



## Japan Sea Coast

▶ TOKYO ▶ AMANOHASHIDATE ▶ KINOSAKI ONSEN ▶ MATSUE ▶ HAGI ▶ TSUWANO ▶ KURASHIKI ▶ OSAKA

### Japan Facts

**Population:** 126 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

New for 2007, The Japan Sea Coast tour visits a stunning yet relatively unexplored part of Japan. In the warmth of early summer the cool sea breeze promise to make this tour a refreshing discovery of the best of Japan's history, culture and nature.

The ancient capital of Kyoto marks the start of our adventures and provides a chance to wander amongst a myriad of temples and shrines before starting out on our journey north to the tranquil Japan Sea Coast.

First stop is Amanohashidate, one of the official "Top Three Views" of Japan and from where we will take in some breathtaking vistas of the two mile long sand-bar known as the "bridge of Heaven". From here we travel west along the coast to Kinosaki Onsen to savour some of the best hot-spring bathing opportunities in the country.

Continuing west to Tottori we make a stop at Japan's only "desert" with its ten miles of sand dunes stretching out into the distance. In the castle fortress town of Matsue, Japan's best gardens await you at the Adachi Museum, as well as the chance to feast your eyes on art works by some of Japan's top modern artists.

The Samurai town of Hagi is our next stop before moving on to see the natural wonders of Akiyoshido Caves and the Chomonkyo Gorge with their stunning stalactites and cascading waterfalls.

In the far west, Tsuwano offers a glimpse of a traditional old castle town before moving east to the historic town of Kurashiki with its characteristic white walled storehouses and tree-lined canals.

Bursting into the modern day, the futuristic city of Osaka makes the perfect end to this comprehensive experience of Japan's natural beauty and cultural history.

### Day-by-Day

#### Day 1 - Kyoto (D)

The tour group convenes in Kyoto. Your tour Buddy will come to the airport to meet you and escort you back into Kyoto and on to your hotel in the downtown area. The first night's dinner is on us at a restaurant a short walk from the hotel. A leisurely stroll around the historic Gion area is a great way to follow dinner or there is always Karaoke if you wish!

#### Day 2 Kyoto (B)

Today is a full day in Kyoto; join your tour Buddy who will lead an optional walking tour around this fascinating city if you wish. Kyoto is the country's old Imperial Capital and is home to a phenomenal 17 UNESCO World Heritage sights. This evening will be free for culinary investigations; perhaps try some of Kyoto's famous tofu, said to be the highest quality in the country!

#### Day 3 - Amanohashidate (B&D)

Today marks the start of our adventures along the Japan Sea Coast. From Kyoto we take a direct train up to Amanohashidate; the name literally means "Bridge of Heaven" and refers to the two mile pine tree studded sandbar which dominates the landscape. Amanohashidate is officially one of the three most scenic views in Japan and a sight which has to be seen to be believed! This afternoon we will take a cable car up to Kamamatsu Park from where the best views are to be had. Locals swear by looking at the view upside down between their legs making the sandbar appear as if it were a bridge suspended in the air!

#### Day 4 Kinosaki Onsen (B&D)

We move on this morning by train to the well known hot spring town of Kinosaki-Onsen. We will leave our bags at the Ryokan and then head out to sample the natural hot springs dotted around the town. There are seven "Sotoyu" public hot springs and you can stroll from one to the other, trying out the healing properties of each. From simple traditional bath houses to outdoor bubbling Jacuzzis and cave pools, you can have a dip in each or stay all afternoon in one. A great way to relax in the traditional Japanese style! If a more active day is what you seek then you can take the local train and check out the nearby Gembudo Caves which has thousands of basalt stalactites jutting down from the ceiling. Dinner this evening will be traditional style in the *ryokan*.

#### Day 5 Matsue via Tottori (B&D)

Travel to Matsue is by private minibus and train via the unique sand dunes at Tottori. We will leave our bags in the minibus and explore the stunning sand dunes which are Japan's only "desert" and have been here for over 10,000 years. To make the most of the "desert" experience you can take a donkey or even a short (and expensive) camel ride! From Tottori we will take head to the station in our minibus and take a train to Matsue, our base for the next three nights. Matsue is the capital city of Shimane Prefecture and as such has a wealth of things to see and do. On our first night we will enjoy a group meal at a local restaurant.

#### Day 6 Matsue (B)

Today is a full day in Matsue and the tour Buddy will lead the group out for a visit to the Adachi Museum of Art. This fascinating museum is home to an impressive collection of 1,300 modern Japanese paintings by master painters of the modern





## Day-by-Day continued



era. There are displays of the works of some prominent ceramic artists, as well as wood sculpture and gold laquerware. Perhaps the main draw of the Adachi Museum though is the stunning beauty of the Japanese gardens, whose creator travelled all over Japan to collect plants and rocks to create this exquisite vision. A moss garden, dry landscape garden and pond garden are amongst the different examples designed to be enjoyed in all four seasons of the year. In early summer we will be lucky enough to see the gardens in full bloom against a blue sky backdrop.

This afternoon we'll make our way back to Matsue City and have time to check out the symbol of this historic city, Matsue Castle Fortress. Built in 1611 with 5 stories (and one hidden "fighting" floor), the castle has wonderful views of the surrounding areas and is one of only 12 surviving castles to survive the wars, fires and earthquakes in the post feudal era since 1868.

### Day 7 Matsue (B)

This morning your Buddy will be taking a trip out to see Japan's oldest and most important Shinto shrine, Izumo Taisha, an hour outside Matsue. The halls and main buildings are considered National Treasures of Japan and attract a phenomenal 450 000 visitors a year. The afternoon will be free to explore the rest of Matsue. You may like to check out the old Samurai house which contains items detailing the life of a Samurai in the Edo period. The Horikawa River Pleasure Boat might be a good option for a relaxing hour of sightseeing in Matsue as it winds its way around the river stopping at various sights.

### Day 8 Hagi (B&D)

This morning we will enjoy breakfast in the hotel and then travel by train continuing west along the Japan Sea Coast to Hagi, a historic castle town with many links to the Meiji restoration. This afternoon is a chance to stroll through some of the sights in the town such as the old samurai-residential quarter, the ruins of the castle in Shizuki-koen Park as well as the town's Art Museum.

### Day 9 Hagi (B&D)

Hagi is ideal for cycling and walking so today will be free to explore the town in your own time. You may like to hire a bicycle from one of the many rental cycle shops in the town or you could have an even more leisurely day and use the city loop bus to travel around the town.

Hagi is famous for its 380 year old traditional "Hagi-yaki" pottery and the many pottery kilns in the area offer a chance to see for yourself how the pottery is made. The evening is free for you to enjoy some more fine food at a local restaurant.

### Day 10 Tsuwano (B&D)

This morning we continue our journey through the hauntingly beautiful natural surroundings, and make our way by minibus to Chomonkyo Gorge. Here we will stop and take a 2 hour gentle walk through the gorge which is known for its steep cliffs, amazing shaped rocks, cascading falls and deep pools.

After the gorge we will head through the Akiyoshi Plateau to the largest cave system in Japan and the second largest in Asia, Akiyoshido. The cave here is a magnificent example of natural art and you can actually walk through 700 metres of this subterranean landscape which is lit in a golden glow to enhance the stunning surroundings of golden rock, crimson and pink stalactites and eerie limestone pools.

In the afternoon we will then head on in our minibus to the traditional town of Tsuwano. We can spend a couple of hours wandering up the main street of Tonomachi lined with temples, museums, sake breweries and gift shops. The area is also known for the huge 60 year old Coi Carp that live in the Tonomachi's stream. We will spend a night in traditional family run accommodation with an evening meal included.

### Day 11 Kurashiki (B&D)

Today we will have the morning free to explore the town of Yamaguchi before travelling on the local train and Shinkansen 'Bullet' Train back east to Kurashiki. We will have dinner included at the *ryokan* this evening which has a history dating back to the Meiji era and serves wonderful locally sourced traditional food.

### Day 12 Kurashiki (B&D)

Today is free to fully explore the town. Kurashiki is famous for its black-tiled warehouse buildings (*kura*) which were originally used to store the rice paid as a tax and brought by boat from the surrounding farmlands in feudal Japan. Many of the warehouses have now been converted into museums and other attractions in this bustling tourist town. Along the canals that carried all that rice one can now find galleries such as the Ohara Art Museum, the Folkcraft Museum and the Archaeological Museum as well as houses with their white walls and black tiles that tell the history of old Kurashiki. It is easy to get around Kurashiki on foot or by bicycle.

### Day 13 Osaka (B)

From Kurashiki this morning we will take a local train and then Shinkansen to Japan's second city where our journey ends. Osaka is the concrete beating heart of the Kansai region and home to perhaps the best food, drink and entertainment in all of Japan. Osaka is a city buzzing with energy and life. The hotel is located in the vibrant Namba district, about a 10 minute walk from

Namba station. This evening we will have a farewell group meal and there'll be one last chance for Karaoke!

### Day 14 Sayonara (B)

Sadly our adventures on the Japan Sea Coast are over and we say our goodbyes to everyone. Your tour Buddy will supply your ticket for the transfer back to the airport making sure you arrive there in good time for your flight home.

## Accommodation

The following accommodation is used on the Japan Sea Coast tour:

### Kyoto Hotel Sunroute

Quality business hotel in the heart of Kyoto  
Tel: 075-371-3711

### Amanohashidate Hotel Kitanoya

Classy Japanese style hotel in a beautiful area. Fabulous food and hot spring baths  
Tel: 0772 22 4126

### Kinosaki Onsen Mikuniya Ryokan

Traditional ryokan built in the late 19th century.  
Tel: 0796-32-2414

### Matsue Sun Rapport Murakamo

Charmingly named hotel close to the bay  
Tel 0852-21-2670

### Hagi Grand Hotel Tenku

The best hotel in town  
Tel. 0838 25 1211

### Tsuwano Family run Minshuku

Traditional accommodation with home cooked food and tatami rooms.  
Tel: TBC

### Kurashiki Ryokan Misono

Charming traditional inn with bags of character and good food  
Tel. 086 422 3618

### Osaka Cross Hotel

Three star tourist hotel in the heart of Osaka's liveliest district  
Tel 06 6213 8281

*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:

- ✓ 13 nights accommodation
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan including airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Meet and greet upon arrival at Kansai Airport
- ✓ Breakfast everyday
- ✓ 7 evening meals
- ✓ Entrance to Adachi Museum and Matsue Castle
- ✓ Full time services of your tour 'Buddy'
- ✓ InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

### NOT included

- ✗ International Flights
- ✗ Additional local transport
- ✗ Entrance fees unless otherwise specified
- ✗ Lunches, 6 evening meals, drinks

### Bathroom arrangements

During the tour we 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.

In **Amanohashidate** the rooms do not have attached bath or toilet. There are both outdoor and indoor hot spring baths for public use (same gender only) as well as a bath available for private use. In **Kinosaki**, the *ryokan* rooms have attached toilets but not bath. There is a large indoor hot spring bath 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 may ask single travellers to share a room (same sex share) at Japanese-style night stops.

### Your tour 'Buddy'

Our tours are led on the ground by a tour 'Buddy', 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

Buddy 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 Buddy 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](http://www.gomobile.co.jp) and an on-line booking form can be found here:

[https://www.gomobile.co.jp/order\\_form\\_in.e.php](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. 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. 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)
- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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
- ✗ **Films** - for those of you 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), 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 in the country has an ATM that will except 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 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 (around £1.50 / \$3). 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 (approximately £480 / \$960) 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

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 April 2008:

- 1 Australian Dollar AUD = 95 yen
- 1 British Pound GBP = 200 yen
- 1 Canadian Dollar CAD = 100 yen
- 1 Euro EUR = 161 yen
- 1 Swiss Franc CHF = 101 yen
- 1 United States Dollar USD 101 yen

Be sure to have a look at the rates before you travel as rates are subject to change.

### 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 Buddy has done an outstanding job on your tour a tip is always appreciated!

### 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	360 yen
2GB iPod nano	17,800 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!

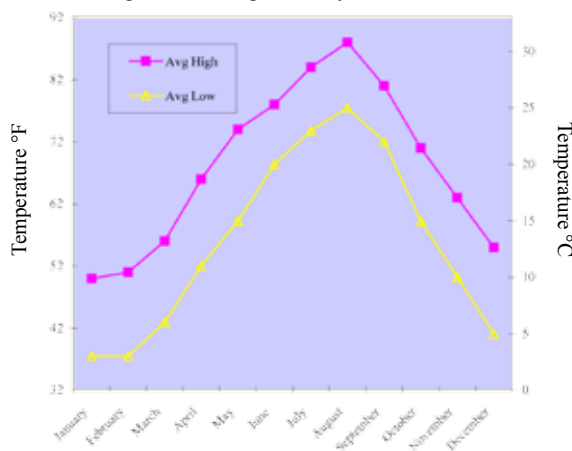
Temperatures in Hokkaido can reach as low as -25 °C in winter with very heavy snowfall. The same goes for the Japan Alps and other mountain regions of Japan. Be sure to take all this into account when packing for your trip. If you are heading up into the mountains you will need warmer clothing. Even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

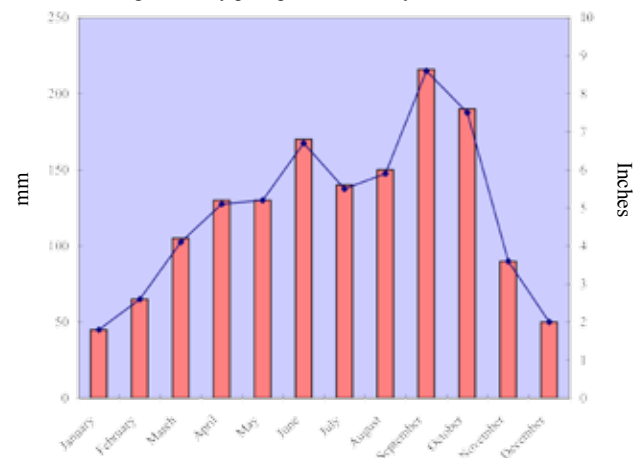
does rain a lot. The wettest month of the year is September. However, this is mainly because of typhoons dumping huge amounts of rain in very short spaces of time, so you do get a lot of dry days as well as the very rainy ones!

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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