



JAPAN TRAVEL TIPS



CREDIT CARD / CASH

Only **Seven Bank** (found in 24 hour convenient stores and other locations), **Citibank** (24 hours, found in major cities only), **Shinsei Bank** or **Post Office ATM's** (normal business hours) will accept foreign credit cards for cash withdrawals - **Don't forget your PIN & to inform your card service provider that you are leaving your home country** - they sometimes put a security block on using cards overseas. It is advisable to bring as much cash as you might need or as much as possible - credit cards and Japan are not as advanced as you might think! Debit Cards are not accepted in most small shops or mama/papa restaurants.

TOP TIP: Never run low on cash when not in a city as you will find it tough to change currency at banks, or find an ATM suitable. Avoid going inside Japanese banks. They generally won't speak English.


SPENDING MONEY: We recommend a budget of €50 – €80 per day per person (when accommodation is already pre booked). If you are taking part in an escorted tour, this figure may be less, as your entrance fees are usually included, and places of interest will keep you busy hence less time to spend money.



LUGGAGE

Bring one suitcase weighing a recommended weight of 15 kg on your way to Japan. You'll add to this during your stay and the maximum weight allowance is usually 20-23 kg per person on most economy seats. Business class varies but is around 30 kg per person. We do not recommend you to carry 30kg around with you. Without knowing it, you may need to carry this case up stairs, through stations, and so on. The lighter the case, the less energy wasted! Not only this, Japanese airports are very strict about weight and usually charge ¥3,000 per extra kilo. If you get caught at the airport with a hefty fine, use the Post Office Service to send by SAL. This takes from 1 week up to 6 weeks to be delivered. It's a lot cheaper than Air Freight.

"Takkyubin" is a postal service that delivers parcels, including suitcases, skis, etc. from anywhere, and to anywhere, within Japan. Distances that do not require a flight usually take less than one day. So if you send your bag from your hotel in Tokyo in the morning it can sometimes be at your Kyoto hotel that evening or the following morning. If you are planning an overnight stay in the countryside (where few coin lockers exist), this service is highly recommended.

 **"Coin Lockers"** - "コインロッカー" are found in most train stations (look for the sign). The bigger the station is, the bigger the lockers are; i.e. lockers available for larger suitcases. Smaller rural stations may only have lockers suitable for light luggage. This option is safe and very convenient. It is not recommended to carry baggage when sightseeing, especially in cities. It will tire you out and get in the way. Cost per locker depends on the size and time ranging from ¥200 - ¥600 for up to 6 - 8 hours.



Wi-Fi service is improving throughout Japan. Many cafes now offer free Wi-Fi service, including Starbucks, however, you need to have signed up beforehand. We recommend to become a Starbucks Member while in your hotel room or before you leave. In that way you won't have to use your roaming/mobile data in the stores.

We highly recommend renting a pocket wifi – especially while on the go and relying on Google Maps. You can do this before you leave your home country (early booking is recommended during busy seasons as stock can be low). Expect to pay approx. ¥1,000 p/da.

POCKET WIFI RENTAL: <https://pupuruwifi.com/IR1/elp>

TRAVEL ADAPTOR

If you plan to carry electronic devices it is advisable to carry a travel adaptor with you. Voltage in Japan is 100V (compared to 220V in Ireland, for example). Make sure your device has a built in transformer or you may burn it out. Japanese sockets are



two pin (same as in US).

SKYPE WHATSAPP

Both Skype & Whatsapp are a great way to stay in touch at home or among your friends in Japan. Don't forget you will need WIFI on your phone to get connected! Calling home using hotel phones will cost a lot more than necessary. If you really need to get in touch, the best way is through your own mobile phone.



MOBILE PHONES

A common mistake many travellers make is assuming your mobile phone will work in Japan. Note that roaming charges are extortionate. If you cannot be without, you can rent for a reasonable fee. Options will be available to you on arrival at the airport. It may be difficult to arrange this on your own in a city so we recommend you get this task done at the airport where they will also speak English. Many hotels, especially five star hotels, will provide you with a handy-phone inside your room. You can make local calls on these.



TIME

Japan is 9 hours ahead of GMT and has no daylight saving time. Just one time zone.

It is advisable not to go to McDonald's 10 minutes before your train leaves - they won't wait. A common shock for many travelling to Japan for the first time is the punctuality of services, especially with the trains. If your train is due to leave at 11.11, you should aim to be at the station for 10.50. This gives you time to find which carriage you are supposed to be standing at (written on your ticket). The bullet train will arrive at 11.11 and leave 10 seconds later so there is really no time for wasting or rushing.



CLOTHES

Check the climate and temperature before you leave and bring clothes to suit the season. Japanese weather is very predictable so it shouldn't be a problem planning your wardrobe. Japanese people dress very casually day and night - except in Tokyo where you won't know what to expect. Women dress quite modestly but very elegantly. Men are well dressed but if work is not involved, a suit is not worn. Unless you are travelling for a special occasion or on business, there's no need for men to bring a suit. Business travellers should bring smart, clean, neat suits with all the trimmings - if you want to impress.



SHOES & SOCKS

Bizarre as it may sound, clean socks are vital in Japan. You will be surprised at the number of unexpected times you have to take off your shoes to enter a room, temple, house, even dressing rooms in clothes stores. Comfortable shoes are a necessity. Lots of walking involved – from hotel lobby to room, from platform to outside your station, and so on. Be prepared to walk! Most train stations have lifts from platform to ticket gates so always look for the lift sign, especially if in any way walking impaired.



LANGUAGE

Surprisingly, you will find little or no English once you leave the main cities (Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto etc.). For this reason it is advisable to learn a few phrases, carry a pocket phrase book, or use a translator APP. Most Japanese people are very friendly and willing/eager to help you. They learn English from an early age but are not that open to speaking it.



BULLET TRAINS (*Shinkansen*) & JAPAN RAIL PASS

If you are travelling in Japan using the Japan Rail Pass, it is still advised to reserve seats prior to getting on the bullet trains. Advance booking is always recommended in Japan. During busy seasons trains can get quite full, even in reserved areas. If you do not reserve your seat, you could end up standing for most of your journey which is not necessary. Same goes for any long distance or special types of trains in Japan - reservations recommended.



CITY TRANSPORT



No matter what form of travel you decide to do, if you are using subways and city transport, we highly recommend you buy a SUICA or PASMO card*. These act as a hop on/hop off travel card that can be used on all trains, buses, and even in convenience stores! Add credit to it and off you go! Scan at the ticket gate every time you enter/exit the station. You can purchase this at any ticket machine in all stations. Note, most machines will only accept cash so have your cash ready. A ¥500 deposit is required to buy the card. Extremely handy and saves you a lot of time. Both cards work all across Japan, i.e. not specific to any city.

*In some cases, your itinerary may state that your Private Tour Guide will provide you with your SUICA card.



VISAS, AIRPORT SECURITY & DOCUMENTATION

Passengers carrying an EU passport are exempt from obtaining a visa to enter Japan. You are not permitted to work as this is only a tourist visa. Visas can be validated for up to 6 months or less. For more information on Visas in Japan visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Website](#).

Since November 2007, security checks on entering an International Airport in Japan requires passengers to give their finger print and photo, kept on file and processed at the immigration area. You are not required to bring a photo with you. You will receive an immigration card to fill out (usually handed out on the aircraft before landing). This must be filled out and handed in to Immigration on arrival. We always advise to fill this out before you disembark your aircraft.



Taking Taxi's

Using taxi's to get around Japan will cost you. Most people travel around cities on subways or buses. However when these stop (usually around midnight), taxi's become your only option. Here are some useful tips when using taxi's:

1. To hail a taxi, you'll find taxi stands outside train stations. Or, if you are lost, flag one in a safe place where they can stop safely. You can see if a taxi is vacant or not by the colour of it's plate



Vacant: Occupied

2. All taxi doors in Japan (left rear) will open automatically. So don't try to open or close the door. You might upset the taxi driver!
3. Tipping is not necessary.
4. If you don't know the address to where you are going, write it down or try to find it on your own google maps. Most taxi drivers will not speak English and given the complexity of the Japanese address system, they will find it hard to know where you want to go without some reference. Telephone numbers can help. Always carry a business card of the hotel you are staying in. This can also be useful when trying to get home at night.
5. Carry cash but if you run low, ask before you start the journey if they take cards. Your SUICA or PASMO card can often be used too.



Eating Out

Eating out in Japan will be one of the major highlights for many while in Japan. You will come across a huge selection of foods, not just sushi! Most people eat out in Japan so you'll find a great selection no matter where you go.

- ❖ Be adventurous and don't be afraid to try as much as you can.
- ❖ Most dishes will be new to you but try to have an open mind and remember, Japanese people are super healthy, clean, and consider food their biggest most important part of life.
- ❖ If you don't know what a dish is, just try it. It's most likely some type of vegetable, seaweed, or local produce.
- ❖ Trip Adviser is a good app to use for finding restaurants in your area.
- ❖ A separate Eating Out Guide will be provided in all Travel Pacls from Unique Japan Tours.



ONSEN & RYOKAN STAYS

We encourage all of our clients to experience onsen (hot spring baths) at least once. You won't regret it! Respecting Japanese culture is so important when traveling in Japan. Japanese people are extremely polite and respectful to one another as a society. So we expect our clients to behave in a similar manner.

How to enjoy onsen:

1. If you are staying in a ryokan, wear your Yukata provided (dressing gown) to the onsen.
2. Male and Female onsen will be separate. Be sure to enter the correct one



3. Get naked! Don't be shy, everyone does it. Wash your body before entering the bath. All onsens will have a separate washing area with small stools and showers. Shampoo/body wash will be provided. Small towels too. So all you need is yourself!
4. Nothing is allowed inside onsen baths including towels but you can leave your small towel to the side if you feel like it. Don't put your head under the water usually.
5. No drinking inside the tub.
6. If you see an onsen outside, be sure to try it. It's amazing! Especially if it's cold outside.
7. Be careful how long you stay in the bath – they're hot. Drink plenty of water after you finish. Towel dry your body before entering changing room.

Ryokan stays:

- No shoes allowed usually. So remove your shoes before entering the ryokan (if you see slippers at entrance, it generally means you have to take your shoes off – slippers are always provided). Slippers should not be worn outside. Different sandals or GETA (wooden clogs) are for outside.
- Take off your slippers before walking on TATAMI mats (rice straw matted flooring). Most ryokan rooms are with tatami mats.
- Each ryokan guest will be provided with a yukata (traditional Japanese dressing gown). Yukatas are worn for lounging around, sleeping in, and even dining in. So be prepared to unwind and relax at your ryokan.

Kaiseki dinner & onsen are what make your stay in a ryokan special. So be sure to try both.

We would appreciate you

Send us your snaps

& keep in touch while in Japan

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