

## Hidden Japan

▶ TOKYO ▶ HIKONE ▶ MIYAJIMA ▶ MATSUYAMA ▶ KOTOHIRA ▶ NARA ▶ MT. KOYA ▶ KYOTO

### Japan Facts

**Population:** 128 million  
**Capital City:** Tokyo, pop. 8.23 million (23 wards)  
**Language:** Japanese  
**Religion:** Shinto & Buddhist, 1.5% Christian  
**Currency:** Japanese Yen  
**Time:** GMT + 9 hours  
**Electricity:** 100V  
**International Dialling Code:** 81



### Tour Overview

The Hidden Japan tour is an odyssey through lost Japan; a journey of discovery - Imperial Kyoto, Hikone Castle, the vine bridges and gorges of the stunning Iya valley and the ancient hot spring resort of Matsuyama. A quieter Japan away from the big cities and bright lights.

We begin in Tokyo where our modern hotel is well situated in Asakusa, the oldest and perhaps the most interesting district of Japan's capital city with Sensoji temple and Nakamise-dori right on our doorstep. On the first night we have included a group meal at a local restaurant and then we have the following day to explore the city.

From Tokyo we take the Bullet train to Hikone, famed for its stunning original samurai Castle. Exploring this area you gain an interesting insight into feudal Japan and enter the ancient world of the samurai. There is also the opportunity to visit the beautiful gardens surrounding the castle as well as the interesting castle museum.

Another journey on the super-fast Shinkansen will take us to Hiroshima, where we will visit the Peace Park and Atomic Bomb Museum to gain a more poignant reminder of Japan's more recent history.

From Hiroshima it is only a short hop to the Island of Miyajima. Miyajima is one of Japan's three top sights and has a truly magical atmosphere. We have a whole day strolling amongst the deer, taking in the shrines and walking through the primeval forests. This will be our first stay in Japanese style accommodation and a delicious dinner is included at the hotel.

We will take a scenic ferry ride from Miyajima to Hiroshima Port and then pick up the Hydrofoil to rural Shikoku Island. We will begin our stay on Shikoku in the castle town of Matsuyama where we stay in Dogo Onsen, which offers a chance to take a dip in the oldest hot spring baths in Japan.

You will also have a great opportunity to try Japanese style baths at our next stop in Kotohira. Staying at a luxury Japanese Ryokan this will be a truly unique experience and the dinners are superb. This is a small pilgrimage town full of character and from here we will also do a day trip to the stunning Iya Valley where we explore vine bridges and see some beautiful scenery.

From Kotohira we head back to Honshu and a one night stay in Nara, one of Japan's former capitals. There will be plenty of time to stroll through the deer park and visit the Daibutsu (Giant Buddha) of Todai-ji temple.

We will then make our way by train and cable car to the mysterious Mt. Koya religious complex. Here we will stay at temple lodgings and have the chance to witness traditional ceremonies as well as try some fantastic Buddhist vegetarian cuisine.

Next stop is Kyoto, the old capital of Japan and still very much its cultural heart. Our smart, western style hotel is located by the river Kamo and is a short walk to the centre of town. We have a full two and a half days to explore Kyoto and there is certainly lots to see!

We finish the tour with a final night back amidst the bright lights of Tokyo.

This is a unique tour and is for those who wish to see the main cities but also delve

a little deeper into rural Japan. It is a great opportunity to see a Japan rarely seen by most visitors and features some excellent ryokan and hotel stays as well as numerous great meals.

### Day-by-Day

#### Day 1 Tokyo

The tour group convenes in Tokyo and you will need to arrive at Narita Airport. Your Tour Leader will come to the airport to meet you and escort you into Tokyo and onto our hotel in the centre of town. Many of our customers choose to arrive a day early (your Leader will still be available to meet you at the airport) in order to get over jet-lag and get the most out of the tour. The Tour Leader will supply you with a Tokyo Transport "PASMO" Card allowing you to move around the city easily on the subways and train systems like a real Tokyoite! The first night's dinner is on us at a local restaurant.

#### Day 2 Tokyo (B)

Breakfast is included at the hotel this morning - and indeed every morning of the tour. After breakfast, your Tour Leader will be leading a tour around Tokyo - or feel free to do your own thing if you wish. Those who wish may like to rise early for a visit to the fish market, or perhaps you will pick up the latest gadgets in Akihabara. For a taste of old Tokyo, Sensoji Temple is near to the hotel as well as some great shopping and restaurants.

#### Day 3 Hikone (B)

Today we leave Tokyo by Shinkansen 'Bullet Train' to Hikone, home to one of Japan's most impressive original castles. We'll explore the castle and the lovely surrounding gardens.





## Day-by-Day continued

### Day 4 Miyajima / Hiroshima (B&D)

Continuing south by Bullet Train to Hiroshima to see the Peace Museum. You will have the opportunity to wander around the surrounding park and take your time exploring the museum before joining the group for an optional lunch at Okonomiyaki Mura. This is a building full of Japanese pancake style restaurants for which this area is famous. We will then continue on by local train and ferry to the island of Miyajima in time for an amazing included dinner at our ryokan.

### Day 5 Miyajima (B&D)

Miyajima is home to the Itsukushima shrine which is famous as one of the Nihon Sankei or top three sights of Japan! The so-called 'floating' Torii gate is a truly magnificent sight whilst the views from Mt. Misen are also spectacular. There is some great hiking to be done on the island if you wish – and if the weather is good, beaches to enjoy. Dinner again is included tonight.

### Day 6 Matsuyama (B)

We will forward on our luggage to Kotohira and then travel by ferry to Hiroshima Port and then take the fast ferry to Matsuyama. It is then a short bus journey to the hotel which is located right next to Dogo Hot spring baths which are the oldest in Japan. In Matsuyama we have the afternoon to explore the castle, wander about the town and take a dip in the baths.

### Day 7 Kotohira (B&D)

After breakfast we will be taking a scenic train journey to this rural town. We are staying at a top grade ryokan here with its own hot spring baths and gourmet meals included. This afternoon you'll have the chance to climb the steps of Kompira-san, one of Japan's most important shrines – at the top you'll be treated to spectacular views of the whole area. A sumptuous dinner is included served to us in our own private dining room by waitresses in Kimono.

### Day 8 Kotohira (B&D)

We'll be touring through the magnificent Iya valley today. Our private bus will take us to one of the famous Kazura Bashi (vine bridges) and we'll also enjoy a boat ride through one of the gorges. Lunch is included in the tour and on our return we'll enjoy hot spring baths and another feast at our ryokan.

### Day 9 Nara (B)

Another scenic train journey will take us to the former capital, Japan. We'll arrive by lunch time and have time to explore some of it's fabulous temples and shrines. Nara is a great place to wander taking in the Big Buddha, colourful shrines and feeding the holy deer along the way. Accommodation is at a good grade western style hotel.

### Day 10 Mt. Koya (B&D)

We have the morning to stroll through Nara Park, and feed the local deer! After lunch, we will continue by train to Koya-San. We'll finish off with a short cable car journey up to Mt. Koya our home for the night. Here we stay in a fascinating temple lodgings complete with authentic vegetarian meals – an unforgettable experience.

### Day 11 Kyoto (B)

This morning we'll have a knowledgeable local guide to show us around the fascinating shrines and temples around our lodgings before departing by train for Kyoto in the afternoon. Kyoto is famed for its excellent cuisine and you are free to try one of its great restaurants in the evening.

### Day 12 Kyoto (B)

Kyoto is the cradle of Japanese culture and has endless ancient temples, shrines and interesting museums to explore. Walking from Ginkakuji along the Philosopher's Path is a relaxing way to spend the morning before taking in some Zen temples and the impressive Heian Shrine.

### Day 13 Kyoto (B)

A free day in Kyoto, maybe you will take a trip down the Hozu River by traditional boat, do some shopping, try a handicraft or explore temples and gardens.

### Day 14 Tokyo (B)

Today we travel back to Tokyo for a final night in the metropolis. Accommodation is in the Shinjuku area of the city - the bright lights you expect from the capital city!

### Day 15 Sayonara (B)

Time to head our separate ways - the airport transfer to Tokyo Narita Airport is included in the tour price.

## Accommodation

The following accommodation is used on the Hidden Japan tour:

### Tokyo Blue Wave Inn Asakusa

Excellent modern business hotel located in the heart of the traditional Asakusa district  
Tel. 0358 28 4321

### Hikone Comfort Hotel

The Comfort Hotel Hikone is located a two minute walk from JR Hikone station and is also just a short distance from Hikone Castle. Lake Biwa is also a short taxi ride away.  
Tel. 0749 27 8211

### Miyajima Seaside Hotel

Sea front traditional hotel with views across the bay  
Tel: 0829 44 0118

### Matsuyama Hotel Patio Dogo

Western style hotel located directly opposite the famous Dogo Onsen  
Tel: 089-941-4128

### Kotohira Sakura-no-sho

Beautiful Japanese inn with lovely rooms and fantastic banquet meals  
Tel: 0877 75 3218

### Nara Comfort Hotel

Comfortable modern business hotel close to JR Nara station  
Tel: 0742-25-3211

### Koya-san Fudojin Shukubo

A traditional temple lodge stay with beautifully prepared meals and a chance to take early morning prayers with the resident monks.  
Tel. 0736-56-2414

### Kyoto Karasuma Kyoto Hotel

A guest friendly hotel with quality service. This hotel is ideally located for sightseeing close to Kyoto Station  
Tel. 075-223-2333

### Tokyo Sunroute Plaza Shinjuku

Brand new superior business hotel in a top location in west Shinjuku  
Tel. 03-3375-3211

*Please note that accommodation is subject to change. Final details of the accommodation will be included in your Info-Pack which will be sent out approximately 4 weeks prior to the tour start date.*





## More Tour Information

### What's Included

The following elements are all included in the price of your tour:

- ✓ 14 nights accommodation
- ✓ 14 day Japan Rail Pass and all transport between destinations
- ✓ Meet and Greet on arrival at Narita Airport
- ✓ Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Breakfast everyday
- ✓ 6 evening meals and 2 lunches
- ✓ Tokyo transport PASMO card
- ✓ Sumida River boat cruise in Tokyo
- ✓ Full day touring by private minibus in Iya valley
- ✓ Luggage forwarding between Tokyo and Miyajima
- ✓ Luggage forwarding between Miyajima and Kotohira
- ✓ Luggage forwarding between Nara and Kyoto
- ✓ Full time services of your Tour Leader
- ✓ InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

### NOT included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Additional local transport
- ✗ Entrance fees to shrines, temples, museums etc. other than on Iya Valley day tour
- ✗ Baggage handling - you will be expected to carry your own luggage

### Bathroom arrangements

During the tour we stay in a variety of different accommodation, some Western-style, others Japanese-style. At all night stops (except Mt Koya) your room will have full en-suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet).

At the **Mt. Koya** temple lodging the rooms do not have attached bath or toilet. There are baths for public use (same gender only).

### Policy on single rooms

InsideJapan Tours do not charge a single supplement for most of our tours. In the Western-style hotels all single travellers will be provided with a single room. However, in Japanese-style accommodation it is traditional for people to share a room. Therefore, we ask single travellers to share a room (same sex share) at the Japanese-style night stops in Miyajima, Kotohira and Koya-san.

### Your Tour Leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a Tour Leader, a Japanese speaking Brit, Aussie or American who is there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The Leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels and *ryokan* so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time. Your Tour Leader is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace; equally however, s/he is available pretty much all day everyday and will even accompany (willing) tour members to karaoke...

### Flexibility

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. Each morning the Tour Leader will outline what he is going to do that day and will be available if you need advice about doing any other activities.

### Meals

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements.

### Transport on tour

Please note that all transfers are by public transport making use of Japan's first-rate transport network. All the hotels and *ryokan* have been chosen for their location close to the nearest station. However, you will have to carry your bags for short distances and some stations do not have escalators. Please see the 'Luggage' section for more information on what luggage to bring and a handy packing check-list.

### Visas

Entry visas not required by UK, USA, CAN, AUS & NZ citizens. For other countries please check with the Japanese embassy or consulate in your home country.

### Power and Plugs

Japan uses 100v with two pin flat blade plugs. Travellers from the USA will find that their plugs will fit into some Japanese sockets but not all. Plug adaptors are readily available in electronic stores in Japan and are not expensive. US appliances will work in Japan even though the voltage is slightly lower than North America. Travellers from the UK should purchase a plug adaptor before arrival in Japan as three pin adaptors are somewhat hard to find once you arrive. Please note that due to the much lower voltage UK electrical appliances will not work unless they have a variable voltage power-pack (such as a laptop computer, most mobile phones, digital cameras etc). If you are bringing a digital camera make sure it has a power-pack or it will NOT recharge!

### Mobile Phones

Until recently overseas mobile phones have not worked at all in Japan. However, with the advent of 3G if you have a 3G enabled handset and your phone contract includes 'roaming', you will be able to use your mobile across most of Japan.

If you do not have a suitable handset or wish to avoid high roaming charges, you may wish to hire a mobile for the duration of your stay.

You can arrange phone rental on arrival at Tokyo Narita Airport, Tokyo Haneda Airport and Osaka Kansai Airport. Do note that phones are subject to availability and do sometimes run out at the very busiest times.

Alternatively, for our clients in North America we have teamed up with **Travel Cell** who provide rental cell phones which can be booked in advance:

<http://www.travelcell.com/tcap.asp?ag=IJT28>

When placing an order either use the custom link above or please mention InsideJapan Tours code (IJT28).

### Crime and personal safety

Japan is perhaps the World's safest country and personal crime is almost unheard of. You are extremely unlikely to have anything stolen whilst you are in Japan and the likelihood of being threatened in any way is almost nonexistent. It is not uncommon to leave your wallet, phone, camera or lap-top in a bar or restaurant and return hours later to find your lost property waiting for you.

However, you should still take the usual precautions: Keep large amounts of money out of sight and consider using a money belt; in your hotel room keep your valuables packed away and when out and about keep an eye on your bag and other personal effects.

Japan is also a very safe country for women to travel in and there is a very low risk of being assaulted in any way. Most areas are safe to walk alone at night but it is best to be with another person. Women can sometimes find themselves the subject of unwanted attention from drunk Japanese salary men. Such men are best ignored or a firmly delivered "Go away!" will usually embarrass them into leaving you alone.





## Luggage

20Kgs  
(44lbs) max /  
12kgs (26lb)  
recommended  
1 main bag + 1 day  
bag + overnight  
bag



You will have to carry your own bags for most of the trip. Large cases **WILL** be an inconvenience to you and will slow down the whole group. A compact case WITH WHEELS or a good quality rucksack is appropriate for this tour. DO NOT bring holdalls or sports bags for your main luggage.

If you are travelling for a long time (such as a round the World ticket), then make sure you have a smaller bag as well as your large bag. Japan has a superb system of luggage forwarding (*takyubin*) meaning there is no need to carry around all the items you have with you for a year long trip! Instead you can forward them to your final hotel and they will be kept safely until you check-in. The cost of this service is between 1200 yen (for a medium sized bag) up to 1830 yen for a very large suitcase. There are no weight limits so you don't need to worry about this.

We highly recommend making use of the luggage forwarding service during your stay in Japan. For this reason we suggest you bring an overnight bag with you. This can be a smallish rucksack, a sports bag or any piece of luggage so long as it is not too big!

## Packing check-list

On this page you will find our packing check-list. This is not fully comprehensive but you should find nearly everything you could possibly need to bring on a trip to Japan! There are also a few things to keep in mind when packing.

### Clothing and footwear

Comfortable casual clothing is all that is required. Outside of business situations the Japanese are very relaxed about dress so formal attire is unnecessary. It is always possible that some of the nights outside of Kyoto and Tokyo might be cool or even cold so a jumper or fleece jacket and a light waterproof jacket are advisable. Everyday you will be doing a fair amount of walking so a pair of good quality, comfortable walking shoes is also recommended.

### The obvious things!

- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ T-shirts / Polo Shirts / Casual shirts
- ✓ 2 pairs of long trousers (Jeans, Cords, Chinos etc.)
- ✓ A pair of shorts
- ✓ Sun hat
- ✓ Warm hat (Spring, Autumn and Winter)
- ✓ Light waterproof
- ✓ Light sweater (the air conditioning can be cold!)
- ✓ Night wear
- ✓ Fleece jacket, warm jumper or sweater (Spring and Autumn)
- ✓ Warm coat (winter only)
- ✓ Comfortable shoes or trainers
- ✓ Walking shoes / boots
- ✓ Open-toed sandals
- ✓ Small hand towel
- ✓ Swimwear (if you want to go to a public pool). Western ladies find it very hard to find swimwear to fit in Japan so it is best to bring your own
- ✓ Day sack / small back pack
- ✓ Overnight bag

### Documents

- ✓ Your passport!!
- ✓ A copy of your passport
- ✓ Credit cards
- ✓ Your travel insurance / health insurance documentation

### Toiletries / Health products

Nearly all toiletries are widely available in Japan. However, many people prefer to use their own brands so you will need to bring these with you.

- ✓ Tooth brush, Tooth paste
- ✓ Contact lens equipment or Glasses
- ✓ Deodorant (most people do not like Japanese brands so be sure to bring your own!)
- ✓ Shower gel / Shampoo (these are provided at every night stop but you may prefer your own)
- ✓ Tampons and Pads
- ✓ Mosquito repellent
- ✓ Sunscreen and After-sun cream
- ✓ Comb or Brush
- ✓ Condoms or Contraceptive Pills
- ✓ Hair products (gel, spray etc.)
- ✓ Lip balm
- ✓ Razor & shaving gel

You may wish to take a well stocked first aid kit containing bandages, plasters (band aids) and other similar products. In addition you may wish to bring:

- ✓ Pain killers (Aspirin, paracetamol, Ibuprofen etc.)
- ✓ Motion sickness tablets

### Miscellaneous

- ✓ Paper / notebook (for writing your diary!)
- ✓ Pen / pencil
- ✓ Reading material - a good book never goes amiss!
- ✓ Earplugs (good on the plane and if you are sharing a room)
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Camera charger / spare camera batteries and memory card (if small)
- ✓ Inflatable travel pillow
- ✓ Phrase book or dictionary
- ✓ Laundry detergent (available in Japan but you may prefer your own brand)
- ✓ Plug converter (for recharging your digital camera)

### You do NOT need

- ✗ **An Umbrella** - these are available everywhere in Japan for a very low cost
- ✗ **A large towel** - towels are provided at all night stops on our itineraries
- ✗ **Films** - for those purists still using film cameras you can buy extra film for far less in Japan than in the UK or USA
- ✗ **Regular Batteries** - All standard battery sizes are available to buy in convenience stores for less than the UK price
- ✗ **A hair dryer** - these are provided at nearly all night stops. Hair dryers brought from the UK will not work due to the lower voltage in Japan.





## Money and currency

### What money to bring

The Japanese Yen is the currency in Japan and you should make sure that you have access to plenty of it during your stay as Japan is still very much a cash society. There are several different ways to get your hands on those precious yen and it is just a case of deciding which suits you best.

### Obtaining money

#### Travellers Cheques

You can change travellers cheques at banks across Japan as well as at the airport upon arrival. However, it can be a time consuming process. We recommend bringing travellers cheques only if you intend to change all of them for yen at the airport (where the exchange takes next to no time and you receive a much better rate than for cash), or if you wish to keep them as emergency back-up. It is probably best to bring your travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling as you can change these anywhere. Euro, Australian Dollars and Canadian Dollars are also widely accepted. You can bring JPY travellers cheques but you will be hit for charges changing them back to your home currency should you decide not to use them.

#### Japanese yen in cash

This is one of the best ways to bring yen to Japan. You can purchase yen from most banks or in the UK from the post office. You can then be sure to arrive in Japan well equipped with currency. Again, make sure you don't bring more than you plan on spending as you will have to pay to convert any leftovers into your home currency. The best rates for obtaining yen are to be found online. In the UK try **Thomas Exchange** - <https://www.thomasexchange.co.uk/currency.asp> - or **Best Foreign Exchange** - <http://www.bestforeignexchange.com/services-travel-money-by-post.php>

#### Foreign Currency in cash

You can bring your home currency in cash to change at the airport or at banks and post offices during the tour. However, you get a better rate for travellers cheques at the airport than for cash. It is also much quicker to change cash at the post office than it is to change travellers cheques at a bank. However, not all post offices and banks offer this service so you can end up spending time trying to find one that does!

#### Credit / Debit cards

Possibly the most convenient way to manage your money in Japan is to use your credit or debit card to withdraw cash from ATMs. **Every post office in the country has an ATM that will accept your foreign issued cards.** Please be aware that post office ATMs usually only open business hours (8am to 6pm). Just be sure that you know your 4 digit PIN. ATMs are also available at 7-11 convenience stores. These accept all cards with Visa or Mastercard / Maestro Cirrus

logo. It is also advisable to notify your card issuer before you travel that you will be in Japan, otherwise there is a possibility that the transaction will be blocked for security reasons.

In conclusion we recommend using a combination of a couple of methods to manage your money whilst you are in Japan. We suggest bringing a substantial amount of JPY in cash to Japan or changing a large amount of money at the airport. If you need more we suggest using your credit or debit card to make withdrawals from the post office ATMs.

### How much money will I need?

This is the \$1000 question so to speak! Everybody spends a different amount when they visit. However, nearly everyone finds Japan a lot less expensive than they were expecting. Eating out is very reasonable and as food is one of the biggest expenses (and pleasures!) when travelling, this helps keep costs down.

Local transport, which is generally NOT included in our holiday packages, is also not expensive with the highest fare on the Tokyo subway being just 310 yen. Entrance fees to shrines, temples and museums are also very reasonable with most being in the region of 200-300 yen. Occasionally you will need to pay as much as 1000 yen but this is not the norm.

As a rough guide we recommend 80-100 thousand yen per person as a good amount to cover basic costs on a 2 week trip. This should cover your meals, drinks, local transport and any entrance fees. What this won't cover are souvenirs and other purchases you may wish to make. Beer and drinks can also add up very quickly so if you like a tittle of an evening you may need to budget a bit more.

### Emergency Funds

When travelling abroad it is always advisable to have emergency funds tucked away somewhere in case of unexpected occurrences. In Japan this is not such an issue as it might be in other parts of Asia but it is perhaps best not to rely on your plastic for this money. We recommend keeping £100 / \$200 of cash on one side. This can be in your home currency or in yen but make sure it is there and don't spend it! You never know when you might need those extra funds.

### Exchange Rates

Since the start of the financial crisis in 2008 the Japanese yen has remained at historically very high levels. However, 20 years of zero inflation in Japan have helped Japan to remain an affordable destination despite the unfavourable exchange rate

### Exchange rates as of early 2012:

- 1 Australian Dollar AUD = 79 yen
- 1 British Pound GBP = 119 yen
- 1 Australian Dollar AUD = 75 yen
- 1 Euro EUR = 98 yen
- 1 United States Dollar USD 77 yen

Be sure to have a look at the rates before you travel as rates can be quite volatile.

### Tipping

As a rule there is no tipping in Japan. This means that at restaurants you should not leave anything extra on top of the bill and you should not generally tip staff in hotels or taxi drivers. If you are staying in a high class ryokan then it is polite to tip your maid 1000-2000 yen on the day of arrival. Please give your tip in a discreet envelope.

### Every day prices

Soft Drink (Pepsi, Fanta etc)	120 yen
Loaf of bread	200 yen
Big Mac Meal	620 yen
Litre of milk	180 yen
Regular 35mm film (36 exp)	600 yen
Banana	100 yen
Litre of Petrol	123 yen
Snickers	120 yen
500ml beer	290 yen
Shop sandwich	230 yen
Umbrella	500 yen
Newspaper	150 yen
Bottle of water	150 yen
Subway journey	160-310 yen
Taxi (per car for 2km)	680 yen
Starbucks Tall Latte	370 yen
New iPod Nano (8GB)	10,800 yen

Entrance to a shrine/temple/museum: Usually between 200 yen and 600 yen per person.

Lunch: Sit-down lunch around 1000 yen, sandwich / *onigiri* / snacks from a convenience store around 500 yen. Beef bowl from Yoshinoya is 400 yen.

Dinner: Multi-course meal around 3000 yen per person, bowl of noodles up to 1000 yen per person, hot "*bento*" (box) dinner from a convenience store around 800 yen per person.

Of course, as in every country you can pay a LOT more for food if you like. Some restaurants in Tokyo and Kyoto will set you back as much as £250 / \$500 per person! However, if your tastes are not too extravagant then there is no reason to spend large sums on your meals.





## Climate

Japan has four distinct seasons with winter being quite cold but dry, spring warm with regular rainy days, summer very hot and humid and autumn warm and wet for the first few weeks and dry towards the end. There is also the risk of typhoons from July through to around the middle of October.

Below you can find a chart of the average temperatures in Tokyo through the year. This is a good indicator of the kind of temperatures you can expect to experience during your trip. However, Japan is a geographically very diverse country and this does have an effect on the temperature. The western regions of Honshu and Kyushu island can be quite a lot hotter than Tokyo. The reverse goes for

the northern regions of the country which can get a lot colder than Tokyo. Much of Japan is mountainous and of course, the higher elevation you go, the colder it gets!

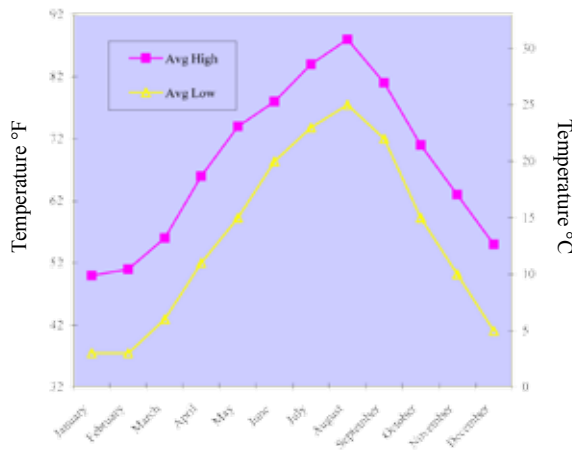
Temperatures in Hokkaido can reach as low as -25 °C in winter with very heavy snowfall. The same goes for the Japan Alps and other mountain regions of Japan. Be sure to take all this into account when packing for your trip. If you are heading up into the mountains you will need warmer clothing. Even in summer the temperatures can drop quite low during the night.

You can be sure that it will rain during your stay in Japan! In fact average rainfall is nearly double that of the UK so it really does

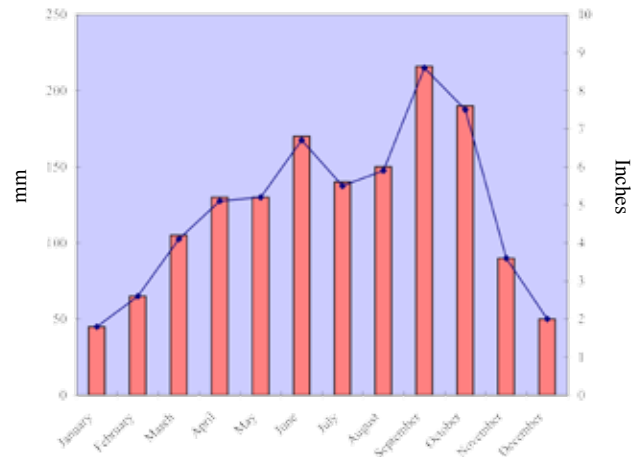
rain a lot. The wettest month of the year is September. However, this is mainly because of typhoons dumping huge amounts of rain in very short spaces of time, so you do get a lot of dry days as well as the very rainy ones!

Rainy season in Tokyo officially begins on 8th June and runs through until 20th July. However, the period of heaviest rain tends to be the last week in June and the first week in July. As with all these things though, exactly how much rain will fall in rainy season is very hard to predict and some years you really wouldn't know it was rainy season at all!

Average lows and highs in Tokyo



Average monthly precipitation in Tokyo



## Recommended Reading

There is no shortage of reading matter for Japan whether it be non-fiction books about Japan, Japanese fiction or non-Japanese fiction about Japan. Here are some of our top recommendations for both reading and viewing.

### Novels

- Matsuo Basho: Narrow Road into the Deep North
- Haruki Murakami: Norwegian Wood, Dance Dance Dance, The Wind-up Bird Chronicle
- Banana Yoshimoto: Kitchen
- Murasaki: Tales of Genji
- Soseki: Botchan/ I am a cat
- Junichiro Tanizaki: The Makioka Sisters, In Praise of Shadows
- James Clavell: Shogun
- Arthur Golden: Memoirs of a Geisha
- Liz Dalby: Geisha
- Pico Iyer: The Lady and the Monk
- Natsuo Kirino: Out
- Giles Milton: Samurai William

### Non-fiction

- John Lowe: Old Kyoto - A Short Social History
- Will Ferguson: Hokkaido Highway Blues - Hitching in Japan
- John Bester and Junichi Saga: Confessions of a Yakuza: A life in Japan's underworld
- Dr. John Nathan: Japan Unbound
- Stephen Addiss: How to Look at Japanese Art

- Kakuzo Okakura: The Book of Tea
- Donald Richie: The Inland Sea
- Nicholas Bornoff: Pink Samurai
- Robert Whiting: You've Gotta Have Wa
- Patrick Smith: Japan - A Reinterpretation
- Alex Kerr: Lost Japan
- Jeff Yang et al: Eastern Standard Time
- P. Sean Bramble: Culture Shock Japan

### Recommended Viewing

- Takeshi Kitano: Zatoichi, Hanabi, Dolls
- Studio Ghibli: Spirited Away, Princess Mononoke
- Akira Kurosawa: The Seven Samurai
- Tetsuya Nakashima: Kamikaze Girls
- Sofia Coppola: Lost in Translation
- Rob Marshall: Memoirs of a Geisha
- Katsuyuki Motohiro: Summer Time Machine Blues
- Shunji Awai: All about Lily Chou-chou (Riri Shushu no subete)
- Kinji Fukasaku: Battle Royale
- Hideo Nakata: Ringu

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