 03-3224-5000; http://japan.usembassy.gov/t-main.html; 1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo); Fukuoka (consulate; ☎ 092-751-9331; 2-5-26 Ōhori, Chūō-ku, Fukuoka); Osaka (consulate; ☎ 06-6315-5900; 2-11-5 Nishitenma, Kita-ku, Osaka)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

A *matsuri* (festival) is often the highlight of a trip to Japan. It is a chance to see the Japanese at their most uninhibited, and get some insight into the ancient traditions and beliefs of the country. In addition to *matsuri*, there are several important annual events, which are often Buddhist imports from China or more recent imports from the West (eg Christmas).

The Japanese often welcome foreigners to participate in their local *matsuri*. You might help carry a portable shrine around a neighbourhood, march in a parade or just dance around a fire. If you'd like to join a local *matsuri*, the best thing to do is ask at the local tourist information office. If you happen upon a *matsuri*, you can usually ask one of the participants if it would be OK to join in. Be warned: participation in a *matsuri* usually also means participation in the drinking session that inevitably follows the festival – or is the main part of the festival!

Some of the most important annual events:

### January

**Shōgatsu** (New Year) The celebrations from 31 December to 3 January include much eating and drinking, visits to shrines or temples and the paying of respects to relatives and business associates.

**Seijin-no-hi** (Coming-of-Age Day) Second Monday in January. Ceremonies are held for boys and girls who have reached the age of 20.

### February–May

**Setsubun** (3 or 4 February) To celebrate the end of winter (last day of winter according to the lunar calendar) and drive out evil spirits, the Japanese throw beans while chanting '*fuku wa uchi, oni wa soto*' (In with good fortune, out with the devils).

**Hanami** (Blossom Viewing) The Japanese delight in the brief blossom-viewing season from February to April. The usual sequence is plum in February, peach in March and cherry in late March or early April.

**Hina Matsuri** (Doll Festival; 3 March) During this festival old dolls are displayed and young girls are presented with special dolls (*hina*) that represent ancient figures from the imperial court.

**Golden Week** (29 April to 5 May) Golden Week takes in Midori-no-hi (Green Day; 29 April), Kempō Kinem-bi (Constitution Day; 3 May) and Kodomo-no-hi (Children's Day; 5 May). This is definitely not a time to be on the move since transport and lodging in popular holiday areas can be booked solid.

**Kodomo-no-hi** (Children's Day; 5 May) This is a holiday dedicated to children, especially boys. Families fly paper streamers of carp (*koi-nobori*), which symbolise male strength.

### July–August

**Tanabata Matsuri** (Star Festival; 7 July) The two stars Vega and Altair meet in the Milky Way on this night. According to a myth (originally Chinese), a princess and a peasant shepherd were forbidden to meet, and this was the only time in the year when the two star-crossed lovers

could organise a tryst. Children copy out poems on streamers, and love poems are written on banners that are hung out on display. An especially ornate version of this festival is celebrated from 6 to 8 August in Sendai.

**Fuji Rock Festival** (late July) Held in Naeba, in Niigata-ken, this is Japan's biggest rock festival and it always draws some top-shelf acts from abroad. It's a world-class event and is worth planning a trip around. For more information see p564.

**O-Bon** (Festival of the Dead; 13 to 16 July, and mid-August) According to Buddhist tradition, this is a time when ancestors return to earth. Lanterns are lit and floated on rivers, lakes or the sea to signify the return of the departed to the underworld. Since most Japanese try to return to their native village at this time of year, this is one of the most crowded times of year to travel or look for accommodation.

### November

**Shichi-Go-San** (Seven-Five-Three Festival; 15 November) Traditionally, this is a festival in honour of girls who are aged three and seven and boys who are aged five. Children are dressed in their finest clothes and taken to shrines or temples, where prayers are offered for good fortune.

## FOOD

In the bigger cities, the restaurants that appear in the Eating sections of this guide are divided by neighbourhoods and type of cuisine (Japanese or international). Outside the bigger cities, eating options are generally presented in one section. For more information about Japan's cuisine, see p85.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

With the possible exception of Thailand, Japan is Asia's most enlightened nation with regard to the sexual preferences of foreigners. Shinjuku-ni-chōme in Tokyo is an established scene where English is spoken and meeting men is fairly straightforward. In provincial areas there may be one 'snack' bar, where you pay about ¥1500 for the first drink, entry and the snack. Staying in hotels is simple as most have twin rooms but love hotels are less accessible; if you know someone Japanese and can overcome the language barrier, a stay in a love hotel may be possible, but some are not particularly foreigner-friendly (see p787). Gay saunas double as late-night crash spots if you, unwittingly or otherwise, miss the last train home – so ask your barman for details.

The lesbian scene is growing in Japan but is still elusive for most non-Japanese speaking foreigners. Outside Tokyo you may find it difficult to break into the local scene unless

you spend considerable time in a place or have local contacts who can show you around.

Given Japan's penchant for convenience the internet has been a boon for the gay and lesbian scene. **Utopia** (www.utopia-asia.com) is the site most commonly frequented by English-speaking gays and lesbians. For information about gay and lesbian venues in Tokyo, see p174.

There are no legal restraints to same-sex sexual activities of either gender in Japan. Public displays of affection are likely to be the only cause for concern for all visitors – gay, straight or otherwise.

## HOLIDAYS

Japan has 15 national holidays. When a public holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday is taken as a holiday. If that Monday is already a holiday, the following day becomes a holiday as well. And, if two weekdays (say, Tuesday and Thursday) are holidays, the day in between (Wednesday) will also become a holiday.

You can expect travel and accommodation options to be fully booked during the New Year festivities (29 December to 6 January), Golden Week (29 April to 6 May) and the mid-August O-Bon festival. See opposite for more details of these festivals and events.

Japan's national holidays:

**Ganjitsu** (New Year's Day) 1 January  
**Seijin-no-hi** (Coming-of-Age Day) Second Monday in January  
**Kenkoku Kinem-bi** (National Foundation Day) 11 February  
**Shūbun-no-hi** (Spring Equinox) 20 or 21 March  
**Showa-no-hi** (Shōwa Emperor's Day) 29 April  
**Kempō Kinem-bi** (Constitution Day) 3 May  
**Midori-no-hi** (Green Day) 4 May  
**Kodomo-no-hi** (Children's Day) 5 May  
**Umi-no-hi** (Marine Day) Third Monday in July  
**Keirō-no-hi** (Respect-for-the-Aged Day) Third Monday in September  
**Shūbun-no-hi** (Autumn Equinox) 23 or 24 September  
**Taiiku-no-hi** (Health-Sports Day) Second Monday in October  
**Bunka-no-hi** (Culture Day) 3 November  
**Kinrō Kansha-no-hi** (Labour Thanksgiving Day) 23 November  
**Tennō Tanjōbi** (Emperor's Birthday) 23 December

## INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea. Some policies will specifically exclude 'dangerous



activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling and even trekking; if you plan to engage in such activities, you'll want a policy that covers them.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than have you pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call (reverse-charge) a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home.

Some insurance policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; choose the high-cost option for Japan. Be sure to bring your insurance card or other certificate of insurance to Japan; Japanese hospitals have been known to refuse treatment to foreign patients with no proof of medical insurance.

For information on car insurance, see p818. For information on health insurance, see p826.

## INTERNET ACCESS

If you plan on bringing your laptop to Japan, first make sure that it is compatible with Japanese current (100V AC; 50Hz in eastern Japan and 60Hz in western Japan). Most laptops function just fine on Japanese current. Second, check to see if your plug will fit Japanese wall sockets (Japanese plugs are flat two pin, identical to most ungrounded North American plugs). Both transformers and plug adaptors are readily available in electronics districts, such as Tokyo's Akihabara (Map pp112-13), Osaka's Den Den Town (Map p375) or Kyoto's Teramachi-dōri (Map p322).

Modems and phone jacks are similar to those used in the USA (RJ11 phone jacks). Conveniently, many of the grey IDD pay phones in Japan have a standard phone jack and an infrared port so that you can log on to the internet just about anywhere in the country if your computer has an infrared port. In this book, an internet symbol (☎) indicates that this accommodation option has at least one computer with internet for guests' use. A wi-fi symbol indicates a place with wi-fi somewhere on its premises. You'll find internet cafés and other access points in most major Japanese cities. Rates vary, usually ranging from ¥200 to ¥700 per hour. As a rule, internet connections are fast (DSL or ADSL) and reliable in Japan. Most accommo-

dation options also have some way of getting online, with terminals in the lobby, wi-fi or LAN access.

See p25 for some useful websites on Japan.

## LEFT LUGGAGE

Only major stations have left-luggage facilities, but there are almost always coin-operated storage lockers costing ¥100 to ¥500 per day, depending on their size. The lockers are rented until midnight (not for 24 hours). After that time you have to insert more money before your key will work. If your bag is simply too large to fit in the locker, ask someone 'tenimotsu azukai wa doko desu ka' (Where is the left-luggage office?).

## LEGAL MATTERS

Japanese police have extraordinary powers compared with their Western counterparts. For starters, Japanese police have the right to detain a suspect without charging them for up to three days, after which a prosecutor can decide to extend this period for another 20 days. Police can also choose whether to allow a suspect to phone their embassy or lawyer, though if you find yourself in police custody you should insist that you will not cooperate in any way until allowed to make such a call. Your embassy is the first place you should call if given the chance.

Police will speak almost no English; insist that an interpreter (*tsuyakusha*) be summoned. Police are legally bound to provide one before proceeding with any questioning. Even if you do speak Japanese, it's best to deny it and stay with your native language.

If you have a problem, call the **Japan Helpline** (☎ 0570-000-911), an emergency number that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## MAPS

If you'd like to buy a map of Japan before arriving, both Nelles and Periplus produce reasonable maps of the whole country. If you want more detailed maps, it's better to buy them after you arrive in Japan.

The Japan National Tourist Organization's (JNTO) free *Tourist Map of Japan*, available at JNTO-operated tourist information centres inside the country and JNTO offices abroad, is a reasonable English-language map that is suitable for general route planning. If you'd like something a little more detailed, both

## ADDRESSES IN JAPAN

In Japan, finding a place from its address can be difficult, even for locals. The problem is twofold: first, the address is usually given by an area rather than a street; and, second, the numbers are not necessarily consecutive, as prior to the mid-1950s numbers were assigned by date of construction.

In Tokyo very few streets have names – so addresses work by narrowing down the location of a building to a number within an area of a few blocks. In this guide, Tokyo addresses are organised as such: area number, block number and building number, followed by area and ward. For example, 1-11-2 Ginza, Chūō-ku.

In Kyoto, addresses are simplified. We either give the area (eg Higashiyama-ku, Nanzen-ji) or we give the street on which the place is located, followed by the nearest cross street (eg Karasuma-dōri-Imadegawa). In some cases, we also give additional information to show where the place lies in relation to the intersection of the two streets mentioned. In Kyoto, the land usually slopes gently to the south; thus, an address might indicate whether a place lies above or north of (*agaru*) or below or south of (*sagaru* or *kudaru*) a particular east-west road. Thus, 'Karasuma-dōri-Imadegawa' simply means the place is near the intersection of Karasuma-dōri and Imadegawa-dōri; Karasuma-dōri-Imadegawa-sagaru indicates that it's south of that intersection. An address might also indicate whether a place lies east (*higashi*) or west (*nishi*) of the north-south road.

In Sapporo, a typical address would be S17W7-2-12 Chūō-ku. The 'S17W7' is the South 17, West 7 block. The building is in the second section at number 12.

Elsewhere in this guide, addresses list area number, block number and building number, followed by area and ward. This is the more common presentation in English. For example, '1-7-2 Motomachi-dōri, Chūō-ku'. Where given, the floor number and building name are listed first.

To find an address, the usual process is to ask directions. Have your address handy. The numerous local police boxes are there largely for this purpose. Businesses often include a small map in their advertisements or on their business cards to show their location.

Most taxis and many rental cars now have satellite navigation systems which make finding places a breeze, as long as you can program the address or phone number into the system. Needless to say, you'll have to be able to read Japanese to input the address, but phone numbers should be no problem.

Shobunsha and Kodansha (Japanese publishers) publish a series of bilingual fold-out maps (prices start at around ¥700).

The *Japan Road Atlas* (Shobunsha) is a good choice for those planning to drive around the country. Those looking for something less bulky should pick up a copy of the *Bilingual Atlas of Japan* (Kodansha). Of course, if you can read a little Japanese, you'll do much better with one of the excellent *Super Mapple* road atlases published by Shobunsha.

## MONEY

Despite being a thoroughly modern country, it is not always easy to get cash in Japan. This is because the vast bulk of the country's ATMs only work with Japan-issued bank cards and credit cards. However, Japan's post office ATMs accept most foreign-issued bank cards (see the following ATMs section for details). If your card is not a member of one of the

networks accepted by Japanese postal ATMs, you will have a hard time getting cash in Japan and you'll have to bring a lot of cash or travellers cheques to exchange.

The currency in Japan is the yen (¥) and banknotes and coins are easily identifiable. There are ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100 and ¥500 coins; and ¥1000, ¥2000, ¥5000 and ¥10,000 banknotes (the ¥2000 notes are very rarely seen). The ¥1 coin is an aluminium lightweight coin, the ¥5 and ¥50 coins have a punched hole in the middle (the former is coloured bronze and the latter silver). Note that some vending machines do not accept older ¥500 coins (a South Korean coin of much less value was often used in its place to rip off vending machines).

The Japanese pronounce yen as 'en', with no 'y' sound. The kanji for yen is: 円.

For information on costs in Japan, see p22. For exchange rates, see the inside front cover of this guide.

**WARNING: JAPAN IS A CASH SOCIETY!**

Be warned that cold hard yen (¥) is the way to pay in Japan. While credit cards are becoming more common, cash is still much more widely used, and travellers cheques are rarely accepted. Do not assume that you can pay for things with a credit card; always carry sufficient cash. The only places where you can count on paying by credit card are department stores and large hotels.

For those without credit cards, it would be a good idea to bring some travellers cheques as a back-up. As in most other countries, the US dollar is still the currency of choice in terms of exchanging cash and cashing travellers cheques.

**ATMs**

Automated teller machines are almost as common as vending machines in Japan. Unfortunately, most of these do not accept foreign-issued cards. Even if they display Visa and MasterCard logos, most accept only Japan-issued versions of these cards.

Fortunately, Japanese postal ATMs accept cards that belong to the following international networks: Visa, Plus, MasterCard, Maestro, Cirrus American Express and Diners Club cards. Check the sticker(s) on the back of your card to see which network(s) your card belongs to. You'll find postal ATMs in almost all post offices, and you'll find post offices in even the smallest Japanese village.

Most postal ATMs are open 9am to 5pm on weekdays, 9am to noon on Saturday, and are closed on Sunday and holidays. Some postal ATMs in very large central post offices are open longer hours.

Note that the postal ATMs are a little tricky to use: first press 'English Guidance' on the lower right-hand side of the screen and then press the withdrawal button. The post office has a useful online guide to using its ATMs at [www.yu-cho.japanpost.jp/e\\_index.htm](http://www.yu-cho.japanpost.jp/e_index.htm). Click 'International ATM service' for an explanation of postal ATMs.

In addition to postal ATMs, you will find a few international ATMs in big cities like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, as well as major airports like Narita and Kansai International Airport. International cards also work in Citibank Japan ATMs. Visit [www.citibank](http://www.citibank)

[.co.jp/en/branch/index.html](http://.co.jp/en/branch/index.html) for a useful branch index.

**Credit Cards**

Except for making cash withdrawals at banks and ATMs, it is best not to rely on credit cards in Japan. While department stores, top-end hotels and some restaurants do accept cards, most businesses in Japan do not. Cash-and-carry is still very much the rule. If you do decide to bring a credit card, you'll find Visa the most useful, followed by MasterCard, Amex and Diners Club.

The main credit-card offices are in Tokyo:

**Amex** (☎ 0120-020-120; 4-30-16 Ogikubo, Suginami-ku; ☎ 24hr)

**MasterCard** (Map p117; ☎ 03-5728-5200; 16th fl, Cerulean Tower, 26-1 Sakuragaoka-chō, Shibuya-ku)

**Visa** (Map p119; ☎ 03-5275-7604; 7th fl, Hitotsubashi Bldg, 2-6-3 Hitotsubashi, Chiyoda-ku)

**Exchanging Money**

Banks, post offices and discount ticket shops will change all major currencies and travellers cheques. As with most other countries, you'll find that US dollars are the easiest to change, although you should have no problems with other major currencies. Note, however, that the currencies of neighbouring Taiwan (New Taiwan dollar) and Korea (*won*) are not easy to change, so you should change these into yen or US dollars before arriving in Japan.

You can change cash or travellers cheques at most banks, major post offices, discount ticket shops, some travel agents, some large hotels and most big department stores. Note that discount ticket shops (known as *kakuyasu kippu uriba* in Japanese) often have the best rates. These can be found around major train stations.

**INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS**

In order to make an international transfer you'll have to find a Japanese bank associated with the bank transferring the money. Start by asking at the central branch of any major Japanese bank. If they don't have a relationship with your bank, they can usually refer you to a bank that does. Once you find a related bank in Japan, you'll have to give your home bank the exact details of where to send the money: the bank, branch and location. A credit-card cash advance is a worthwhile alternative.

**Taxes**

Japan has a 5% consumer tax. If you eat at expensive restaurants and stay in top-end accommodation, you will encounter a service charge which varies from 10% to 15%.

**Tipping**

There is little tipping in Japan. If you want to show your gratitude to someone, give them a gift rather than a tip. If you do choose to give someone a cash gift (a maid in a ryokan, for instance), place the money in an envelope first.

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Japan is one of the world's best places to buy cameras (digital or film), photographic equipment, memory and anything else that you can possibly think of to help you record your trip. Japan's photo shops also offer a wide range of services for digital photographers, such as high-quality prints from digital files. The typical cost for printing digital photos is ¥35 per print.

For more information on buying cameras and other photographic equipment, see p801.

**POST**

The Japanese postal system is reliable, efficient and, for regular postcards and airmail letters, not markedly more expensive than other developed countries.

**Postal Rates**

The airmail rate for postcards is ¥70 to any overseas destination; aerograms cost ¥90. Letters weighing less than 25g are ¥90 to other countries within Asia, ¥110 to North America, Europe or Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) and ¥130 to Africa and South America. One peculiarity of the Japanese postal system is that you will be charged extra if your writing runs over onto the address side (the right side) of a postcard.

**Sending & Receiving Mail**

The symbol for post offices is a red T with a bar across the top on a white background (〒). District post offices (the main post office in a ward) are normally open from 9am to 7pm weekdays and 9am to 3pm Saturday, and are closed Sunday and public holidays. Local post offices are open 9am to 5pm weekdays, and are closed Saturday, Sunday and public holidays. Main post offices in the larger cities may

have an after-hours window open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Mail can be sent to, from or within Japan when addressed in English (Roman script).

Although any post office will hold mail for collection, the *poste restante* concept is not well known and can cause confusion in smaller places. It is probably better to have mail addressed to you at a larger central post office. Letters are usually only held for 30 days before being returned to sender. When inquiring about mail for collection ask for *kyoku dome yūbin*.

It should be addressed as follows:

Darren O'CONNELL  
Poste Restante  
Central Post Office  
Tokyo, JAPAN

**SHOPPING**

Japan is truly a shopper's paradise, and it is not as expensive as you might imagine. As well as all the electronic gadgetry available in Japan, there is a wide range of traditional crafts to choose from, all of which make great souvenirs. The big department stores often have the best selections of Japanese gift items, and they usually have English speakers on hand.

**Bargaining**

Bargaining is largely restricted to flea markets (where anything goes) and large discount electronics shops (where a polite request will often bring the price down by around 10%).

**Computer Equipment**

Computers, computer accessories and software are widely available. Unfortunately for the foreign traveller, most of what's out there – operating systems, keyboards and software – is in Japanese and not of any use unless you intend to work with the Japanese language. However, if you're after hardware like peripherals, chips and the like, where language isn't a factor, you will find lots to choose from, including second-hand goods at unbelievably low prices. The world's biggest selection of computer equipment can be found in Japan's major electronics districts: Akihabara in Tokyo and Den Den Town in Osaka (see following Electronics section).

**Electronics**

Nowhere in the world will you find a better selection of electronics than in Tokyo's



Akihabara district (p179) and Osaka's Den Den Town (p389). Keep in mind though that much of the electrical gadgetry on sale in Japan is designed for Japan's curious power supply (100V at 50Hz or 60Hz) and may require a transformer for use overseas. The safest bet is to go for export models – the prices may be slightly higher but, in the long run, you'll save the expense of converting the equipment to suit the conditions in your own country.

### Japanese Arts & Crafts

As well as all the hi-tech knick-knacks produced by the Japanese, it is also possible to go home loaded with traditional Japanese arts and crafts. Anything from carp banners to kimono can make good souvenirs for the Japanophile.

### KASA (JAPANESE UMBRELLAS)

A classic souvenir item, *kasa* (Japanese umbrellas) come in two forms: *higasa*, which are made of paper, cotton or silk and serve as a sunshade; and *bangasa*, which are made of oiled paper and keep the rain off. Department stores and tourist shops are your best bet for finding *kasa*.

### KATANA (JAPANESE SWORDS)

A fantastic souvenir – good *katana* (Japanese swords) are going to cost more than all your other travel expenses put together! The reason for their expense is both their mystique as the symbols of samurai power, and the great care that goes into making them. Sword shops that sell the real thing will also stock *tsuba* (sword guards), and complete sets of samurai armour. Some department stores, on the other hand, stock realistic (to the untrained eye at least) imitations at affordable prices.

### KIMONO & YUKATA

A good kimono is perhaps the ultimate souvenir of a trip to Japan, and prices for new kimono start at around ¥60,000. Keep in mind that you'll have to go for at least one fitting and wait for around a week before the finished item is ready to pick up. A used kimono is a good solution if you don't have the time or money to spend on a new one. Used-clothing shops usually stock a variety of kimono ranging in price from ¥1500 to ¥9000. Another good place to pick up a used kimono is a flea market, where you can find a huge variety of often very fine kimono for less than ¥2000.

*Yukata* (light summer kimono or bath-ropes) are another great souvenir and new ones can be had for as low as ¥2000. Unlike kimono, these are easy to put on and can be worn comfortably around the house. These are available from tourist shops and department stores in Japan.

### KOINOBORI (CARP BANNERS)

The lovely banners that you see waving in the breeze on Kodomo-no-hi (Children's Day; 5 May) throughout Japan are called *koinobori*. The carp is much revered for its tenacity and perseverance, but you might like the banners for their simple elegance.

### NINGYŌ (JAPANESE DOLLS)

Not for playing with, Japanese dolls are usually intended for display. Often quite exquisite, with coiffured hair and dressed in kimono, *ningyō* make excellent souvenirs or gifts. Also available are *gogatsu-ningyō*, dolls that are dressed in samurai suits used as gifts on Kodomo-no-hi. The most well-known dolls are made in Kyoto and are known as *kyō-ningyō*.

*Ningyō* can be bought in tourist shops, department stores and special doll shops. In Tokyo, Edo-dōri in Asakusa (p181) is well known for its many doll shops.

### POTTERY

Numerous pottery villages still exist in Japan; many feature pottery museums and working kilns that are open to the public. Of course, it is also possible to buy examples of stoneware and porcelain. Sources of different pottery styles abound: there's Bizen (p446), near Okayama in western Honshū, which is famed for its Bizen-yaki pottery; and Karatsu (p676), Imari (p678) and Arita (p679) in Kyūshū (the home of Japanese pottery).

Department stores are a surprisingly good place to look for Japanese pottery, and Takashimaya (see p179 for details) often has bargain bins where you can score some real deals. For even better prices try some of Japan's flea markets.

### SHIKKI (LACQUERWARE)

Another exquisite Japanese craft is *shikki* (lacquerware). The lacquerware-making process, involving as many as 15 layers of lacquer, is used to create objects as diverse as dishes and furniture. As you might expect, examples of

good lacquerware cannot be had for a song, but smaller items can be bought at affordable prices from department stores. Popular, easily transportable items include bowls, trays and small boxes. Department stores often have good selections of lacquerware in their housewares sections.

### UKIYO-E (WOOD-BLOCK PRINTS)

Originating in the 18th century as one of Japan's earliest manifestations of mass culture, wood-block prints were used in advertising and posters. It was only later that *ukiyo-e* was considered an art form. The name (literally, 'pictures from the floating world') derives from a Buddhist term indicating the transient world of daily pleasures. *Ukiyo-e* uniquely depicts such things as street scenes, actors and courtesans.

Today, tourist shops in Japan stock modern reproductions of the work of famous *ukiyo-e* masters such as Hokusai, whose scenes of Fuji-san are favourites. It is also possible to come across originals by lesser-known artists at prices ranging from ¥3000 to ¥40,000.

### WASHI (JAPANESE PAPER)

For more than 1000 years, *washi* (Japanese paper) has been famous as the finest handmade paper in the world. Special shops stock sheets of *washi* and products made from it, such as notebooks, wallets and so on. As they're generally inexpensive and light, *washi* products make excellent gifts and souvenirs. You'll find them in the big department stores. See p363 for suggestions on places to buy *washi*.

### Pearls

The Japanese firm Mikimoto developed the technique of producing cultured pearls by artificially introducing an irritant into the pearl oyster. Pearls and pearl jewellery are still popular buys for foreign visitors. The best place in Japan to buy pearls is Mikimoto's home base: Toba, in Mie-ken (p438).

### Photographic Equipment

Tokyo is an excellent hunting ground for photographic equipment. As almost all of the big-name brands in camera equipment are locally produced, prices can be very competitive. The prices for accessories, such as motor drives and flash units, can even be compared to Singapore and Hong Kong. In addition,

shopping in Japan presents the traveller with none of the rip-off risks that abound in other Asian discount capitals.

Tokyo's Shinjuku area is the best place for buying camera equipment, although Ginza also has a good selection of camera shops (see p181 for details). Second-hand camera equipment is worth checking out. In Tokyo, both Shinjuku and Ginza have a fair number of second-hand shops where camera and lens quality is usually very good and prices are around half what you would pay for new equipment. In Osaka, the area just south of Osaka station has used-camera shops as well (see p389).

### Tax-Free Shopping

Shopping tax-free in Japan is not necessarily the bargain that you might expect. Although tax-free shops enable foreigners to receive an exemption from the 5% consumption tax (*shōhi-zei*) levied on most items, these still may not be the cheapest places to shop. Shops that offer this exemption usually require that you pay the consumption tax and then go to a special counter to receive a refund. You will often need to show your passport to receive this refund. Tax-free shops will usually have a sign in English that announces their tax-free status.

### Toys

Tokyo has some remarkable toy shops. See p180 for more information. Elsewhere, look out for some of the traditional wooden toys produced as regional specialities – they make good souvenirs for adults and children alike.

### SOLO TRAVELLERS

Japan is an excellent place for solo travellers: it's safe, convenient and friendly. Almost all hotels in Japan have single rooms, and business-hotel singles can cost as little as ¥4000. Ryokan usually charge by the person, not the room, which keeps the price down for the single traveller. The only hitch is that some ryokan owners balk at renting a room to a single traveller, when they might be able to rent it to two people instead. For more on accommodation, see p784.

Many restaurants in Japan have small tables or counters which are perfect for solo travellers. *Izakaya* (Japanese-style dining pubs) are also generally welcoming to solo travellers, and you probably won't have to wait long

before you're offered a drink and roped into a conversation, particularly if you sit at the counter. Finally, the 'gaijin bars' in the larger cities are generally friendly, convivial places; if you're after a travel partner or just an English-speaking conversation partner, these are good places to start.

## TELEPHONE

Japanese telephone codes consist of an area code plus a local code and number. You do not dial the area code when making a call in that area. When dialling Japan from abroad, dial the country code (☎ 81, followed by the area code (drop the '0') and the number. For a list of area codes for some of Japan's major cities and emergency numbers, see the inside front cover of this guidebook. Numbers that begin with the digits ☎ 0120, ☎ 0070, ☎ 0077, ☎ 0088 and ☎ 0800 are toll-free.

### Directory Assistance

For local directory assistance dial ☎ 104 (the call costs ¥100), or for assistance in English ring ☎ 0120-364-463 from 9am to 5pm weekdays. For international directory assistance dial ☎ 0057.

### International Calls

The best way to make an international phone call from Japan is to use a prepaid international phone card (see right).

Paid overseas calls can be made from grey international ISDN phones. These are usually found in phone booths marked 'International & Domestic Card/Coin Phone'. Unfortunately, these are very rare; try looking in the lobbies of top-end hotels and at airports. Some new green phones found in phone booths also allow international calls. Calls are charged by the unit, each of which is six seconds, so if you don't have much to say you could phone home for just ¥100. Reverse-charge (collect) overseas calls can be made from any pay phone.

You can save money by dialling late at night. Economy rates are available from 7pm to 8am. Note that it is also cheaper to make domestic calls by dialling outside the standard hours.

To place an international call through the operator, dial ☎ 0051 (KDDI operator; most international operators speak English). To make the call yourself, dial ☎ 001 010 (KDDI), ☎ 0041 010 (SoftBank Telecom)

or ☎ 0033 010 (NTT) – there's very little difference in their rates – then the international country code, the local code and the number.

Another option is to dial ☎ 0038 plus your country code for home country direct, which takes you straight through to a local operator in the country dialled. You can then make a reverse-charge call or a credit-card call with a telephone credit card valid in that country.

### PREPAID INTERNATIONAL PHONE CARDS

Because of the lack of pay phones from which you can make international phone calls in Japan, the easiest way to make an international phone call is to buy a prepaid international phone card. Most convenience stores carry at least one of the following types of phone cards: KDDI Superworld Card, NTT Communications World Card and SoftBank Telecom Comica Card. These cards can be used with any regular pay phone in Japan.

### Local Calls

The Japanese public telephone system is very well developed. There are a great many public phones and they work almost all the time. Local calls from pay phones cost ¥10 per minute; unused ¥10 coins are returned after the call is completed but no change is given on ¥100 coins.

In general it's much easier to buy a telephone card (*terefon kado*) when you arrive rather than worry about always having coins on hand. Phone cards are sold in ¥500 and ¥1000 denominations (the latter earns you an extra ¥50 in calls) and can be used in most green or grey pay phones. They are available from vending machines and convenience stores, come in a myriad of designs and are also a collectable item.

### Mobile Phones

Japan's mobile phone networks use 3G (third generation) cell phone technology on a variety of frequencies. Thus, non-3G cell phones cannot be used in Japan. This means that most foreign cell phones *will not work* in Japan. Furthermore, SIM cards are not commonly available in Japan. Thus, for most people who want to use a cell phone while in Japan, the only solution is to rent a mobile phone.

Several companies in Japan specialise in short-term mobile phone rentals, a good option for travellers whose own phones won't

work in Japan, or whose own phones would be prohibitively expensive to use here. The following companies provide this service:

**Mobile Phone Japan** (☎ 075-361-8890; www

.mobilephone.jp.com) This company offers basic mobile phone rental for as low as ¥2900/week. Incoming calls, whether international or domestic, are free, and outgoing domestic calls are ¥2 per second (outgoing domestic calls vary according to country and time of day). Free delivery anywhere in Japan is included and a free prepaid return envelope is also included.

**Rentafone Japan** (☎ 090-9621-7318; www.rentafone.jp.com) This company rents out mobile phones for ¥3900 per week and offers free delivery of the phone to your accommodation. Call rates are the same as above.

### Useful Numbers

If you're staying long-term, adjusting to life in Japan can be tough; but there are places to turn to for help. **Metropolitan Government Foreign Residents' Advisory Center** (☎ 03-5320-7744; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) is a useful service operated by the Tokyo metropolitan government. Otherwise, try the 24-hour **Japan Helpline** (☎ 0120-461 997).

### TIME

Despite the distance between Japan's east and west, the country is all on the same time: nine hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Sydney and Wellington are ahead of Japan (+1 and +3 hours, respectively), and most of the world's other big cities are behind Japan (New York -14, Los Angeles -17 and London -9). Japan does not have daylight savings time (also known as summer time). For more information see World Time Zones (pp866-7).

### TOILETS

In Japan you will come across Western-style toilets and Asian squat toilets. When you are compelled to squat, the correct position is facing the hood, away from the door. Make sure the contents of your pockets don't spill out! Toilet paper isn't always provided, so carry tissues with you. You may be given small packets of tissue on the street in Japan, a common form of advertising.

In many bathrooms in Japan, separate toilet slippers are often provided just inside the toilet door. These are for use in the toilet only, so remember to change out of them when you leave.

It's quite common to see men urinating in public – the unspoken rule is that it's accept-

able at night time if you happen to be drunk. Public toilets are free in Japan. The katakana script for 'toilet' is トイレ, and the kanji script is お手洗い.

You'll often also see these kanji:

**Female** 女

**Male** 男

## TOURIST INFORMATION

Japan's tourist information services are first-rate. You will find information offices in most cities, towns and even some small villages. They are almost always located inside or in front of the main train station in a town or city.

A note on language difficulties: English speakers are usually available at tourist information offices in larger cities. Away from the big cities, you'll find varying degrees of English-language ability. In rural areas and small towns you may find yourself relying more on one-word communication and hand signals. Nonetheless, with a little patience and a smile you will usually get the information you need from even the smallest local tourist information office.

### Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO)

The **Japan National Tourist Organization** (JNTO; www.jnto.go.jp, www.japantravelinfo.com) is the main English-language information service for foreign travellers to Japan. JNTO produces a great deal of useful literature, which is available from both its overseas offices and its Tourist Information Center in Tokyo (p109). Most publications are available in English and, in some cases, other European and Asian languages. JNTO's website is very useful in planning your journey.

Unfortunately for foreign travellers, JNTO is pulling out of the business of operating tourist information centres inside Japan. The sole remaining domestic office is the Tokyo office.

JNTO has a number of overseas offices:

**Australia** (☎ 02-9251 3024; Level 18, Australia Sq

Tower, 264 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

**Canada** (☎ 416-366 7140; 165 University Ave, Toronto, ON M5H 3B8)

**France** (☎ 01 42 96 20 29; 4 rue de Ventadour, 75001 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 069-20353; Kaiserstrasse 11, 60311 Frankfurt am Main)

**UK** (☎ 020-7734 4290; Heathcoat House, 20 Savile Row, London W1S 3PR)

**USA** Los Angeles (☎ 213-623 1952; 515 South Figueroa St, Suite 1470, Los Angeles, CA 90071); New York (☎ 212-757 5640; One Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 1250, New York, NY 10020)

### Other Information Offices

There are tourist information offices (*kankō annai-sho*; 観光案内所) in or near almost all major railway stations, but the further you venture into outlying regions, the less chance you have of finding English-speaking staff.

### TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Japan is a relatively easy country in which to travel for travellers with disabilities. Many new buildings in Japan have access ramps, traffic lights have speakers playing melodies when it is safe to cross, train platforms have raised dots and lines to provide guidance and some ticket machines in Tokyo have Braille. Some attractions also offer free entry to disabled persons and one companion. On the negative side, many of Japan's cities are still rather difficult for disabled persons to negotiate, often due to the relative lack of normal sidewalks on narrow streets.

If you are going to travel by train and need assistance, ask one of the station workers as you enter the station. Try asking: *'karada no fujiyū no kata no sharyō wa arimasu ka?'* (Are there train carriages for disabled travellers?).

There are carriages on most lines that have areas set aside for people in wheelchairs. Those with other physical disabilities can use the seats set near the train exits, called *yūsen-zaseki*. You will also find these seats near the front of buses; usually they're a different colour from the regular seats.

The most useful information for disabled visitors is provided by the **Japanese Red Cross Language Service Volunteers** (☎ 03-3438-1311; <http://accessible.jp.org/title2-e.html>; c/o Volunteers Division, Japanese Red Cross Society, 1-1-3 Shiba Daimon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8521, Japan). Its website has online guides for disabled travellers to Tokyo, Kyoto and Kamakura.

For information on negotiating Japan in a wheelchair, see the website for **Accessible Japan** ([www.wakakoma.org/aj](http://www.wakakoma.org/aj)).

**Eagle Bus Company** (☎ 049-227-7611; [www.new-wing.co.jp/koedo/Nostalsic%20Little%20Edo/index.htm](http://www.new-wing.co.jp/koedo/Nostalsic%20Little%20Edo/index.htm)) has lift-equipped buses and some English-speaking drivers who are also licensed caregivers. It offers tours of Tokyo and around for travellers with disabilities. However, the

number of English-speaking drivers/caregivers is limited, so it is necessary to reserve well in advance. Group bookings are possible. It also offers English-language tours of Kawagoe, a small town outside Tokyo, which is sometimes known as little Edo.

### VISAS

Generally, visitors who are not planning to engage in income-producing activities while in Japan are exempt from obtaining visas and will be issued a *tanki-taizai* visa (temporary visitor visa) on arrival.

Stays of up to six months are permitted for citizens of Austria, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Switzerland and the UK. Citizens of these countries will almost always be given a 90-day temporary visitor visa upon arrival, which can usually be extended for another 90 days at immigration bureaux inside Japan (for details see opposite).

Citizens of the USA, Australia and New Zealand are granted 90-day temporary visitor visas, while stays of up to three months are permitted for citizens of Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and a number of other countries.

Japan requires that visitors to the country entering on a temporary visitor visa possess an ongoing air or sea ticket or evidence thereof. In practice, few travellers are asked to produce such documents, but to avoid surprises it pays to be on the safe side.

For additional information on visas and regulations, contact your nearest Japanese embassy or consulate, or visit the website of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan** ([www.mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp)). Here you can find out about the different types of visas available, read about working-holiday visas and find details on the Japan Exchange & Teaching (JET) program, which sponsors native English speakers to teach in the Japanese public school system.

### Alien Registration Card

Anyone, and this includes tourists, who stays for more than 90 days is required to obtain an Alien Registration Card (*Gaikokujin Torokushō*). This card can be obtained at the municipal office of the city, town or ward in which you're living or staying.

You must carry your Alien Registration Card at all times as the police can stop you

and ask to see the card. If you don't have the card, you may be taken back to the station and will have to wait there until someone fetches it for you.

### Visa Extensions

With the exception of those nationals whose countries have reciprocal visa exemptions and can stay for six months, the limit for most nationalities is 90 days or three months. To extend a temporary visitor visa beyond the standard 90 days or three months, apply at the nearest immigration office (for a list of immigration bureaux and regional offices visit [www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/soshiki/index.html](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/soshiki/index.html)). You must provide two copies of an Application for Extension of Stay (available at the immigration office), a letter stating the reasons for the extension, supporting documentation and your passport. There is a processing fee of ¥4000.

Many long-term visitors to Japan get around the extension problem by briefly leaving the country, usually going to South Korea. Be warned, though, that immigration officials are wise to this practice and many 'tourist visa returnees' are turned back at the entry point.

### Work Visas

Unless you are on a cultural visa and have been granted permission to work (see p143), or hold a working-holiday visa, you are not permitted to work in Japan without a proper work visa. If you have the proper paperwork and an employee willing to sponsor you, the process is straightforward, although it can be time-consuming.

Once you find an employer in Japan who is willing to sponsor you, it is necessary to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility from the nearest immigration office. The same office can then issue you your work visa, which is valid for either one or three years. The whole procedure usually takes two to three months.

### Working-Holiday Visas

Australians, Britons, Canadians, Germans, New Zealanders and South Koreans between the ages of 18 and 25 (the age limit can be pushed up to 30 in some cases) can apply for a working-holiday visa. This visa allows a six-month stay and two six-month extensions. It is designed to enable young people to travel extensively during their stay; although

employment is supposed to be part-time or temporary, in practice many people work full-time.

A working-holiday visa is much easier to obtain than a work visa and is popular with Japanese employers. Single applicants must have the equivalent of US\$2000 of funds, a married couple must have US\$3000, and all applicants must have an onward ticket from Japan. For details, inquire at the nearest Japanese embassy or consulate (see p793).

### VOLUNTEERING

For obvious reasons, Japan doesn't have as many volunteer opportunities as some other Asian countries. However, there are positions out there for those who look. One of the most popular volunteering options in Japan is provided by **Willing Workers on Organic Farms Japan** (WWOOF Japan; fax 011-780-4908; [www.wwoofjapan.com/index\\_e.shtml](http://www.wwoofjapan.com/index_e.shtml); Honcho 2-jo, 3-chome 6-7, Higashi-ku, Sapporo 065-0042, Japan). This organisation places volunteers on organic farms around the country, where they help with the daily running of the farms and participate in family or community life. This provides a good look into Japanese rural life, the running of an organic farm and a great chance to improve your Japanese-language skills.

Alternatively, you can look for volunteer opportunities once you arrive in Japan. There are occasional ads for volunteer positions in magazines like *Kansai Time Out* in Kansai and the various English-language journals in the Tokyo area. Word of mouth is also a good way to search for jobs. Hikers, for example, are sometimes offered short-term positions in Japan's mountain huts (see p787).

### WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Japan is a relatively safe country for women travellers, though perhaps not quite as safe as some might think. Women travellers are occasionally subjected to some form of verbal harassment or prying questions. Physical attacks are very rare, but have occurred. Long-term foreign women residents of Japan have been victims of stalking, harassment and worse, and have often found the local police to be unwilling to help them prosecute offenders.

The best advice is to avoid being lulled into a false sense of security by Japan's image as one of the world's safest countries and to take the some precautions you would in your home country. If a neighbourhood or establishment



looks unsafe, then treat it that way. Never give your address or the name of your accommodation out to an unfamiliar man and never invite an unfamiliar man to your place or go to his. As long as you use your common sense, you will most likely find that Japan is a pleasant and rewarding place to travel.

Several train companies in Japan have recently introduced women-only cars to protect female passengers from *chikan* (men who feel up women and girls on packed trains). These cars are usually available during rush-hour periods on weekdays on busy urban lines. There are signs (usually pink in colour) on the platform indicating where to board these cars, and the cars themselves are usually labelled in both Japanese and English (again, these are often marked in pink).

If you have a problem and find the local police unhelpful, you can call the **Japan Helpline** (☎ 0570-000-911), an emergency number that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Finally, an excellent resource available for any woman setting up in Japan is Caroline Pover's book *Being A Broad in Japan*, which can be found in bookstores and can also be ordered from her website at [www.being-a-broad.com](http://www.being-a-broad.com).

## WORK

Japan is an excellent and rewarding place to live and work and all major cities in Japan have significant populations of expats doing just that. Teaching English is still the most common job for Westerners, but bartending, hostessing, modelling and various writing/editorial jobs are also possible.

The key to success in Japan is doing your homework and presenting yourself properly. You will definitely need a proper outfit for interviews, a stack of *meishi* (business cards) and the right attitude. If you don't have a university degree, you won't be eligible for most jobs that qualify you for a work visa. Any qualification, like an English-teaching qualification, will be a huge boost.

Finally, outside of the entertainment, construction and English-teaching industries, you can't expect a good job unless you speak good Japanese (any more than someone could expect a job in your home country without speaking the *lingua franca*).

## Bartending

Bartending does not qualify you for a work visa; most of the foreign bartenders in Japan

are either working illegally or are on another kind of visa. Some bars in big Japanese cities hire foreign bartenders; most are strict about visas but others don't seem to care. The best places to look are 'gaijin bars', although a few Japanese-oriented places also employ foreign bartenders for 'ambience'. The pay is barely enough to survive on – usually about ¥1000 per hour. The great plus of working as a bartender (other than free drinks) is the chance to practise speaking Japanese.

## English Teaching

Teaching English has always been the most popular job for native English speakers in Japan. A university degree is an absolute essential as you cannot qualify for a work visa without one (be sure to bring the actual degree with you to Japan). Teaching qualifications and some teaching experience will be a huge plus when job hunting.

Consider lining up a job before arriving in Japan. Big schools, like Nova for example, now have recruitment programs in the USA and the UK. One downside to the big 'factory schools' that recruit overseas is that working conditions are often pretty dire compared with smaller schools that recruit within Japan.

Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians, who can take advantage of the Japanese working-holiday visa (p805), are in a slightly better position. Schools are happier about taking on unqualified teachers if they don't have to bother with sponsoring a teacher for a work visa.

There is a definite hierarchy among English teachers and teaching positions in Japan. The bottom of the barrel are the big chain *eikaiwa* (private English conversation schools), followed by small local *eikaiwa*, inhouse company language schools, and private lessons, with university positions and international school positions being the most sought after. As you would expect, newcomers start at the lower rungs and work their way up the ladder.

**ELT News** ([www.eltnews.com/home.shtml](http://www.eltnews.com/home.shtml)) is an excellent site with lots of information and want ads for English teachers in Japan.

## GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

The program run by **Japan Exchange & Teaching** (JET; [www.jetprogramme.org](http://www.jetprogramme.org)) provides 2000 teaching assistant positions for foreign teachers. The job operates on a yearly contract and

must be organised in your home country. The program gets very good reports from many of its teachers.

Teachers employed by the JET program are known as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). Although you will have to apply in your home country in order to work as an ALT with JET, it's worth bearing in mind that many local governments in Japan are also employing ALTs for their schools. Such work can sometimes be arranged within Japan.

Visit the JET website or contact the nearest Japanese embassy or consulate (p793) for more details.

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Major cities with large foreign populations, such as Tokyo and Yokohama, have a number of international schools for the children of foreign residents. Work is available for qualified, Western-trained teachers in all disciplines; the schools will usually organise your visa.

## PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Private language schools (*eikaiwa*) are the largest employers of foreign teachers in Japan and the best bet for the job-hunting newcomer. The classifieds section of the Monday edition of the *Japan Times* is the best place to look for teaching positions. Some larger schools rely on direct inquiries from would-be teachers.

Tokyo is the easiest place to find teaching jobs; schools across Japan advertise or recruit in the capital. Heading straight to another of Japan's major population centres (say Osaka, Fukuoka, Hiroshima or Sapporo), where there are smaller numbers of competing foreigners, is also a good bet.

## Hostessing

A hostess is a woman who is paid to pour drinks for and chat with (usually) male customers in a so-called 'hostess bar'. Although hostessing does involve a lot of thinly veiled sexual innuendos and the occasional furtive grab at thighs or breasts, it is not a form of prostitution. At some of the seedier places, however, there may be some pressure to perform 'extracurricular activities'.

Work visas are not issued for hostesses. Rates for Western women working as hostesses typically range from ¥3000 to ¥5000 per hour (plus tips), with bonuses for bringing customers to the club. An ability to speak Japanese is an asset, but not essential – many Japanese *salarymen* want to practise their English.

## Proofreading, Editing & Writing

There is a huge demand for skilled editors, copywriters, proofreaders and translators (Japanese to English and, less commonly, vice versa) in Japan. And with the advent of the internet, you don't even have to be based in Japan to do this work. Unfortunately, as with many things in Japan, introductions and connections play a huge role, and it's difficult simply to show up in Tokyo or plaster your resume online and wind up with a good job.

You'll need to be persistent and do some networking to make much in this field. Experience, advanced degrees and salesmanship will all come in handy. And even if you don't intend to do translation, some Japanese-language ability will be a huge plus, if only for communicating with potential employers and clients. If you think you've got what it takes, check the Monday edition of the *Japan Times* for openings.

For more information about proofreading and editing in Japan, visit the webpage for the **Society of Writers, Editors & Translators** (SWET; [www.swet.jp](http://www.swet.jp)).

## Ski Areas

Seasonal work is available at ski areas in Japan and this is a popular option for Australian and Kiwi travellers, who want to combine a trip to Japan, a little skiing and a chance to earn a little money. A working-holiday visa (see p805) makes this easier, although occasionally people are offered jobs without visas. The jobs are typical ski town jobs – ski lift attendants, hotel workers, bartenders, and, for those with the right skills (language and skiing), ski instructors. You won't earn much more than ¥1000 per hour unless you're an instructor, but you'll get lodging and lift tickets. All told, it's a fun way to spend a few months in Japan.

# Transport

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TRANSPORT

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

While most travellers to Japan fly via Tokyo, there are several other ways of getting into and out of the country. For a start, there are many other airports in Japan, which can make better entry points than Tokyo's somewhat inconvenient Narita International Airport. It's also possible to arrive in Japan by sea from South Korea, China, Russia and Taiwan.

### Passports

A passport is essential. If your passport is within a few months of expiry, get a new one now – you will not be issued a visa if your passport is due to expire before the visa. For information on visas, see p804.

### AIR

There are flights to Japan from all over the world, usually to Tokyo, but also to a number of other Japanese airports. Although Tokyo may seem the obvious arrival and departure point in Japan, for many visitors this may not be the case. If you plan on exploring western Japan or the Kansai region, it might be more

### THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

convenient to fly into Kansai International Airport (KIX) near Osaka.

### Airports & Airlines

There are international airports situated on the main island of Honshū (Nagoya, Niigata, Osaka/Kansai and Tokyo Narita), and on Kyūshū (Fukuoka, Kagoshima, Kumamoto and Nagasaki), Okinawa (Naha) and Hokkaidō (Sapporo).

### TOKYO NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

With the exception of China Airlines, all international flights to/from Tokyo use **Narita International Airport** (NRT; www.narita-airport.or.jp/airport\_e). Since Narita is the most popular arrival/departure point in Japan, flights via Narita are usually cheaper than those using other airports. Of course, if you can get a cheap flight into another airport, particularly one close to your area of interest, then there's no reason to use Narita.

### OSAKA/KANSAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

All of Osaka's international flights now go via **Kansai International Airport** (KIX; www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp). It serves the key Kansai cities of Kyoto, Osaka, Nara and Kōbe. Airport transport to any of these cities is fast and reliable (though it can be expensive if you're going all the way to Kyoto).

### CHŪBU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

#### CENTRAIR

Conveniently located between Tokyo and Osaka is Japan's newest major airport: **Chūbu**

**International Airport Centair** (NGO; www.centair.jp). From Nagoya, flights connect with Australia, Canada, China, Guam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Saipan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA.

### FUKUOKA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Fukuoka, at the northern end of Kyūshū, is the main arrival point for western Japan. **Fukuoka International Airport** (FUK; www.fuk-ab.co.jp/english/frame\_index.html), conveniently located near the city, has flights to/from the following cities: Seoul, Busan, Beijing, Dalian, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Guam and Ho Chi Minh City.

### NAHA AIRPORT

Located on Okinawa-hontō (the main island of Okinawa), **Naha Airport** (OKA; www.naha-airport.co.jp in Japanese) has flights to/from Seoul, Manila, Shanghai and Taipei.

### NIIGATA AIRPORT

Located north of Tokyo, **Niigata Airport** (KIJ; www.niigata-airport.gr.jp in Japanese) has flights to/from Irkusk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Seoul, Shanghai, Harbin, Xian, Honolulu and Guam.

### CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

### OTHER AIRPORTS

On Kyūshū, **Kagoshima Airport** (KOJ; www.koj-ab.co.jp in Japanese) has flights to/from Shanghai and Seoul; **Kumamoto Airport** (KMJ; www.kmj-ab.co.jp in Japanese) has flights to/from Seoul; and **Nagasaki Airport** (NGS; www.nabic.co.jp/english) has flights to/from Shanghai and Seoul.

On Hokkaido, **New Chitose Airport** (CTS; www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english/index.html) has connections with Shanghai, Taipei and Shenyang.

### AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM JAPAN

**Aeroflot** (code SU; ☎ 03-5532-8701; www.aeroflot-japan.com/eng/index.asp; hub Sheremetyevo International Airport, Moscow)

**Air Canada** (code AC; ☎ 03-5405-8800, toll-free 0120-048-048; www.aircanada.ca/e-home.html; hub Toronto Pearson International Airport, Toronto)

**Air China** (code CA; ☎ 03-5520-0333; www.china-airlines.com/en/index.htm; hub Beijing Capital International Airport, Beijing)

**Air France** (code AF; ☎ 03-3475-2210; www.airfrance.com; hub Charles de Gaulle International Airport, Paris)

**Air India** (code AI; ☎ 03-3508-0261; www.airindia.com; hubs Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Mumbai, & Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi)

**Air New Zealand** (code NZ; ☎ 03-5521-2744, toll-free 0120-300-747; www.airnewzealand.co.nz; hub Auckland International Airport, Auckland)

TRANSPORT

**Air Niugini** (code PX; ☎ 03-5216-3555; www.airniugini.com.pg/main.htm; hub Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby)

**Air Tahiti Nui** (code TN; ☎ 03-6267-1177; www.airtahitiniui.com; hub Faa'a International Airport, Faa'a)

**Air Pacific** (code FJ; ☎ 03-5208-5171, toll-free 0120-489-311; www.airpacific.com; hub Nadi International Airport, Nadi)

**Alitalia** (code AZ; ☎ 03-5166-9123; www.alitalia.com; hubs Malpensa Airport, Milan, Leonardo da Vinci International Airport, Fiumicino)

**All Nippon Airways** (code NH; ☎ 03-5435-0333, toll-free 0120-029-333; www.anasnyweb.com; hubs Narita International Airport, Tokyo, Kansai International Airport, Osaka)

**American Airlines** (code AA; ☎ 03-4550-2111, toll-free 0120-000-860; www.aa.com; hub Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas)

**Asiana Airlines** (code OZ; ☎ 03-5812-6600; http://us.flyasiana.com; hub Incheon International Airport, Seoul)

**Austrian Airlines** (code OS; ☎ 03-5222-5454; www.aa.com/us/eng; hub Vienna International Airport, Vienna)

**Biman Bangladesh Airlines** (code BG; ☎ 03-3502-7922; www.bimanair.com; hub Zia International Airport, Dhaka)

**British Airways** (code BA; ☎ 03-3570-8657; www.britishairways.com; hub London Heathrow Airport, London)

**Cathay Pacific Airways** (code CX; ☎ 03-5159-1700; www.cathaypacific.com; hub Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong)

**China Eastern Airlines** (code MU; ☎ 03-3506-1166; www.ce-air.com/cea2/en\_US/homepage; hub Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai)

**China Southern Airlines** (code CZ; ☎ 03-5157-8011; www.cs-air.com/en; hub Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangzhou)

**Continental Airlines** (code CO; ☎ 03-5464-5100, toll-free 0120-242-414; www.continental.com; hub George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Houston)

**Continental Micronesia** (code CS; ☎ 03-5464-5050; www.continental.com; hub Guam International Airport, Guam)

**Delta Air Lines** (code DL; ☎ 03-3593-6666, toll-free 0120-333-742; www.delta.com; hub Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Atlanta)

**Deutsche Lufthansa** (code LH; ☎ 03-4333-7656, toll-free 0120-051-844; www.lufthansa.com; hub Frankfurt International Airport, Frankfurt)

**Dragon Air** (code KA; ☎ 03-5159-1715; www.dragonair.com; hub Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong)

**EgyptAir** (code MS; ☎ 03-3211-4524; www.egyptair.com.eg; hub Cairo International Airport, Cairo)

**Finnair** (code AY; ☎ 03-3222-6801, toll-free 0120-700-915; www.finnair.com; hub Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, Helsinki)

**Garuda Indonesia** (code GA; ☎ 03-3240-6161; www.garuda-indonesia.com; hub Soekarno-Hatta Airport, Jakarta)

**Iberia Airlines** (code IB; www.iberia.com; hub Barcelona International Airport, Barcelona)

**Iran Air** (code IR; ☎ 03-3586-2101; www.iranaairjp.com; hub Mehrabad International Airport, Tehran)

**JALWAYS** (code JQ; ☎ 03-5460-0511, toll-free 0120-255-931; www.jalways.co.jp/english; hub Narita International Airport, Tokyo)

**Japan Airlines** (code JL; ☎ 03-5460-0511, toll-free 0120-255-931; www.jal.com/en; hubs Narita International Airport, Tokyo, Kansai International Airport, Osaka)

**Japan Asia Airways** (code EG; ☎ 03-5460-0533, toll-free 0120-747-801; www.japanasia.co.jp in Japanese; hubs Narita International Airport, Tokyo, & Kansai International Airport, Osaka)

**KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines** (code KL; ☎ 03-3570-8770; www.klm.com; hub Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam)

**Korean Air** (code KE; ☎ 03-5443-3311; www.koreanair.com; hub Incheon International Airport, Seoul)

**Malaysia Airlines** (code MH; ☎ 03-5733-2111; www.malaysiaairlines.com; hub Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Kuala Lumpur)

**Northwest Airlines** (code NW; ☎ 0476-31-8000; www.nwa.com; hub Minneapolis-St Paul International Airport, Minneapolis)

**Pakistan International** (code PK; ☎ 03-3216-6511; www.piac.com.pk; hub Jinnah International Airport, Karachi)

**Philippine Airlines** (code PR; ☎ 03-5157-4361; www.philippineairlines.com; hub Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila)

**Qantas** (code QF; ☎ 03-3593-7000; www.qantas.com; hub Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney)

**Scandinavian Airlines System** (code SK; ☎ 03-5400-2331; www.flysas.com; hub Copenhagen Airport, Copenhagen)

**Shanghai Airlines** (code FM; ☎ 06-6945-8666; www.shanghai-air.com/ywww/home.htm; hub Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai)

**Singapore Airlines** (code SQ; ☎ 03-3213-3431; www.singaporeair.com; hub Singapore Changi Airport, Changi)

**Sri Lankan Airlines** (code UL; ☎ 03-3431-6611; www.srilankan.aero; hub Bandaranaike Airport, Colombo)

**Swiss International Airlines** (code LX; ☎ 03-5156-8252; www.swiss.com; hub Zurich International Airport, Zurich)

**Thai Airways International** (code TG; ☎ 03-3503-3311; www.thaiairways.com; hub Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok)

**Turkish Airlines** (code TK; ☎ 03-5251-1551; www.thy.com; hub Atatürk International Airport, Istanbul)

**United Airlines** (code UA; ☎ 03-3817-4411, toll-free 0120-114-466; www.united.com; hub Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Chicago)

**US Airways** (code US; ☎ 03-3597-9471; www.usairways.com; hub Philadelphia International Airport, Philadelphia)

**Uzbekistan Airways** (code UY; ☎ 03-3500-1355; www.uzbekistanairways.nl; hub Yuzhny Airport, Tashkent)

**Vietnam Airlines** (code VN; ☎ 03-3508-1481; www.vietnamairlines.com; hub Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City)

**Virgin Atlantic Airways** (code VS; ☎ 03-3499-8811; www.virgin-atlantic.com; hub London Heathrow Airport, London)

## Tickets

The price of your ticket will depend to a great extent on when you fly. High-season prices are determined by two sets of holidays and popular travel times: those in the country you're flying from and those in Japan. Generally, high season for travel between Japan and Western countries is in late December (around Christmas and the New Year period), late April to early May (around Japan's Golden Week holiday), as well as July and August. If you must fly during these periods, book well in advance.

## Australia

Garuda, Malaysian Airlines and Cathay Pacific usually have good deals for travel between Australia and Japan. Return fares start at around A\$1200 with Garuda, which allows a stopover in Bali. Direct flights to Japan with airlines including Qantas and Japan Air Lines (JAL) are more expensive – expect to pay at least A\$1600 for a return fare.

Two well-known agencies for cheap fares are **STA Travel** (☎ 134 782; www.statravel.com.au), which has offices in all major cities; and **Flight Centre** (www.flightcentre.com.au), which has dozens of offices throughout Australia. For online bookings, try www.travel.com.au.

## Canada

Return fares between Vancouver and Tokyo start at around C\$1000, while return fares between Toronto and Tokyo start at around C\$1300. Carriers to check include Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Air Canada, United, American, Delta and Northwest Airlines.

**Travel Cuts** (☎ 800-667-2887; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency. For online bookings, try www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca.

## China

There are several daily flights between Japan and Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific, as well as on JAL and All Nippon Airways (ANA). In Hong Kong try **Four Seas Tours** (☎ 2200-7777; www.fourseas.travel.com/fs/en). There are also flights between Japan and Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Harbin, Shenyang, Xian and Dalian.

## Continental Europe

Most direct flights between Europe and Japan fly into Tokyo but there are also some flights into Kansai. Typical low-season return fares from major European cities are Frankfurt–Tokyo €500, Rome–Tokyo €700 and Paris–Tokyo €580.

The following are recommended travel agencies in continental Europe:

### FRANCE

**Anyway** (☎ 08 92 89 38 92; www.anyway.fr in French)  
**Lastminute** (☎ 08 99 78 50 00; www.fr.lastminute.com in French)

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr in French)

**OTU Voyages** (☎ 01 55 82 32 32 www.otu.fr in French) This agency specialises in student and youth travellers.

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 08 92 23 56 56; www.vdm.com in French)

### GERMANY

**Expedia** (☎ 01805-007146; www.expedia.de in German)

**Just Travel** (☎ 089-747 33 30; www.justtravel.de)

**STA Travel** (☎ 069-743 032 92; www.statravel.de) For travellers under the age of 26.

### ITALY

**CTS Viaggi** (☎ 064 41 11 66, www.cts.it in Italian)

### NETHERLANDS, THE

**Airfair** (☎ 0900-771 77 17; www.airfair.nl in Dutch)

### SPAIN

**Barcelo Viajes** (☎ 902 20 04 00; www.barceloviajes.com in Spanish)

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 902 12 42 12; www.tui.es /Via/Inicio)

## Japan

In most of Japan's major cities there are travel agencies where English is spoken. For an idea of the latest prices in Tokyo check the travel ads in the various local English-language



publications, and in Kansai check *Kansai Time Out*. In other parts of Japan check the *Japan Times*. For more details on city-based travel agencies, see relevant sections under Tokyo (p109), Osaka (p376) and Kyoto (p313).

### New Zealand

Return fares between Auckland and Tokyo start at around NZ\$1500. Airlines that fly this route include Malaysian Airlines, Thai International, Qantas and Air New Zealand. You'll save money by taking one of the Asian airlines via an Asian city rather than flying direct.

Both **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) have branches throughout New Zealand.

### South Korea

Numerous flights link Seoul and Busan with Japan. A Seoul–Tokyo flight purchased in Seoul costs around US\$200/400 one way/return. From Tokyo, flights to Seoul are the cheapest way out of Japan. Low-season return fares start as low as ¥30,000.

In Seoul, try the **Korean International Student Exchange Society** (Kises; ☎ 02-733-9494; www.kises.co.kr in Korean; 5th fl, YMCA Bldg, Chongno 2-ga).

See opposite for information on sea-travel bargains between Korea and Japan.

### Taiwan

Return flights from Taipei to Tokyo start at around NT10,000. Flights also operate between Kaohsiung and Osaka or Tokyo.

### UK

Expect to pay from UK£500 to UK£600 for a return ticket with a good airline via a fast route. ANA and JAL offer direct flights between London and Japan. Air France is a reliable choice for flights to Japan (usually Tokyo), but you'll have to change in Paris. For a less convenient trans-Asian route, it's about UK£350. The following travel agencies are recommended:

**Flight Centre** (☎ 087-0499 0040; www.flightcentre.co.uk)

**Flightbookers** (☎ 087-1223 5000; www.ebookers.com)

**North-South Travel** (☎ 01245 608291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) North-South Travel donates part of its profit to projects in the developing world.

**Quest Travel** (☎ 087-1423 0135; www.questtravel.com)

**STA Travel** (☎ 087-1230 0040; www.statravel.co.uk) For travellers under the age of 26.

**Trailfinders** (☎ 084-5058 5858; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

**Travel Bag** (☎ 080-0082 5000; www.travelbag.co.uk)

### USA

From New York during the low season you can find discount return fares to Japan for as low as US\$700. Some carriers to check include Korean Air, JAL and ANA, United Airlines and Northwest Airlines. From the US west coast, low-season discount return fares are available from as little as US\$500. High-season discount fares will just about double these figures.

**STA Travel** (☎ 800-781-4040; www.statravel.com) is a good place to start your ticket search in the USA. **IACE Travel USA** (☎ 800-872-4223, 212-972-3200; www.iace-usa.com) is a travel agency specialising in travel between the USA and Japan which can often dig up cheap fares. San Francisco's **Avia Travel** (☎ 800-950-2842, 510-558-2150; www.avia-travel.com) is a favourite of Japan-based English teachers and can arrange tickets originating in Japan.

The following agencies are recommended for online bookings:

- www.cheaptickets.com

- www.expedia.com

- www.itn.net

- www.lowestfare.com

- www.orbitz.com

- www.sta.com (for travellers under the age of 26)

- www.travelocity.com

### Other Asian Countries

There are daily flights between Bangkok and Japan on Thai Airways International, ANA and JAL, with fares starting at about 18,000B return in the low season. From Singapore, return tickets cost approximately S\$800; from Indonesia (Jakarta/Denpasar), a return flight costs around US\$800.

From the Philippines (Manila) a return flight to Japan is around US\$550 and from Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) it's around RM2500 return. From Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City) a return flight costs around US\$650.

Other Asian countries with limited flights to Japan include India, Nepal and Myanmar (Burma).

### Other Regions

There are also flights between Japan and South America (via the USA and Europe),

Africa (via Europe, south Asia or Southeast Asia) and the Middle East.

### LAND

#### Trans-Siberian Railway

A little-used option of approaching or leaving Japan is the Trans-Siberian Railway. There are three Trans-Siberian Railway options, one of which is to travel on the railway to/from Vladivostok in Russia and take the ferry between Vladivostok and Fushiki in Toyama-ken. The cheaper options are the Chinese Trans-Mongolia and Russian Trans-Manchuria routes, which start/finish in China, from where there are ferry connections to/from Japan via Tientsin, Qingdao and Shanghai.

See below for information on ferry connections between Japan, Russia and China.

More detailed information is also available in a good number of publications – see Lonely Planet's *Trans-Siberian Railway: A Classic Overland Route*. Those making their way to Japan via China (or vice versa) should pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *China* guide, which has invaluable information on travel in China as well as information on Trans-Siberian travel.

### SEA China

The **Japan China International Ferry Company** (in Japan ☎ 06-6536-6541, in China ☎ 021-6325-7642; www.fune.co.jp/chinjif in Japanese) links Shanghai and Osaka/Kōbe. A 2nd-class ticket costs around US\$180. The journey takes around 48 hours. A similar service is provided by the **Shanghai Ferry Company** (in Japan ☎ 06-6243-6345, in China ☎ 021-6537-5111; www.shanghai-ferry.co.jp in Japanese). For more information on both of these, see p389.

The **China Express Line** (in Japan ☎ 078-321-5791, in China ☎ 022-2420-5777; www.celkobe.co.jp in Japanese) operates a ferry between Kōbe and Tientsin where 1st-/2nd-class tickets cost US\$240/210. The journey takes around 48 hours. For more information, see p397.

**Orient Ferry Ltd** (in Japan ☎ 0832-32-9677, in China ☎ 0532-8387-1160; www.orientferry.co.jp in Japanese) runs between Shimonoseki and Qingdao, China, with three departures a week. The cheapest one-way tickets cost around US\$130. The trip takes around 27 hours. See p477 for details.

### Russia

**FKK Air Service** (☎ 0766-22-2212; http://fkk-air.toyama-net.com in Japanese) operates ferries between Fushiki in Toyama-ken and Vladivostok.

One-way fares start at around US\$250. The journey takes around 36 hours. The ferry operates from July until the first week of October. For more details, see p238.

An even more exotic option is the summer-time route between Wakkanaï (in Hokkaidō) and Korsakov (on Sakhalin Island), operated by the **East Japan Sea Ferry Company** (in Japan ☎ 0162-23-3780, in Russia ☎ 4242-42-0917; www.kaiferry.co.jp in Japanese). One-way fares start at around ¥22,500 (around US\$190) and the journey takes around six hours. The ferry operates from mid-May to the end of October. For more details, see p571.

### South Korea

South Korea is the closest country to Japan and has several ferry connections.

#### BUSAN–SHIMONOSEKI

**Kampu Ferry** (in Japan ☎ 0832-24-3000, in Korea operating under Pukwan Ferry ☎ 051-464-2700; www.kampuferry.co.jp in Japanese) operates the Shimonoseki–Busan ferry service. One-way fares range from around US\$85 to US\$180, and the journey takes around 12 hours. See p477 for more details.

#### BUSAN–FUKUOKA

An international high-speed hydrofoil service, known as the Biitoru (say 'beetle'), is run by **JR Kyūshū** (in Japan ☎ 092-281-2315, in Korea ☎ 051-465-6111; www.jrbettle.co.jp/english) and connects Fukuoka with Busan in Korea (around US\$110 one

#### BAGGAGE FORWARDING

If you have too much luggage to carry comfortably or just can't be bothered, you can do what many Japanese travellers do: send it to your next stop by *takkyūbin* (express shipping companies). Prices are surprisingly reasonable and overnight service is the norm. Perhaps the most convenient service is Yamato Takkyūbin, which operates from most convenience stores. Simply pack your luggage and bring it to the nearest convenience store; they'll help with the paperwork and arrange for pick-up. Note that you'll need the full address of your next destination in Japanese, along with the phone number of the place. Alternatively, ask the owner of your accommodation to come and pick it up (this is usually possible but might cost extra).

way, three hours). **Camellia Line** (in Japan ☎ 092-262-2323, in Korea ☎ 051-466-7799; [www.camellia-line.co.jp](http://www.camellia-line.co.jp) in Japanese & Korean) also has a regular daily ferry service between Fukuoka and Busan (around US\$80, six hours from Fukuoka to Busan, 11 hours from Busan to Fukuoka). See p673 for more details.

## Taiwan

**Arimura Sangyō** (in Japan ☎ 098-869-1980, in Taiwan ☎ 07-330-9811) operates a weekly ferry service between Naha (Okinawa) and Taiwan, sometimes via Ishigaki and Miyako in Okinawa. The Taiwan port alternates between Keelung and Kaohsiung. Departure from Okinawa is on Thursday or Friday; departure from Taiwan is usually on Monday. The journey takes about 20 hours. One-way fares cost around US\$140 in 2nd class.

## GETTING AROUND

Japan is justifiably famous for its extensive, well-organised and efficient transportation network. Schedules are strictly adhered to and

late or cancelled services are almost unheard of. All this convenience comes at a price, however, and you'd be well advised to look into money-saving deals whenever possible (see p823).

## AIR

Air services in Japan are extensive, reliable and safe. In many cases, flying is much faster than even *shinkansen* (bullet trains) and not that much more expensive. Flying is also an efficient way to travel from the main islands to the many small islands around Japan.

## Airlines in Japan

**Japan Airlines** (JAL; ☎ 03-5460-0522, 0120-255-971; [www.jal.co.jp/en](http://www.jal.co.jp/en)) is the major international carrier and also has a domestic network linking the major cities. **All Nippon Airways** (ANA; ☎ 03-3490-8800, 0120-029-709; [www.ana.co.jp/eng](http://www.ana.co.jp/eng)) is the second largest international carrier and operates a more extensive domestic system. **Japan Trans Ocean Air** (JTA; ☎ 03-5460-0522, ☎ 0120-255-97; [www.jal.co.jp/jta](http://www.jal.co.jp/jta) in Japanese) is a smaller domestic carrier that mostly services routes in Okinawa and the Southwest Islands.

In addition to these, **Skymark Airlines** (SKY; ☎ 03-3433-7670; [www.skymark.co.jp/en](http://www.skymark.co.jp/en)) is a recent start-up budget airline and **Shinshū Kōkū** (☎ 0422-31-4191; [www.central-air.co.jp](http://www.central-air.co.jp) in Japanese) has light-plane flights between Chōfu Airport, outside Tokyo, and the islands of Izu-shoto.

The Domestic Air Fares map (p814) shows some of the major connections and one-way fares. Note that return fares are usually around 10% cheaper than buying two one-way tickets. The airlines also have some weird and wonderful discounts if you know what to ask for. The most useful of these are the advance-purchase reductions: both ANA and JAL offer discounts of up to 50% if you purchase your ticket a month or more in advance, with smaller discounts for purchases made one to three weeks in advance. Seniors over 65 also qualify for discounts on most Japanese airlines, but these are sometimes only available if you fly on weekdays.

ANA also offers the Star Alliance Japan Airpass for foreign travellers on ANA or Star Alliance network airlines. Provided you reside outside Japan, purchase your tickets outside Japan and carry a valid international ticket on any airline, you can fly up to five times within 60 days on any ANA domestic route for only ¥11,550 per flight (a huge saving on some routes). Visit [www.ana.co.jp/wvs/us/e/travelservice/reservations/special/airpass.html](http://www.ana.co.jp/wvs/us/e/travelservice/reservations/special/airpass.html) for more details.

## BICYCLE

Japan is a good country for bicycle touring and several thousand cyclists, both Japanese and foreign, traverse the country every year. Favourite bike touring areas include Kyūshū, Shikoku, the Japan Alps (if you like steep hills!), Noto-hantō and Hokkaidō.

There's no point in fighting your way out of big cities by bicycle. Put your bike on the train or bus and get out to the country before you start pedalling. To take a bicycle on a train you may need to use a bicycle carrying bag, available from good bicycle shops.

See p818 for information on road maps of Japan. In addition to the maps mentioned in that section, a useful series of maps is the *Touring Mapple* (Shobunsha) series, which is aimed at motorcyclists, but is also very useful for cyclists.

For more information on cycling in Japan, you can check out the excellent website of **KANCycling website** ([www.kancycling.com](http://www.kancycling.com)).

## Guided Bicycle Tours

For more information about guided bicycle tours in Kyoto, see p366. There is talk of a similar service being offered in Tokyo in the near future – a web search should turn up the operator once they're up and running.

## Hire

You will find bicycle rental shops outside the train or bus stations in most of Japan's popular tourist areas, as well as near the ferry piers on many of the country's smaller islands. Typical charges are around ¥200/1000 per hour/day. Kyoto, for example, is ideally suited to bicycle exploration and there are plenty of cheap hire shops to choose from.

Note that the bicycles for rent are not usually performance vehicles. More commonly they're what the Japanese call *mama chari* (literally 'mama's bicycles'): one- or three-speed shopping bikes that are murder on hills of any size. They're also usually too small for anyone over 180cm in height.

Many youth hostels also have bicycles to rent – there's a symbol identifying them in the *Japan Youth Hostel Handbook*. 'Cycling terminals' found in various locations around the country also rent out bicycles. For more on cycling terminals, see p785.

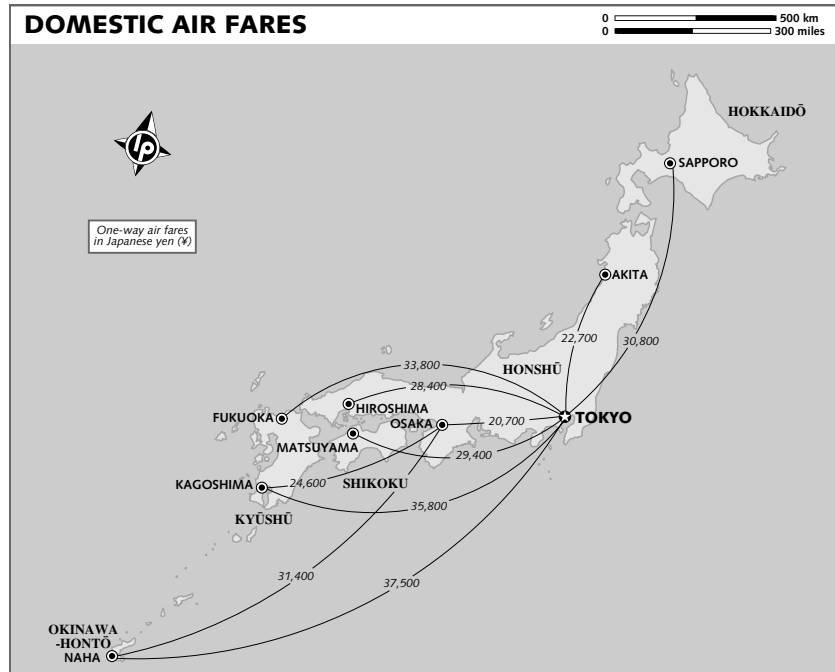
## Purchase

In Japan, prices for used bikes range from a few thousand yen for an old shopping bike to several tens of thousands of yen for good mountain bikes. New bikes range anywhere from about ¥10,000 for a shopping bike to ¥100,000 for a flash mountain or road bike.

Touring cycles are available in Japan but prices tend to be significantly higher than you'd pay back home. If you're tall, you may not find any suitably sized bikes in stock. One solution for tall riders, or anyone who wants to save money, is to buy a used bike; in Tokyo check the English-language publications and in Kansai check *Kansai Time Out*.

## BOAT

Japan is an island nation and there are a great many ferry services both between islands and between ports on the same island. Ferries can be an excellent way of getting from one place to another and for seeing parts of Japan you might otherwise miss. Taking a ferry between Osaka (Honsū) and Beppu (Kyūshū), for example, is a good way of getting to Kyūshū



and – if you choose the right departure time – seeing some of the Inland Sea (Seto-nai-kai; p463) on the way. Likewise, the ferry run up and down the Izu-shotō (p231) can be incredibly scenic.

The routes vary widely, from two-hour services between adjacent islands to 1½-day trips in what are in fact small ocean liners. The cheapest fares on the longer trips are in tatami-mat rooms where you simply unroll your futon on the floor and hope, if the ship is crowded, that your fellow passengers aren't too intent on knocking back the booze all night. In this basic class, fares are usually lower than equivalent land travel, but there are also more expensive private cabins. Bicycles can always be brought along and most ferries also carry cars and motorcycles.

Information on ferry routes, schedules and fares is found in the *JR Jikokuhyō* (p825) and on information sheets from the Japan National Tourist Organisation (JNTO; p803). Some ferry services and their lowest one-way

fares, as well as major ferry companies, appear in the table below.

## BUS

Japan has a comprehensive network of long-distance buses. These 'highway buses' are nowhere near as fast as the *shinkansen* but the fares are comparable with those of normal *futsū* trains. The trip between Tokyo and Sendai (Northern Honshū), for example, takes about two hours by *shinkansen*, four hours by *tokkyū* and nearly eight hours by bus. Of course, there are also many places in Japan where trains do not run and bus travel is the only public transport option.

Bookings can be made through any travel agency in Japan or at the Green Window in large Japan Rail (JR) stations. The Japan Rail Pass is valid on some highway buses, but in most cases the *shinkansen* would be far preferable (it's much faster and more comfortable). Note that the storage racks on most buses are generally too small for large backpacks,

but you can usually stow them in the luggage compartment underneath the bus.

## Costs

Some typical long-distance fares and travel times out of Tokyo include the following:

Destination	Fare (one way)	Duration (hr)
Aomori	¥4000	10½
Hakata	¥9900	16
Hiroshima	¥8000	11½
Kyoto	¥4200	9
Nagoya	¥3000	7
Niiigata	¥3000	7
Osaka	¥4200	10
Sendai	¥3300	7

## Night Services

Night buses are a good option for those on a tight budget without a Japan Rail Pass. They are relatively cheap, spacious (allowing room to stretch out and get some sleep) and they also save on a night's accommodation. They typically leave at around 10pm or 11pm and arrive the following day at around 6am or 7am.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving in Japan is quite feasible, even for just the mildly adventurous. The major roads are signposted in English; road rules are generally adhered to and driving is safer than in other Asian countries; and petrol, while expensive, is not prohibitively so. Indeed, in some areas of the country it can prove much more convenient than other forms of travel and, between a group of people, it can also prove quite economical.

## Automobile Associations

If you're a member of an automobile association in your home country, you're eligible for reciprocal rights with the **Japan Automobile Federation** (JAF; ☎ 03-6833-9000, 0570-00-2811; www.jaf.or.jp/e/index\_e.htm; 2-2-17 Shiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0014). Its office is near Onarimon Station on the Tōei Mita line. JAF publishes a variety of publications, and will make up strip maps for its members.

## Driving Licence

Travellers from most nations are able to drive in Japan with an International Driving Permit backed up by their own regular licence. The international permit is issued by your national automobile association and costs

around US\$5 in most countries. Make sure it's endorsed for cars and motorcycles if you're licensed for both.

Travellers from Switzerland, France and Germany (and others whose countries are not signatories to the Geneva Convention of 1949 concerning international driver's licences) are not allowed to drive in Japan on a regular international licence. Rather, travellers from these countries must have their own licence backed by an authorised translation of the same licence. These translations can be made by their country's embassy or consulate in Japan or by the JAF. If you are unsure which category your country falls into, contact the nearest JNTO office (p803).

Foreign licences and International Driving Permits are only valid in Japan for six months. If you are staying longer, you will have to get a Japanese licence from the local department of motor vehicles. To do this, you will need to provide your own licence, passport photos, Alien Registration Card and the fee, and also take a simple eye test.

## Expressways

The expressway system will get you from one end of the country to another but it is not particularly extensive. Also, since all the expressways charge tolls, it is uniformly expensive – about ¥24.6 per kilometre. Tokyo to Kyoto, for example, will cost about ¥10,050 in tolls. The speed limit on expressways is 80km/h but seems to be uniformly ignored. At a steady 100km/h, you will still find as many cars overtaking you as you overtake, some of them going very fast indeed.

There are good rest stops and service centres at regular intervals. A prepaid highway card, available from tollbooths or at the service areas, saves you having to carry so much cash and gives you a 4% to 8% discount in the larger card denominations. You can also pay tolls with most major credit cards. Exits are usually fairly well signposted in romaji but make sure you know the name of your exit as it may not necessarily be the same as the city you're heading towards.

## Fuel & Spare Parts

You'll find *gasoreen sutando* (petrol stations) in almost every town in Japan and in service stations along the country's expressways. The cost of petrol ranges from ¥95 to ¥140 per litre.

## FERRY FARES & TIMES

Hokkaidō–Honshū	Fare	Duration (hr)
Otaru–Niigata	¥6200	18
Otaru–Maizuru	¥9600	20
Tomakomai–Hachinohe	¥4080	7
Tomakomai–Sendai	¥7300	14½
Tomakomai–Ōarai	¥8000	19
Tomakomai–Nagoya (via Sendai)	¥9400	38½

Departing from Tokyo	Fare	Duration (hr)
Tokushima (Shikoku)	¥9310	18
Shinmoji (Kitakyūshū)	¥14,000	34
Naha (Okinawa)	¥23,500	47

Departing from Osaka/Kōbe	Fare	Duration (hr)
Imabari (Shikoku)	¥5400	7
Matsuyama (Shikoku)	¥6300	9½
Shinmoji (Kitakyūshū)	¥7400	12
Beppu (Kyūshū)	¥8800	12
Ōita (Kyūshū)	¥8800	12
Miyazaki (Kyūshū)	¥10,400	13
Shibushi (Kyūshū)	¥10,700	14
Naha (Okinawa)	¥18,800	39

Departing from Kyūshū	Fare	Duration (hr)
Kagoshima–Naha (Okinawa)	¥14,200	25





read Japanese (although you can always ask for help here, too).

## Motorcycles

For citizens of most countries, your overseas licence and an International Driving Permit are all you need to ride a motorcycle in Japan (see p817 for details on which nationalities require additional documentation). Crash helmets are compulsory and you should also ensure your riding gear is adequate to cope with the weather, particularly rain. For much of the year the climate is ideal for motorcycle touring, but when it rains it really rains.

Touring equipment – panniers, carrier racks, straps and the like – is readily available from dealers. Remember to pack clothing in plastic bags to ensure it stays dry, even if you don't. An adequate supply of tools and a puncture repair kit can prove invaluable.

Riding in Japan is no more dangerous than anywhere else in the world, which is to say it is not very safe and great care should be taken at all times. Japan has the full range of motorcycle hazards from single-minded taxi drivers to unexpected changes in road surface, heedless car-door openers to runaway dogs.

## Parking

In most big cities, free curbside parking spots are almost nonexistent, while in rural areas you'll be able to park your car just about wherever you want. In the cities you'll find that you usually have to pay ¥200 per hour for metred street parking, or anywhere from ¥300 to ¥600 per hour for a spot in a multi-storey car park. You'll find car parks around most department stores and near some train stations. Fortunately, most hotels have free parking for guests, as do some restaurants and almost all department stores.

## Road Rules

Driving in Japan is on the left. There are no real problems with driving in Japan. There are no unusual rules or interpretations of them and most signposts follow international conventions. JAF (p817) has a *Rules of the Road* book available in English and five other languages for ¥1000.

## HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should under-

stand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. In particular, Japan is a very dangerous place for solitary female hitchhikers; there have been countless cases of solitary female hitchers being attacked, molested and raped. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go.

Provided you understand the risks and take appropriate precautions, Japan can be a good country for hitchhiking. Many hitchhikers have tales of extraordinary kindness from motorists who have picked them up.

The rules for hitchhiking are similar to anywhere else in the world. Dress neatly and look for a good place to hitch – expressway onramps and expressway service areas are probably your best bet.

Truck drivers are particularly good for long-distance travel as they often head out on the expressways at night. If a driver is exiting before your intended destination, try to get dropped off at one of the expressway service areas. The *Service Area Parking Area (SAPA)* guide maps are excellent for hitchers. They're available free from expressway service areas and show full details of each interchange (IC) and rest stop. These are important orientation points if you have a limited knowledge of Japanese.

For more on hitching in Japan pick up a copy of the excellent *Hitchhiker's Guide to Japan* by Will Ferguson. In addition to lots of general advice, this book details suggested routes and places to stay on the road. All in all, it's just about invaluable for anyone contemplating a long hitch around Japan.

## LOCAL TRANSPORT

All the major cities offer a wide variety of public transport. In many cities you can get day passes for unlimited travel on bus, tram or subway systems. Such passes are usually called an *ichi-nichi-jōsha-ken*. If you're staying for an extended period in one city, commuter passes are available for regular travel.

## Bus

Almost every Japanese city has an extensive bus service but it's usually the most difficult public transport system for foreign travellers to use. The destination names are almost always written in kanji and often there are no numbers to identify which bus you want.

Fares are either paid to the driver on entering or as you leave the bus and usually operate

on one of two systems. In Tokyo and some other cities, there's a flat fare regardless of distance. In the other system, you take a ticket as you board which indicates the zone number at your starting point. When you get off, an electric sign at the front of the bus indicates the fare charged at that point for each starting zone number. You simply pay the driver the fare that matches your zone number. There is often a change machine near the front of the bus that can change ¥100 and ¥500 coins and ¥1000 notes.

In many tourist towns there are also *teiki kankō basu* (tour buses), often run from the main railway station. Tours are usually conducted in Japanese but English-language tours are available in popular areas like Kyoto and Tokyo. In places where the attractions are widespread or hard to reach by public transport, tours can be a good bet.

## Taxi

Taxis are convenient but expensive and can even be found in quite small towns; the train station is the best place to look. Fares are fairly uniform throughout the country – flagfall (posted on the taxi windows) is ¥600 to ¥660 for the first 2km, after which it's around ¥100 for each 350m (approximately). There's also a time charge if the speed drops below 10km/h. During the day, it's almost impossible to tell if a moving taxi is occupied (just wave at it and it will stop if it's free); at night, vacant taxis are distinguishable by an illuminated light on the roof – an occupied taxi will have its light turned off.

Don't whistle for a taxi; a simple wave should bring one politely to a halt. Don't open the door when it stops; the driver does that with a remote release. The driver will also shut the door when you leave the taxi.

Communication can be a problem with taxi drivers in Japan, but perhaps not as much as you fear. If you can't tell the driver where you want to go, it's useful to have the name written down in Japanese. At hotel front desks there will usually be business cards complete with name and location, which can be used for just this purpose. Of course, Japanese script is provided on map keys in this guidebook, too.

Tipping is not necessary. A 20% surcharge is added after 11pm or for taxis summoned by radio. There may also be an added charge if you summon the taxi by phone or reserve the taxi.

## Train & Subway

Several cities, especially Osaka and Tokyo, have mass transit rail systems comprising a loop line around the city centre and radial lines into the central stations and the subway system. Subway systems operate in Fukuoka, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, Osaka, Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo and Yokohama. They are usually the fastest and most convenient way to get around the city.

For subways and local trains you'll most likely have to buy your ticket from a machine. They're pretty easy to understand even if you can't read kanji as there is a diagram explaining the routes; from this you can find out what your fare should be. If you can't work the fare out, a solution is to buy a ticket for the lowest fare. When you finish your trip, go to the fare adjustment machine (*seisan-ki*) or counter before you reach the exit gate and pay the excess. JR train stations and most subway stations not only have their names posted above the platform in kanji and romaji but also the names of the preceding and following stations.

## Tram

Many cities have tram lines – particularly Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Kagoshima on Kyūshū, Kōchi and Matsuyama on Shikoku, and Hakodate on Hokkaidō. These are excellent ways of getting around as they combine many of the advantages of bus travel (eg good views) with those of subways (it's easy to work out where you're going). Fares work on similar systems to bus travel and there are also unlimited-travel day tickets available.

## TRAIN

Japanese rail services are among the best in the world: they are fast, frequent, clean and comfortable. The services range from small local lines to the *shinkansen* super-expresses or 'bullet trains' which have become a symbol of modern Japan.

The 'national' railway is **Japan Railways** (JR; www.japanrail.com), which is actually a number of separate private rail systems providing one linked service. The JR system covers the country from one end to the other and also provides local services around major cities like Tokyo and Osaka. There is more than 20,000km of railway line and about 20,000 services daily. JR operates the *shinkansen* network throughout Japan. *Shinkansen* lines are

totally separate from the regular railways and, in some places, the *shinkansen* stations are a fair distance from the main JR station (as is the case in Osaka). JR also operates buses and ferries, and ticketing can combine more than one form of transport.

In addition to JR services, there is a huge network of private railways in Japan. Each large city usually has at least one private train line that services that city and the surrounding area, or connects that city to nearby cities.

## Services

### TYPES OF TRAINS

The slowest trains stopping at all stations are called *futsū* or *kaku-eki-teisha*. A step up from this is the *kyūkō* (ordinary express), which stops at only a limited number of stations. A variation on the *kyūkō* trains is the *kaisoku* (rapid) service. Finally, the fastest regular (non-*shinkansen*) trains are the *tokkyū* services, which are sometimes known as *shin-kaisoku*.

### SHINKANSEN

The fastest and best-known train services in Japan are JR's *shinkansen*. The *shinkansen* reach speeds of up to 300km/h and some experimental models have gone significantly faster. In addition to being incredibly fast, *shinkansen* are also incredibly safe: in more than 30 years of operation, there has never been a fatality.

The service efficiency starts even before you board the train. Your ticket indicates your carriage and seat number, and platform signs indicate where you should stand for that carriage entrance. The train pulls in precisely to the scheduled minute and, sure enough, the carriage door you want is right beside where you're standing.

On most *shinkansen* routes, there are two or three types of service: faster express services stopping at a limited number of stations, and slower local services stopping at all *shinkansen* stations. There is no difference in fare with the exception of the super-express Nozomi service on the Tōkaidō/San-yō *shinkansen* line. There are, however, regular and Green Car (1st-class) carriages.

There are a limited number of *kin'en-sha* (nonsmoking carriages); request one when booking or ask on the platform for the *kin'en-sha-jiyū-seki* (unreserved nonsmoking cars).

Unreserved carriages are available on all but the super-express Nozomi service, but at peak holiday periods they can be very crowded and you may have to stand for the entire trip.

For prices on specific *shinkansen* routes, see below.

## Classes

Most long-distance JR trains, including the *shinkansen*, have regular and Green Car carriages. The seating is slightly more spacious in Green Car carriages, but most people will find the regular carriages perfectly acceptable.

### Train Types

shinkansen	新幹線	bullet train
tokkyū	特急	limited express
shin-kaisoku	新快速	JR special rapid train
kyūkō	急行	express
kaisoku	快速	JR rapid or express
futsū	普通	local
kaku-eki-teisha	各駅停車	local

### Other Useful Words

jiyū-seki	自由席	unreserved seat
shitei-seki	指定席	reserved seat
green-sha	グリーン車	1st-class car
ōfuku	往復	round trip
katamichi	片道	one way
kin'en-sha	禁煙車	nonsmoking car
kitsuen-sha	喫煙車	smoking car

## Costs

JR fares are calculated on the basis of *futsū-unchin* (basic fare), *tokkyū-ryōkin* (an express surcharge levied only on express services) and *shinkansen-ryōkin* (a special charge for *shinkansen* services). The following are some typical fares from Tokyo or Ueno, not including the Nozomi super express (prices given for *shinkansen* are the total price of the ticket):

Destination	Basic Fare	Shinkansen
Fukushima	¥4620	¥8190
Hakata	¥13,440	¥21,210
Hiroshima	¥11,340	¥17,540
Kyoto	¥7980	¥12,710
Morioka	¥8190	¥13,640
Nagoya	¥6090	¥10,070
Niigata	¥5460	¥9760
Okayama	¥10,190	¥15,850
Shin Osaka	¥8510	¥13,240
Sendai	¥5780	¥10,080
Shin Shimonoseki	¥12,810	¥20,060

## SURCHARGES

Various surcharges may be added to the basic fare. These include reserved seat, Green Car, express service and *shinkansen* surcharges. You may also have to pay a surcharge for special trains to resort areas or for a seat in an observation car. The express surcharges (but not the *shinkansen* super-express surcharge) can be paid to the train conductor on board the train.

Some of the fare surcharges are slightly higher (5% to 10%) during peak travel seasons. This applies mainly to reserved seat tickets. High-season dates are 21 March to 5 April, 28 April to 6 May, 21 July to 31 August, and 25 December to 10 January.

Further surcharges apply for overnight sleepers, and these vary with the berth type, from approximately ¥9800 for various types of two-tier bunks, and ¥20,000 for a standard or 'royal' compartment. Note that there are no sleepers on the *shinkansen* services as none of these run overnight. Japan Rail Pass users must still pay the sleeper surcharge (for more on the Japan Rail Pass, see below). Sleeper services mainly operate on trains from Tokyo or Osaka to destinations in Western Honshū and Kyūshū.

The Nozomi super express has higher surcharges than other *shinkansen* services and cannot be used with a Japan Rail Pass. As a guideline, the Nozomi surcharge for Tokyo–Kyoto is ¥300; for Tokyo–Hakata it's ¥600 (seat reserve fee).

## Passes & Discount Tickets

If you plan to do any extended travel in Japan, a Japan Rail Pass is almost essential. Not only will it save you lots of money, it will also spare you the hassle of buying tickets each time you want to board a train.

In addition to the Japan Rail Pass, there are various discount tickets and special fares available. The most basic is the return fare discount: if you buy a return ticket for a trip which is more than 600km each way, you qualify for a 10% discount on the return leg.

### JAPAN RAIL PASS

One of Japan's few real travel bargains is the Japan Rail Pass, which *must be purchased outside Japan*. It is available to foreign tourists and Japanese overseas residents (but not foreign residents of Japan). The pass lets you use any JR service for seven days for ¥28,300, 14

days for ¥45,100 or 21 days for ¥57,700. Green Car passes are ¥37,800, ¥61,200 and ¥79,600, respectively. The pass cannot be used for the super express Nozomi *shinkansen* service, but is OK for everything else (including other *shinkansen* services).

The only surcharge levied on the Japan Rail Pass is for overnight sleepers. Since a one-way reserved seat Tokyo–Kyoto *shinkansen* ticket costs ¥13,220, you only have to travel Tokyo–Kyoto–Tokyo to make a seven-day pass come close to paying off. Note that the pass is valid only on JR services; you will still have to pay for private train services.

In order to get a pass, you must first purchase an 'exchange order' outside Japan at JAL and ANA offices and major travel agencies. Once you arrive in Japan, you must bring this exchange order to a JR Travel Service Centre (these can be found in most major JR stations and at Narita and Kansai airports). When you validate your pass, you'll have to show your passport. The pass can only be used by those with a temporary visitor visa, which means it cannot be used by foreign residents of Japan (those on any visa other than the temporary visitor visa).

The clock starts to tick on the pass as soon as you validate it. So don't validate if you're just going into Tokyo or Kyoto and intend to hang around for a few days.

For more information on the pass and overseas purchase locations, visit the JR website's **Japan Rail Pass section** ([www.japanrailpass.net/eng/en001.html](http://www.japanrailpass.net/eng/en001.html)).

### JR EAST PASS

This is a great deal for those who only want to travel in eastern Japan. The passes are good on all JR lines in eastern Japan (including Tōhoku, Yamagata, Akita, Jōetsu and Nagano *shinkansen*, but not including the Tōkaidō *shinkansen*). This includes the area around Tokyo and everything north of Tokyo to the tip of Honshū, but doesn't include Hokkaidō.

Prices for five-day passes are ¥20,000/16,000/10,000 for adults over 26/youths 12 to 25/children aged six to 11. Ten-day passes are ¥32,000/25,000/16,000 for the same age groups. Four-day 'flexible' passes are also available which allow travel on any four consecutive or non-consecutive days within any one-month period. These cost ¥20,000/16,000/10,000 for the same age



groups. Green Car passes are available for higher prices.

As with the Japan Rail Pass, this can only be purchased outside Japan (in the same locations as the Japan Rail Pass) and can only be used by those with temporary visitor visas (you'll need to show your passport). See the preceding Japan Rail Pass section for more details on purchase places and validation procedures.

For more information on the JR East Pass, visit the website's **JR East Pass section** ([www.jreast.co.jp/e/eastpass/top.html](http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/eastpass/top.html)).

### JR WEST SAN-YŌ AREA PASS

Similar to the JR East Pass, this pass allows unlimited travel on the San-yō *shinkansen* line (including the Nozomi super express) between Osaka and Hakata, as well as local trains running between the same cities. A four-day pass costs ¥20,000 and an eight-day pass costs ¥30,000 (children's passes are half-price). These can be purchased both inside Japan (at major train stations, travel agencies and Kansai airport) and outside Japan (same locations as the Japan Rail Pass) but can only be used by those with a temporary visitor visa. The pass also entitles you to discounts on hiring cars at station rent-a-car offices. For more information on this pass, see the JR West website's **San-yo Area Pass section** ([www.westjr.co.jp/english/global.html](http://www.westjr.co.jp/english/global.html)).

### JR WEST KANSAI AREA PASS

A great deal for those who only want to explore the Kansai area, this pass covers unlimited travel on JR lines between most major Kansai cities, such as Himeji, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto and Nara. It also covers JR trains to/from Kansai airport but does not cover any *shinkansen* lines. One-/two-/three-/four-day passes cost ¥2000/4000/5000/6000 (children's passes are half-price). These can be purchased at the same places as the San-yō area rail pass (both inside and outside Japan) and also entitle you to discounts on station hire-car offices. Like the San-yō Area Pass, this pass can only be used by those with a temporary visitor visa. For more information, see the JR West website's **Kansai Area Pass section** ([www.westjr.co.jp/english/global.html](http://www.westjr.co.jp/english/global.html)).

### JR KYŪSHŪ RAIL PASS

This pass is valid on all JR lines in Kyūshū with the exception of the *shinkansen* line. A five-day pass (the only option) costs ¥16,000

(children's passes are half-price). It can be purchased both inside Japan, at Joyroad Travel Agencies in major train stations in Kyūshū, and outside Japan, at the same locations as the Japan Rail Pass (see p823 for purchase details). It can only be used by those on a temporary visitor visa. If you purchase an exchange order overseas, you can pick up your pass at major train stations in Kyūshū. For more information, visit the website of **JR Kyūshū** ([www.jrkyushu.co.jp/english/kyushu\\_railpass.html](http://www.jrkyushu.co.jp/english/kyushu_railpass.html)).

### SEISHUN JŪHACHI KIPPU

If you don't have a Japan Rail Pass, one of the best deals going is a five-day Seishun Jūhachi Kippu (literally a 'Youth 18 Ticket'). Despite its name, it can be used by anyone of any age. Basically, for ¥11,500 you get five one-day tickets valid for travel anywhere in Japan on JR lines. The only catches are that you can't travel on *tokkyū* or *shinkansen* trains and each ticket must be used within 24 hours. However, even if you only have to make a return trip, say, between Tokyo and Kyoto, you'll be saving a lot of money. Seishun Jūhachi Kippu can be purchased at most JR stations in Japan.

The tickets are intended to be used during Japanese university holidays. There are three periods of sale and validity: spring – which is from 20 February to 31 March and valid for use between 1 March and 10 April; summer – from 1 July to 31 August and valid for use between 20 July and 10 September; and winter – from 1 December to 10 January and valid for use between 10 December and 20 January. Note that these periods are subject to change. For more information, ask at any JR ticket window.

If you don't want to buy the whole book of five tickets, you can sometimes purchase separate tickets at the discount ticket shops around train stations.

For more on the Seishun Jūhachi Kippu, see the JR East website's **Seishun Jūhachi Kippu section** ([www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/seishun18.html](http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/seishun18.html)).

### KANSAI THRU PASS

See p311 for details on this excellent pass, which allows unlimited travel on all non-JR private train lines and most bus lines in Kansai.

### SHŪYŪ-KEN & FURII KIPPU

There are a number of excursion tickets, known as *shūyū-ken* or *furii kippu* (*furii* is

Japanese for 'free'). These tickets include the return fare to your destination and give you unlimited JR local travel within the destination area. There are *shūyū-ken* available to travel from Tokyo to Hokkaidō and then around Hokkaidō for up to seven days. A Kyūshū or Shikoku *shūyū-ken* gets you to and from either island and gives you four or five days of travel around them. You can even go to Kyūshū one way by rail and one way by ferry. These tickets are available at major JR stations in Japan. For more information on these and other special ticket deals, see the JR East website's **Useful Tickets and Rail Passes for Visitors to East Japan** section ([www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/index.html](http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/pass/index.html)).

Discount ticket shops are known as *kakuyasu-kippu-uriba* in Japanese. These stores deal in discounted tickets for trains, buses, domestic plane flights, ferries, and a host of other things like cut-rate stamps and phone cards. You can typically save between 5% and 10% on *shinkansen* tickets. Discount ticket agencies are found around train stations in medium and large cities. The best way to find one is to ask at the *kōban* (police box) outside the station.

### Schedules & Information

The most complete timetables can be found in the *JR Jikokuhyō* (book of timetables; available at all Japanese bookstores; written in Japanese). The JNTO, however, produces a handy English-language Railway Timetable booklet which explains a great deal about the services in Japan and gives timetables for the *shinkansen* services, *JR tokkyū* (limited express services) and major private lines. If your visit to Japan is a short one and you will not be straying far from the major tourist destinations, this booklet may well be all you need.

Major train stations all have information counters, and you can usually get your point across in simplified English.

If you need to know anything about JR, such as schedules, fares, fastest routes, lost baggage, discounts on rail travel, hotels and car hire, call the **JR East Infoline** (☎ 050-2016-1603; [www.jreast.co.jp/e/info/index.html](http://www.jreast.co.jp/e/info/index.html); ☎ 10am-6pm, closed during the year-end/new-year period). Information is available in English, Korean and Chinese. More information can be found on the website.

### Tickets & Reservations

Tickets for most journeys can be bought from vending machines or ticket counters/reservation offices. For reservations of complicated tickets, larger train stations have *midori-no-madoguchi* (green counters) – look for the counter with the green band across the glass. Major travel agencies in Japan also sell reserved-seat tickets, and you can buy *shinkansen* tickets through JAL offices overseas if you will be flying JAL to Japan.

On *futsū* services, there are no reserved seats. On the faster *tokkyū* and *shinkansen* services you can choose to travel reserved or unreserved. However, if you travel unreserved, there's always the risk of not getting a seat and having to stand, possibly for the entire trip. This is a particular danger at weekends, peak travel seasons and on holidays. Reserved-seat tickets can be bought any time from a month in advance to the day of departure.

Information and tickets can be obtained from travel agencies, of which there are a great number in Japan. Nearly every railway station of any size will have at least one travel agency in the station building to handle all sorts of bookings in addition to train services. JTB (Japan Travel Bureau) is the big daddy of Japanese travel agencies. However, for most train tickets and long-distance bus reservations, you don't need a travel agency – just go to the ticket counters or *midori-no-madoguchi* (green counters) of any major train station.

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# Health

Dr Trish Batchelor

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Japan is a wealthy industrialised country with a high standard of medical care. The level of care in rural areas, however, is not usually up to the same high standards as in the major cities. Food and water sanitation is generally good, though there is some risk of disease transmission through eating certain raw or undercooked foods. There is a low risk of catching an insect-borne disease such as Japanese encephalitis, Lyme disease and tick-borne encephalitis in specific areas at certain times of the year. Medical care is expensive, so ensure you have adequate travel insurance.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later. See your dentist before a long trip, carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses, and take your optical prescription with you. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity. If you have a heart condition bring

a copy of a recent electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG). If you take any regular medication carry extra supplies in case of loss or theft – it may be difficult to get exactly the same medications in Japan. In particular it can be difficult to get oral contraceptives.

Although medical care in most of Japan is quite reasonable, it is still wise to carry a basic medical kit suitable for treating minor ailments. Recommended items include simple painkillers, antiseptic and dressings for minor wounds, insect repellent, sunscreen, antihistamine tablets and adequate supplies of your personal medications.

## INSURANCE

Even if you are fit and healthy, don't travel without specific travel health insurance – accidents can happen. If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses while abroad, get supplemental insurance. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. Take a higher medical expense option as health costs in Japan are high. If you are seeing a doctor as an outpatient in Japan you will usually be expected to pay up front. If you're admitted to hospital, your insurance company may be able to pay the hospital directly; however, this is much easier if the company actually has an office in Japan.

## RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No vaccinations are required for Japan. However, you should be aware that Japan scrupulously checks visitors who arrive from countries where there is a risk of yellow fever and other similar diseases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella, regardless of their destination. Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician at least six weeks before departure. Specialised travel medicine clinics are your best source of information as they will be able to give you personalised information for you and your trip. The doctors will take into ac-

count factors like your medical history, past vaccination history, the length of your trip, time of year you are travelling, and any activities you may be undertaking, as any of these factors can alter general recommendations. Ensure you receive an International Certificate of Vaccination (the yellow booklet), which lists the vaccines you have received.

**Adult diphtheria/tetanus (ADT)** A booster is recommended if it is more than 10 years since your last shot. Side effects include a sore arm and a fever.

**Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR)** Two doses of MMR are recommended unless you have had the diseases. Many adults under the age of 35 require a booster. Occasionally a rash and flu-like illness can occur about a week after vaccination.

**Varicella (Chickenpox)** If you have not had chickenpox you should discuss this vaccine with your doctor. Chickenpox can be a serious disease in adults with complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis. As an adult you require two shots, six weeks apart (usually given after a blood test to prove you have no immunity).

Under certain circumstances, or for those at special risk, the following vaccinations are recommended. These should be discussed with a doctor specialised in travel medicine.

**Hepatitis A** The risk in Japan is low but travellers spending extensive amounts of time in rural areas may consider vaccination. One injection gives almost 100% protection for six to 12 months; after a booster at least 20 years' protection is provided. This vaccine is commonly combined with the hepatitis B vaccine in the form of 'Twinrix'.

**Hepatitis B** For those staying long term or who may be exposed to body fluids by sexual contact, acupuncture, dental work etc, or for health-care workers. Three shots are required, given over six months (a rapid schedule is also available).

**Influenza** If you are over 50 years of age or have a chronic medical condition such as diabetes, lung disease or heart disease, you should have a flu shot annually. Side effects include a mild fever and a sore arm.

**Japanese B encephalitis** There is no risk in Tokyo, but there is risk in rural areas of all islands. The risk is highest in the western part of the country from July to October.

Three shots are given over the course of a month, with a booster after two years. Rarely, allergic reactions can occur, so the course is best completed 10 days prior to travel.

**Pneumonia (pneumococcal)** This vaccine is recommended to travellers over the age of 65 or with chronic lung or heart disease.

**Tick-borne encephalitis** This is present only in the wooded areas of Hokkaido and is transmitted from April to October. This vaccine is readily available in Europe but can be difficult or impossible to find elsewhere.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. For further information, the Lonely Planet website, at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), is a good place to start. WHO publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available free online at [www.who.int/ith/](http://www.who.int/ith/). Other websites of general interest are MD Travel Health at [www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a good site at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov); and Fit for Travel at [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) has up-to-date information about outbreaks and is very user-friendly.

It's also a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available.

**Australia** ([www.dfat.gov.au/travel/](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel/))

**Canada** ([www.travelhealth.gc.ca](http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca))

**New Zealand** ([www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz))

**UK** ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/))

## FURTHER READING

For those spending an extended period of time in Japan the best book is the *Japan Health Handbook* by Meredith Maruyama, Louise Picon Shimizu and Nancy Smith Tsurumaki. It gives an excellent overview of the Japanese medical system for expats. Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel Asia & India* is a useful pocket-sized guide to travel health. *Travel with Children* from Lonely Planet is useful if you are taking children with you. Other recommended general travel-health references are *Traveller's Health* by Dr Richard Dawood and *Travelling Well* by Dr Deborah Mills – check out the website [www.travellingwell.com.au](http://www.travellingwell.com.au) for other trips.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. If a blood clot travels to the lungs it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol. If you have previously had DVT speak with your doctor about preventive medications (usually given in the form of an injection just prior to travel).

### JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

To avoid jet lag (common when crossing more than five time zones) try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), prochlorperazine (Phenergan) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. The main side effect of these medications is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger.

## IN JAPAN

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Medical care in Japan is significantly better in the major cities compared to rural areas. Outside urban areas it may be difficult to access English-speaking doctors, so try to take a Japanese speaker with you to any medical facility. Japan has a national health insurance system, but this is only available to foreigners if they have long-term visas in Japan. Be aware that medical facilities will require full payment at the time of treatment or proof that your travel insurance will pay for any treatment that you receive. Insurance companies in the West are comfortable with the facilities in Japan's major urban centres, but have found variable standards of care in the country areas.

Tourist offices operated by Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO; p803) have lists of English-speaking doctors and dentists, and hospitals where English is spoken. You can contact your insurance company or embassy to locate the nearest English-speaking facility.

Dental services are widespread and of good standard; however, they are very expensive so make sure you have a check-up before you leave home.

Drugs that require a prescription in the West also generally require one in Japan. En-

sure you bring adequate supplies of your own medications from home.

There are certain medications that are illegal to bring into Japan, including some commonly used cough and cold medications such as pseudoephedrine (found in Actifed, Sudafed etc) and codeine. Some prescription medications not allowed into Japan include narcotics, psychotropic drugs, stimulants and codeine. If you need to take more than a one-month supply of any other prescription drug, you should check with your local Japanese embassy as you may need permission. Ensure you have a letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition and the need for any prescription medication.

Pregnant women should receive specialised advice before travelling. Some vaccines are definitely not recommended, others are only prescribed after an individual risk/benefit analysis. The ideal time to travel is during the second trimester (between 15 and 28 weeks), when the risk of pregnancy-related problems are at their lowest and pregnant women generally feel at their best. During the first trimester there is a risk of miscarriage and in the third trimester problems such as premature labour and high blood pressure are possible. Always travel with a companion, have a list of quality medical facilities available at your destination and ensure you continue your standard antenatal care while you travel. Avoid travel to rural areas with poor transport and medical facilities. Most importantly, ensure your travel insurance covers you for pregnancy-related problems, including premature labour. There have recently been reports of hepatitis E in Japan, contracted from undercooked pork liver, boar and deer meat (see p829).

Supplies of sanitary products are readily available in Japan. It can be very difficult to get the oral contraceptive pill so ensure you bring adequate supplies of your own pill from home.

Japan is a safe country to travel with children. Ensure they are up to date with their basic vaccinations prior to travel.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES AIDS & STDs

AIDS and STDs can be avoided completely only by abstaining from sexual contact with new partners. Condom use in Japanese society is low. HIV is still relatively uncommon in Japan, but the incidence is slowly increasing.

In the year 2000, 78% of new cases were contracted via sexual contact. Condoms can help prevent some sexually transmitted infections, but not all. If you have had sexual contact with a new partner while travelling, or have any symptoms such as a rash, pain or discharge, see a doctor for a full STD check-up.

### Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus spread via body fluids, eg through sexual contact, unclean medical facilities or shared needles. People who carry the virus are often unaware they are carriers. In the short term hepatitis B can cause the typical symptoms of hepatitis – jaundice, tiredness and nausea – but in the long term it can lead to cancer of the liver and cirrhosis. Vaccination against hepatitis B is now part of most countries' routine childhood vaccination schedule and should be considered by anyone travelling for a long period of time or who may have contact with body fluids.

### Hepatitis E

Hepatitis E is a virus spread via contaminated food and water. There have been a number of cases reported from Japan, linked to eating boar and deer meat, and most recently undercooked pork liver. The disease causes jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), tiredness and nausea. There is no specific treatment and those infected usually recover after four to six weeks. However, it can be a disaster in pregnant women, with a death rate of both mother and baby of up to 30% in the third trimester. Pregnant women should be particularly careful to avoid eating any undercooked foods. There is no vaccine yet available to prevent hepatitis E.

### Influenza

Influenza is generally transmitted between November and April. Symptoms include high fever, muscle aches, runny nose, cough and sore throat. It can be a very severe illness in those aged over 65 or with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes. Vaccination is recommended for these high-risk travellers or for anyone who wishes to reduce their risk of catching the illness. There is no specific treatment for 'the flu', just rest and paracetamol.

### Japanese B Encephalitis

Japanese B encephalitis is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. It is a rare disease in

travellers and the vaccine is part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule in Japan. Risk exists in rural areas of all islands, but is highest in the western part of the country. In western Japan the risk season is from July to October. On Ryuku Island (Okinawa) the risk season runs from April to December. Vaccination is recommended for travellers spending more than a month in rural areas during the transmission season. Other precautions include general insect avoidance measures such as using repellents and sleeping under nets if not in screened rooms. Although this is a rare disease, it is very serious - there is no specific treatment and a third of people infected will die and a third will suffer permanent brain damage.

### Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is spread via ticks and is present in the summer months in wooded areas. Symptoms include an early rash and general viral symptoms, followed weeks to months later by joint, heart or neurological problems. The disease is treated with the antibiotic doxycycline. Prevent Lyme disease by using general insect avoidance measures and checking yourself for ticks after walking in forested areas.

### Tick-Borne Encephalitis

Tick-borne encephalitis occurs on the northern island of Hokkaidō only, and, as its name suggests, is a virus transmitted by ticks. The illness starts with general flu-like symptoms, which last a few days and then subside. After a period of remission (about one week) the second phase of the illness occurs with symptoms such as headache, fever and stiff neck (meningitis), or drowsiness, confusion and other neurological signs such as paralysis (encephalitis). There is no specific treatment, and about 10% to 20% of those who progress to the second phase of illness will have permanent neurological problems. You can prevent this disease by using insect avoidance measures and checking yourself for ticks after walking in forested areas. A vaccine is available in Europe but is very difficult if not impossible to find elsewhere. Two doses are given four to 12 weeks apart with a third shot after nine to 12 months. Boosters are required every three years to maintain immunity.

### TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

There is a low risk of traveller's diarrhoea in Japan, only 10% to 20% of travellers will experience some stomach upset. If you develop



diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution (eg Dioralyte). A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day you should start taking an antibiotic (such as norfloxacin, ciprofloxacin or azithromycin) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours, is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, or doesn't respond quickly to your antibiotic, you should seek medical attention.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

### Air Pollution

Air pollution can be a problem in major centres such as Tokyo if you have an underlying lung condition. If you have a pre-existing lung condition speak with your doctor to ensure you have adequate medications to treat an exacerbation.

### Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness could develop in some people when climbing Mt Fuji (for more information, see p200) or some of the higher Japanese alps. Altitude sickness is best avoided by slowly acclimatising to higher altitudes. If this is impossible, the medication Diamox can be a helpful preventative if taken on a doctor's recommendation. The symptoms of altitude sickness include headache, nausea and exhaustion and the best treatment is descending to a lower altitude. We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the condition and how to prevent it before setting out on any climb over 2000m. Rick Curtis's *Outdoor Action Guide to High Altitude: Acclimatization and Illness* ([www.princeton.edu/~oa/safety/altitude.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~oa/safety/altitude.html)) provides a comprehensive overview.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is possible if walking or climbing in the alps. It is surprisingly easy to progress from very cold to dangerously cold due to a combination of wind, wet clothing, fatigue and hunger, even if the air temperature is above freezing. It is best to dress in layers; silk, wool and some of the new artificial fibres are all good insulating materials. A hat is important, as a lot of heat is lost through the head. A strong, waterproof outer layer (and a space blanket for emergencies)

is essential. Carry basic supplies, including food containing simple sugars to generate heat quickly and fluid to drink. Symptoms of hypothermia are exhaustion, numb skin (particularly the toes and fingers), shivering, slurred speech, irrational or violent behaviour, lethargy, stumbling, dizzy spells, muscle cramps and violent bursts of energy. Irrationality may take the form of sufferers claiming they are warm and trying to take off their clothes. To treat mild hypothermia, first get the person out of the wind and/or rain, remove their clothing if it's wet and replace it with dry, warm clothing. Give them hot liquids – not alcohol – and some high-calorie, easily digestible food. The early recognition and treatment of mild hypothermia is the only way to prevent severe hypothermia, which is a critical condition.

### Insect Bites & Stings

Insect bites and stings are not a common problem in Japan. You should, however, follow general insect avoidance measures if you are hiking in the woods or are in rural areas during the summer months. These include using an insect repellent containing 20% to 30% DEET (diethyl-M-toluamide), covering up with light-coloured clothing and checking yourself for ticks after being in the forest. When removing ticks ensure you also remove their heads. Some people have an allergic reaction to ticks so it is a good idea to carry an antihistamine with you.

### Water

The water is generally safe to drink in Japan.

## TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The two most well-known forms of traditional Japanese medicine are shiatsu and *reiki*.

Shiatsu is a type of massage that emerged in Japan out of traditional Chinese medicine. It is a form of manual therapy incorporating gentle manipulations and stretches derived from physiotherapy and chiropractic, combined with pressure techniques exerted through the fingers or thumbs. The philosophy underlying shiatsu is similar to many traditional Asian medical systems and involves the body's *ki* (vital energy) flowing through the body in a series of channels known as meridians. If the *ki* is blocked from flowing freely, illness can occur. The technique is used to improve the flow of *ki*. Shiatsu was officially recognised

by the Japanese government as a therapy in its own right in the mid-1900s.

*Reiki* claims to heal by charging this same life force with positive energy, thus allowing the *ki* to flow in a natural, healthy manner. In a standard treatment, *reiki* energy flows from the practitioner's hands into the client. The practitioner places their hands on or near the

clients' body in a series of positions that are held for three to 10 minutes. People become practitioners after receiving an 'attunement' from a *reiki* master.

If you do decide to have any traditional medical treatments make sure you tell your practitioner if you are taking any Western medicines.

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