

Essential Honshu

▶ TOKYO ▶ KAMAKURA ▶ HAKONE ▶ OSAKA ▶ KYOTO ▶ TAKAYAMA ▶ KAMIKOCHI ▶ TOKYO

Japan Facts

Population: 127 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

Honshu has everything that a trip to Japan should include; the bright lights and confusion of Tokyo; Osaka, Japan's fashion and culinary heartland; former capital cities Kyoto, Nara, and Kamakura all with a unique ambience of past and present; and the awe-inspiring peaks of the Japan Alps. It is certainly no surprise that this continues to be one of our most popular and exciting tours!

We'll start and finish in Tokyo giving you three nights to try and get to grips with this modern metropolis, a city of pulsating energy. In between you'll have the chance to experience the many different sides that combine to make Japan such a unique and fascinating country.

From the hi-tech speed and efficiency of the 'Bullet' Train which will whisk you down to Osaka, to the serenity of Kyoto's Zen gardens; from the tops of sky-scrappers to the summit of Mt. Fuji, Japan's highest and most sacred mountain; from the glowing neon nights of futuristic cities to the wondrous star filled skies above the Kamikochi national park.

Six nights in traditional inns (*ryokan*) in Kyoto, Takayama and Hakone complete this never to be forgotten adventure in the land of the rising sun. As one of our most popular tours the Essential Honshu always sells out quickly so **please book as early as possible to avoid missing out.**

Day-by-Day

Day 1 - Tokyo (D)

The tour begins today in Tokyo, Japan's electric capital city. You'll be arriving at Narita Airport and your Tour Leader will be there to meet you and escort you into Tokyo. Many of our customers choose to come in a day or two early to get over jet-lag and get the most out of the tour. Whatever the case, up to two days before the tour starts we will have someone there to meet you. The hotel is situated in the Asakusa area, the former downtown and entertainments district of Edo, as Tokyo was formally known. This friendly district still maintains a traditional atmosphere and is home to Senso-ji, the city's oldest temple.

Tonight we will be indulging in a first night dinner of *Okonomiyaki* - a kind of savoury pancake. Food and drinks are on us so this is a great chance to start getting to know the other members of the group.

Day 2 Tokyo (B)

Today will begin with a buffet breakfast at a nearby hotel before we embark on a full day tour of the city. We'll cruise down the Sumida River, take a relaxing stroll through Hamarikyu tei-en, a tranquil garden that is just a few minutes walk from the lively Ginza shopping district, explore the precincts of Meiji Shrine and check out the amazing view of the city to be had from the 45th floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building. If you prefer to explore independently please ask your Tour Leader for suggestions.

Day 3 - Kamakura (B&D)

Today we'll be making an early start... about 4.30am in actual fact if you'd like to join us at the city's morning fish market! This is a great experience and a chance to eat some of Japan's best and freshest *sushi*!

After returning to the hotel we will be departing for Kamakura. The journey takes about 1h45 from door to door. You'll be able to drop off your bags before heading off to look around some of Kamakura's many beautiful temples and shrines. The town is small enough to see all the major sights on foot and there are some really nice walking routes you might like to take. Be sure not to miss the big Buddha at Kotokuin temple.

In the evening you will be treated to an exquisite '*kaiseki*' meal at a local restaurant. The chef will specially prepare a full course meal containing no meat or fish for the vegetarians in the group.

Day 4 Hakone (B)

After enjoying a Japanese style breakfast at our hotel we will move on to Hakone. Total journey time is around 2h30. The tour includes a Hakone free-pass which allows you unlimited travel on all of the many forms of transport in the Hakone region; buses, rail, funicular railway, cable car, rope-way, and even the sightseeing 'pirate' boat which crosses Lake Ashino. We'll be staying at the traditional style Fuji-Hakone Guest House which boasts a very nice outside hot spring '*rotemburo*' bath where you can relax after a hard day sightseeing and look up at the stars! For those of you joining us in July or August there is the option of a Mt. Fuji climb, a real once-in-a-lifetime experience. Be warned though, you'll need to be fit!

Day 5 Hakone (B)

More time to explore Hakone (or rest up if you viewed this morning's sunrise from the top of Mt. Fuji!). You may like to take a short hike along what remains of the old Tokaido highway which used to be the major road linking Edo (modern day Tokyo) with Kyoto and Osaka. The open air sculpture museum features pieces by





Day-by-Day continued

many world renowned artists all set against a stunning mountain backdrop. There are also all kinds of museums to visit and this is a great chance to pick up one of Hakone's famous "trick boxes" as a unique souvenir.

Day 6 Osaka (B&D)

After breakfast we'll be moving on to Osaka, taking a three hour ride on the world famous 'Bullet' Train. Osaka is the concrete beating heart of the Kansai region and home to some of the best food, drink and entertainment in all of Japan. Your hotel is right in the heart of the city, in the Umeda district, about a 10 minute walk from Osaka station. Tonight, dinner is included at a local restaurant.

Day 7 Osaka / Optional Nara excursion (B)

Today you have the option of using your included Transport Pass to take an excursion to Nara where you will find the huge Big Buddha at Todaiji Temple, or to Himeji, famous for the stunning original castle. Alternatively, you may like to remain in Osaka to explore this exciting city. There is fantastic shopping, one of the world's best aquariums, an Olympic sized swimming pool, and an enormous proliferation of video game arcades and *karaoke* parlours. The evening will be spent back in Osaka for some great food and great nightlife.

Day 8 Full day in Kyoto (B&D)

We'll head off to Kyoto reasonably early this morning so as to allow a full day of sightseeing in this historic city. Kyoto is a great city in which to sightsee on foot and has hundreds of things to see. There are several walking tour routes all of which have many different places of interest along the way and your Tour Leader will be on hand to make sure you get to see the things you want to.

This afternoon we will be taking a tour of Gion and the Geisha districts with a local Geisha expert, giving you a truly unique insight into this hidden world. We will then go for dinner at a restaurant in Gion so we can enjoy some delicious food and a carafe or two of sake. We will then go for dinner at a restaurant in Gion so we can enjoy some delicious food and a carafe of sake.

Day 9 Kyoto (B)

A free day to further explore this amazing city. Your Tour Leader may lead an excursion out of town to Kameoka from where you can take a white water ride back down the river to Arashiyama, one of the most charming districts of the city. Don't be concerned though, it's not really a hair-raising ride! From here the famous temples of Ryoanji with its timeless *zen* rock garden and Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion, are within easy reach. Dinner is not included tonight so this is a good chance to head out for some culinary adventures.

Day 10 Takayama (B&D)

Today it's on by 'Bullet' and express trains to Takayama. We'll be arriving early afternoon and after leaving our bags at our *minshuku* lodgings, will have a chance to start exploring this intriguing mountain town. Dinner will tonight be served at the *minshuku* so we'll be sure to have some delicious home cooked fare to enjoy.

Day 11 Takayama (B&D)

Takayama is packed with things to see and do. In the morning your Tour Leader will be visiting the Hida-Takayama folk village. This fantastic outdoor museum is made up of a collection of old traditional style houses from all around the 'Hida' region. This is a rare chance to catch a glimpse of what rural life was like for ordinary Japanese before industrial advancement was undertaken by the new Meiji regime in 1868. In the afternoon you might like to check out some of the museums in the area or perhaps take a stroll round the beautiful shrines and temples. *Sake* tasting at a brewery is also a popular option! Dinner will again be served at the *minshuku* this evening. More top tucker!

Day 12 Kamikochi (B&D)

After breakfast we will take the bus up into the mountains and onto the Kamikochi National Park. The plateau is nearly 1500m above sea level and even in summer it can be quite cool. If you are coming in September remember to bring warm clothing for night time as temperatures can fall below freezing. The park is one of the most beautiful places in Japan with each season providing a different experience. Tonight we shall barbecue over a real fire! Any fire starting assistance will no doubt be gratefully received by your Tour Leader.

Customers should note that the main washing facilities at Kamikochi are at the communal bath house (or 'onsen'). Men and women are separate. Private showers are available at the visitor centre.

Day 13 Kamikochi (B)

This is a great chance for you to relax or perhaps do some walking or hiking. There are a variety of trails to walk and if you are lucky you might get to laugh at the antics of the park's many resident wild monkeys! There is also an onsen where you can take a natural hot spring bath.

Day 14 Tokyo (B)

We'll be taking an early bus down to Matsumoto, from where we will transfer by express train back to Tokyo. The journey is absolutely stunning as the road twists and turns down the valley through a series of seemingly never-ending tunnels. Once we reach Matsumoto we will have time to stop off for a couple of hours to visit the famous castle before grabbing some lunch and heading back to the station to catch the

train to Tokyo. We will arrive late afternoon into Shinjuku Station - seemingly a world away from the peace and tranquillity of Kamikochi. This is the final day of the tour so we hope that you might join with your Tour Leader for a farewell meal in the evening: A chance for one last night of good food and drink before heading home.

Day 15 Sayonara (B)

Sadly the tour is over and we all have to say our farewells and go our separate ways. Your transfer ticket back to Narita Airport is included.

Accommodation

The following accommodation is used on the Essential Honshu Tour.

Tokyo Asakusa Komagata Toyoko Inn
Comfortable business hotel in Asakusa
Tel. 03 3841 1045

Kamakura Classic Hotel Ajisai
Small, family-run pension with a wonderful biscuit shop on the ground floor.
Tel. 0467 22 3492

Hakone Fuji-Hakone Guest House
Popular family-run guest house with great *onsen* baths
Tel. 0460 4 6577

Osaka OS Umeda Hotel
Superior grade business hotel in a fantastic location
Tel: 06 6312 1271

Kyoto Heianbo Ryokan
Charming old inn with classic Japanese-style rooms
Tel. 075 351 0650

Takayama Minshuku Sousuke
Rustic old house with delicious home-cooking
Tel. 0577 32 0818

Minshuku Iwatakan
Family run inn with hot spring baths near the morning markets
Tel. 0577 34 8708

Kamikochi Konashidaira Log Cabins
Comfortable cabins in a stunning location
Tel. 0263 95 2321

Tokyo Star Hotel
Comfortable business hotel in a superb location on Shinjuku's 'Ogado' crossing.
Tel. 03-3361-1111

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
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan including airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Meet and greet upon arrival at Narita Airport
- ✓ Sumida River boat trip in Tokyo
- ✓ Breakfast everyday either at the hotel or a nearby restaurant
- ✓ 7 evening meals incl. Kamikochi BBQ
- ✓ Walking tour of the Gion geisha district in Kyoto
- ✓ Luggage forwarding between Kamakura & Osaka, and Takayama & Tokyo
- ✓ Full time services of your Tour Leader
- ✓ InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

NOT included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Local transport (buses, subways, taxis) at any destination except if covered by the 'Free Pass' in Hakone.
- ✗ Any entrance fees including those for shrines, temples and museums
- ✗ Lunches, 7 evening meals, drinks

Bathroom arrangements

During the tour we will stay in a variety of different accommodation, some Western-style, others Japanese-style. At most night stops your room will have full en-suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet). However, at some Japanese-style night stops bathroom and toilet facilities may be shared. Usually bathroom facilities are available to use privately but not always! Japan has a long history of communal bathing and therefore these kind of facilities are not unusual. However, men and women always bathe separately.

The traditional Japanese Inn in **Hakone** has private-use communal facilities. The traditional inn in **Takayama** has shared single sex showers and large baths. In **Kamikochi** bathing is at the communal bath house (Men and women are separate) or at the Kamikochi Onsen (hot spring) Hotel. Customers should note that in Kamikochi the only private washing facilities are pay showers at the visitor centre. **You will need your own towel in Kamikochi.**

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 will ask single travellers to share a room (same sex share) at Japanese-

style night stops.

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 Buddy 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 s/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.

Early check-in

Upon arrival you may well be tired after a long international flight. Hotels in Japan operate strict check-in policies. If you have an early flight arrival please ask us about early check-in options.

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 lap-top computer). 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 you will be able to use your mobile across most of Japan. If you do not have a 3G handset you may wish to hire a mobile for the duration of your stay. For this service InsideJapan Tours recommends **Go Mobile** as offering the best service and the best rates. You can book a mobile phone to be delivered to your first hotel in Japan and at the end of your trip you simply pop it in the post back to Go Mobile. All phones have a 3 mega-pixel camera and can send and receive email.

7 days rental costs from 2995yen which includes 15 minutes of local calls. Further information about the service can be found at www.gomobile.co.jp and an on-line booking form can be found here:

https://www.gomobile.co.jp/order_form_in.e.php

Please be sure to enter our agent code - **INSIDEJAPAN** - to receive your discounted price.

Even if you have a 3G handset you may wish to consider this service as the call charges will be a LOT lower and you do not have to pay to receive calls. The push-email facility (as available on Blackberry handsets in the West) is also very useful and can make keeping in touch very easy!

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.





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. There is a certain amount of walking involved 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)
- ✓ Comfortable shoes or trainers
- ✓ Walking shoes / boots
- ✓ Open-toed sandals
- ✓ Small hand towel (to dry your hands in public restrooms)
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Tampons and Pads

Your tour leader carries a well stocked first aid kit so you do not need bandages, plasters (band aids) or other similar products. However, 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 recharger / spare camera batteries (charged!)
- ✓ Inflatable travel pillow
- ✓ Phrase books or Dictionaries
- ✓ 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 tours other than in Kamikochi National Park
- ✗ **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), 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.

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. You actually get a better rate for cash at the airport than for travellers cheques. 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 and 7-11 convenience store in the country has an ATM that will accept your foreign issued cards.** Just be sure that you know your 4 digit PIN. 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 and 7-11 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 tour 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 100,000 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 tippie 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

During 2007 the yen reached record lows against the pound and weakened considerably against the US dollar. However, 2008 has seen a considerable shift in the currency markets which sadly has pushed up the cost of travelling in Japan. However, after 15 years of 0% inflation Japan is still an affordable destination and is a world away from the crazy prices of the bubble era.

Exchange rates as of 16th December 2008:

- 1 Australian Dollar AUD = 61 yen
- 1 British Pound GBP = 135 yen
- 1 Canadian Dollar CAD = 73 yen
- 1 Euro EUR = 124yen
- 1 United States Dollar USD 89 yen

Be sure to have a look at the rates before you travel as the levels are unlikely to continue indefinitely.

Tipping

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 tip staff in hotels or taxi drivers. However, if you feel your Tour Leader has done an outstanding job on your tour a tip is always appreciated!

Every day prices

Loaf of bread	200 yen
Big Mac Meal	620 yen
Litre of milk	180 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	360 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!

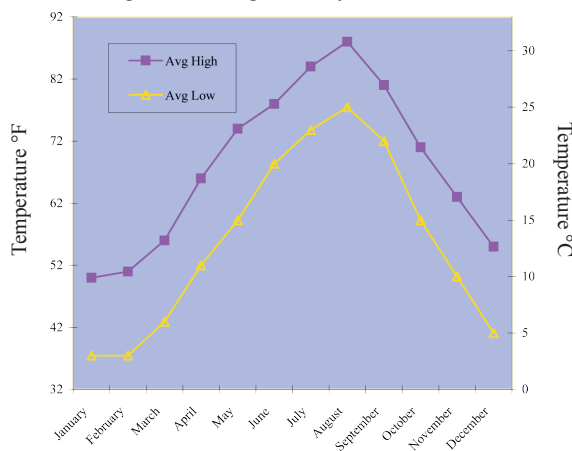
Temperatures in Hokkaido can reach as low as -25 °C in winter with very heavy snowfall. The same goes for the Japan Alps and other mountain regions of Japan. Be sure to take all this into account when packing for your trip. If you are heading up into the mountains you will need warmer clothing. Even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

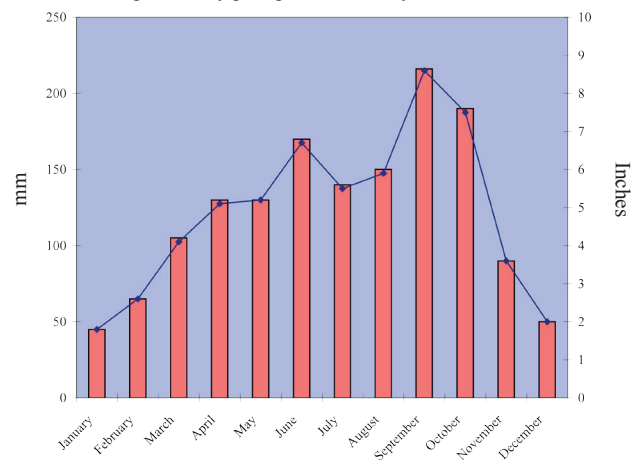
does rain a lot. The wettest month of the year is September. However, this is mainly because of typhoons dumping huge amounts of rain in very short spaces of time, so you do get a lot of dry days as well as the very rainy ones!

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: Kamikaza 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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