






# Samurai Express

7 Nights

Tokyo ▶ Hakone ▶ Kyoto ▶ Tokyo

ESSENTIAL



-  Float down the Sumida River to Tokyo's beautiful Hamarikyu Gardens
-  Stay in a *ryokan*, a traditional Japanese inn, and enjoy a soak in a hot spring bath.
-  Ride on the world famous *shinkansen* bullet train
-  Meet a trainee geisha or *maiko* in Kyoto's historic Gion district.
-  Take a day trip to Miyajima and explore Itsukushima Shrine and its iconic "floating" *torii* gate.

## IJT ESSENTIAL TOURS

Flexible, fast-paced tours. Just the basics included, keeping the cost down so you can choose how much you spend

### Style Facts

- Two- to three-star accommodation
- En suite rooms in Western-style hotels, shared single-sex bathroom facilities in Japanese-style inns and mountain huts
- No airport transfers (but a city transport pass and detailed airport transfer instructions are provided)
- Breakfast every day plus one or two evening meals
- Entrance fees not included
- Carry your own luggage
- Solo travellers: a single room is available for no extra charge at Western-style hotels, but you will need to share with a member of the same sex in the Japanese-style inns

## Tour Overview

This fast-paced tour covers cities and checkpoints once connected by the old Tokaido Road which was frequented by samurai and citizens alike during the Edo Period.

Beginning in Tokyo amongst the towering, neon-lit skyscrapers your tour leader will take

you to one of his favourite restaurants for your first introduction to Japanese cuisine. You'll also have time to cruise along the Sumida River before alighting at the peaceful Hamarikyu Gardens, former samurai gardens, nestled in the heart of the city.

Heading south-west you'll have time to see more of Japan's stunning natural beauty in the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. If luck is on your side you may even get a glimpse of Mount Fuji! Your evening here will be spent relaxing at a traditional Japanese inn or *ryokan*, surely a highlight in itself. Don't miss out on your chance to take a dip in the natural *onsen* hot spring baths, a perfect way to unwind after a long day of sightseeing.

In Kyoto, the ancient capital, you will have plenty of opportunities to explore some of the city's temples and shrines often surrounded by meticulous and picturesque Japanese gardens. Spend an afternoon rubbing shoulders with a *maiko*, or trainee *geisha*, as the *samurai* once did, and enjoy a private tea ceremony experience.

During your time in Kyoto you'll also have time to make a day trip to Hiroshima, the site of the world's first atomic bomb attack and Miyajima, a beautiful island in the bay opposite Hiroshima city - home to hundreds of friendly deer and the iconic "floating" *torii* gate.

## Day by day

### Day 1 Tokyo (D)

Upon arrival at one of Tokyo's airports, you will use your included Manaca card to take the train to your hotel in the Asakusa district of Tokyo. Asakusa is Tokyo's most traditional district, home to the city's oldest temple, the striking Senso-ji, and a lively market where you can sample some delicious street food and browse a huge range of knick-knacks. You'll have the rest of the day free to rest at your hotel or to explore the area, and will meet your tour leader and other group members at the welcome meeting this evening. A welcome meal is included tonight at one of the fabulous local restaurants as there's no better way to begin getting to know your group.

### Day 2 Tokyo (B)

After a good night's sleep you'll have a whole day to explore Japan's vibrant capital city. Your tour leader will be there to fill you in on the history of Tokyo's famous landmarks and take you to some of their favourite spots. Float down the Sumida River and visit Hamarikyu Gardens, with further options including the chance to visit Meiji Shrine, Tokyo's



most important Shinto site; crazy fashions in trendy Harajuku or the towering neon arcades of Akihabara "electric town" – your tour leader will be able to make suggestions depending on your interests.

### Day 3 – Hakone (B)

Less than an hour, using local railway lines, you will be in one of Japan's premier hot spring areas – forest-covered Hakone National Park; home to the iconic Mount Fuji. During your stay here you'll have the opportunity to cross Lake Ashi on a pirate ship, ride the Komagatake ropeway and walk a section of the Old Tokaido road, the ancient road linking Kyoto and Edo (now Tokyo).

Tonight you'll enjoy the hospitality of a traditional Japanese-style *ryokan* inn, where you'll sleep on futon mattresses on *tatami*-mat floors – with the chance to soak in the restorative waters of the indoor and outdoor *onsen* hot spring baths. This is sure to be a highlight of your stay!

### Day 4 – Kyoto (B)

Today you will continue on via bullet train to the ancient capital Kyoto, home to more than 2,000 temples and shrines. After arriving into Kyoto, we will have the afternoon to visit Kiyomizu Dera, an ancient Buddhist temple and enjoy afternoon tea with a *maiko*, a trainee geisha - a rare opportunity to peek into the elusive world of geisha culture.

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**Day 5 – Kyoto (B)**

The following day we have the services of a local, private guide for the day. We will begin with a visit to the Golden Pavilion, a dazzling temple, the top two stories of which are covered in pure gold leaf. Its impressive decoration has made it one of Kyoto's most beautiful and iconic temples.

**Day 6 – Kyoto (B)**

Today we take an included day trip to Hiroshima and Miyajima island.

Visit the beautifully designed Peace Memorial Museum and A-Bomb Dome to learn about Hiroshima's tragic history before taking the ferry to the nearby island of Miyajima in the Inland Sea of Japan. This island is famous for its "floating" torii gate, friendly deer and three imposing mountains - a lovely atmospheric island. You will have time to walk around and explore and there are various shops and food stalls in the area.

After the ferry trip across the bay back to Hiroshima, we will ride the *shinkansen* back to Kyoto where you have the evening at leisure.

**Day 7 – Tokyo (B)**

Boarding the bullet train back to the glittering metropolis of Tokyo, we will also stop off for an included visit to Yokohama or Odaiba.

For the final night of your tour you'll be staying in the bustling, high-rise district of Shinjuku; known for its glaring neon, vibrant nightlife and literally thousands of excellent restaurants. There could be no better place to see out the end of your holiday in style and toast the end of a fantastic trip.

**Day 8 – Tokyo (B)**

On your final morning you can use your included Japan Rail Pass to take the train to Tokyo's Narita Airport or your Manaca card for the train to Haneda Airport for your flight home. We're sure you'll be back before long!

## Accommodation

**Asakusa Via Inn, Tokyo, Tokyo**

The Asakusa Via Inn is located just a stone's throw from Senso-ji, the oldest and most venerated temple in Tokyo.

This is a fascinating, old-fashioned district of Tokyo packed with market stalls, interesting shops, traditional inns and tiny restaurants selling reasonably priced and delicious food. The rooms at the Asakusa Via Inn are modern, bright and fully en suite. The Ginza and Asakusa subway lines are just a short walk away, meaning that access to the rest of Tokyo is easy, while the nearby Tobu line provides direct trains to Nikko National Park in the north. Breakfast is a Western/Japanese buffet.

**Fuji Hakone Guesthouse, Hakone**

The Fuji-Hakone Guest House is a simple, Japanese-style, family-run accommodation with friendly, English-speaking staff. Established in 1984, the guesthouse is an excellent budget accommodation located in the Hakone area - the perfect base for your exploration of the beautiful national park to the southeast of Mount Fuji.

Rooms are simple but comfortable and designed in traditional Japanese style, with shoji paper

screens and futon mattresses laid out on *tatami*-mat floors. There is also a convivial lounge area where a breakfast of fresh fruit, bread rolls and boiled eggs is served every morning. The guesthouse's prime feature is its indoor and outdoor *onsen* baths, fed by natural volcanic hot spring water. Bathing facilities at the guesthouse are shared, (as is the norm in Japanese-style inns), but if you feel uncomfortable stripping off in front of your fellow guests you can book out the baths for private use.

A 50-minute bus ride will take you directly from Odawara Station to Senkyoro-mae bus stop, just one minute's walk from the guesthouse. Buses from this stop also service the rest of the Hakone area and are easy to use - the staff will be able to tell you which ones to catch. Free Wi-Fi is available.

**Sunroute Kyoto Hotel, Kyoto**

The Sunroute in Kyoto is a welcoming, Western-style hotel. It boasts a great location, just 10 minutes' walk from the lively shopping area of Shijo, 15 minutes from the Gion geisha district and the Minamiza theatre, and 20 minutes from the World Heritage Site of Kiyomizu Temple, one of Kyoto's most famous and best-loved tourist spots. Rooms are compact but have everything you need, and the hotel has a particularly good buffet breakfast with excellent 10th-floor views of the Kamogawa River. There is a pleasant café downstairs and an Italian restaurant. Free internet is available throughout the hotel. The nearest stations are Kiyomizu-gojo (five minutes' walk) and Kawaramachi (ten minutes' walk), while Kyoto Station (an attraction in itself, housed in a vast and impressive modern building) is seven minutes away by taxi.

**The B Ikebukuro, Tokyo**

The B Hotel in Ikebukuro combines modern and stylish décor in this well located hotel providing for a comfortable stay in one of Tokyo's most exciting districts. The rooms are western style and have en-suite bathroom and there is a very good Pizza restaurant on the second floor. The hotel has free WiFi throughout.

*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 four weeks before departure.*

**What's Included**

- ✓ Your InsideJapan Tours Info-Pack
- ✓ The full-time services of your IJT tour leader
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan
- ✓ Seven-Day Japan Rail Pass
- ✓ IC transport card with 2,500 yen credit for city

transport

- ✓ Seven nights' accommodation
- ✓ Breakfast every day and one evening meal
- ✓ Baggage forwarding from Tokyo to Kyoto
- ✓ Selected entrance fees included
- ✓ Two-day Hakone FreePass (for all transport

modes in the area)

- ✓ Private afternoon tea with a Maiko (trainee geisha)
- ✓ Shared portable Wi-Fi access throughout trip

**NOT Included**

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Local transport when not covered by one of the included passes
- ✗ Any entrance fees (including those for shrines, temples and museums) unless otherwise specified
- ✗ Baggage handling and luggage forwarding unless otherwise specified

## Practical notes

**Bathroom arrangements**

The hotels in Tokyo and Kyoto are equipped with full en suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet). The Fuji Hakone Guest House has its own natural hot spring baths and shower, which can be used privately, but does not have baths or toilets attached to the rooms.

**Policy on single rooms**

This tour does NOT have a single supplement. Single travellers are guaranteed a single room in Western-style accommodation (six nights in total). However, single travellers will be asked to share a room in the Japanese-style accommodation with a group member of the same sex (one night in total).

**Transport on tour**

Please note that many 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 might have to carry your bags for short distances and some stations do not have escalators.

**Fitness**

Even when not using public transport, sightseeing in Japan often involves walking between sights, climbing up steps in temples and being 'on the go' for much of the day. To enjoy any of our Small Group Tours you should be of moderate fitness, able to walk and climb stairs without difficulty and able to maintain a pace that is comfortable for the majority of the group.

**Luggage**

For ease of transit, we will be forwarding your luggage on occasion: please note you will be without your main baggage for one night in Hakone. See more detailed information on what to pack in the luggage section below.



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## More tour information

### Meals

There are a number of meals included on all our tours. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements and we will ensure that all included meals meet your specific needs.

### Visa requirements

Citizens of the UK, USA, CAN, AUS & NZ do not require an entry visa for Japan. If your home country is not listed here, please check with the Japanese embassy or consulate in your home country for information on visa requirements.

### Your tour leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a fluent English-speaking tour leader who is a resident of Japan and a strong speaker of the local language. They are there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The tour 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, yet s/he is available pretty much all day every day and will even be happy to accompany tour members out at night on occasion!

Please note that the tour leader reserves the right to deny participation in an activity if s/he feels that it is in the safety or best interest of you and/or any other members of the group (e.g. for any Mount Fuji climb, proper hiking gear and a reasonable level of fitness are required - both being generally assessed by the tour leader. Similarly, dangerous weather conditions may lead to cancellation of such an activity.)

### 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 if you would like to break away from the group and do something different, s/he will be available to give you advice, and help you plan your day.

### 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 very small indeed. It is not uncommon to leave your wallet, phone, camera or laptop 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 keep an eye on your bag and other personal effects when out and about.

## Money & 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-based 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

#### Japanese yen in cash

Probably the best way 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 [www.thomasexchange.co.uk](http://www.thomasexchange.co.uk)

Best Foreign Exchange [www.bestforeignexchange.com/services-foreign-currency-travel-money.php](http://www.bestforeignexchange.com/services-foreign-currency-travel-money.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. You will 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

Another 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 four-digit PIN. ATMs are also available at 7-11 convenience stores. These accept most foreign cards but not all. It is advisable to notify your card issuer before you travel that you will be in Japan, to avoid the possibility that the transaction will be blocked for security reasons. N.B. Bank ATMs bearing your card's symbol (Visa, Mastercard etc) will most likely NOT accept your card, as counterintuitive as that sounds.

#### Travellers Cheques

You can change travellers cheques at banks across Japan as well as at the airport on arrival. However, it can be a time-consuming process so you could get 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 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. Euros, Australian Dollars, and Canadian Dollars are also widely accepted. You can bring Japanese Yen travellers cheques but you

will be hit with charges when you change them back to your home currency should you decide not to use them.

**In conclusion, 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 200-500 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 two-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 as much of an issue as in other parts of Asia, but it is perhaps best not to rely on your plastic for this money. We recommend keeping about £100 / \$200 of cash to one side for this purpose. 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

20 years of zero inflation in Japan have helped Japan to remain a surprisingly affordable destination. Since the re-election of Prime Minister Abe, the exchange rate has become more favourable but continues to change frequently.

#### Exchange rates as of November 2016:

1 Australian Dollar AUD = 82 yen  
1 British Pound GBP = 136 yen  
1 Euro EUR = 117 yen  
1 United States Dollar USD = 109 yen

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

### Tipping

As a rule there is no tipping in Japan. 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



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## CONNECTIVITY

ryokan then it is polite to tip your maid 1,000-2,000 yen on the day of arrival, but please give your tip in a discreet envelope. The same goes if you would like to tip a local guide – although a tip will not be expected and no offence will be taken if you do not give one.

If you feel that your tour leader has done a particularly good job, a tip will always be graciously accepted and appreciated. We recommend approximately 3,000 yen per person for a two-week tour.

### EVERYDAY PRICES

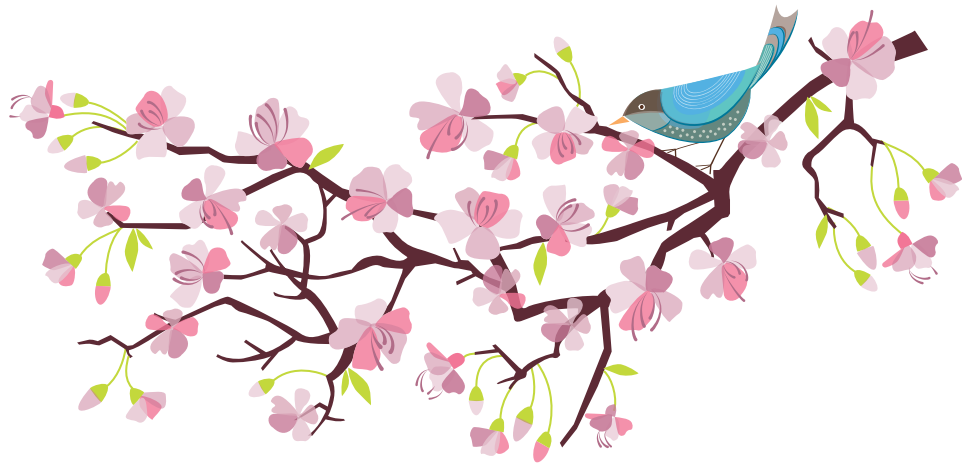
Soft drink (Pepsi, Fanta etc)	130 yen
Loaf of bread	200 yen
Big Mac Meal	680 yen
Banana	100 yen
Litre of petrol	130 yen
Snickers	120 yen
500 ml can of beer	290 yen
Pint of beer in bar	(500-800 yen)
Shop sandwich	230 yen
Umbrella	500 yen
Newspaper	150 yen
Bottle of water	150 yen
Subway journey	160-310 yen
Taxi (per car for 2 km)	680 yen
Starbucks Tall Latte	370 yen
Entrance to a shrine/temple/museum - Usually between	200 yen and 600 yen

**Lunch:** Sit-down lunch around 1,000 yen, sandwich / onigiri / snacks from a convenience store around 500 yen. Beef bowl from Yoshinoya is 400 yen.

**Dinner:** Multi-course meal around 3,000 yen per person, bowl of noodles up to 1,000 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.

Your tour leader will most likely visit restaurants where food costs average 1,500-2,000 yen.



## Connectivity

### Power and plugs

The voltage in Japan is 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. 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 (such as laptop computers) will not work unless they have a variable voltage power-pack.

### Internet and Wi-Fi

In these days of Facebook, Twitter, smart phones and iPads, access to the internet and keeping in touch with friends and family online has become an important part of many people's holiday experience.

Free Wi-Fi is readily available in most hotels and ryokan in Japan. Some hotels only offer wired internet connections (not much help if you are trying to get online with your iPhone), but this is now more the exception than the norm.

There may be a couple of nights on your tour where internet is not available at the accommodation – especially if you are staying in a rural area. If you have concerns or want further details, feel free to call our office or talk to your tour leader. As of 2015, your tour leader will have a portable Wi-Fi unit that you will be able to request access to on railway journeys etc. Please note that this will be on a limited basis and NOT offered at the dinner table.

### Pocket Wi-Fi

If you would like to have internet available for the duration of your trip you may like to consider hiring a "Pocket Wi-Fi" device. This is a smart phone-sized device which acts as a mobile wireless router. It fits comfortably into any pocket or handbag and creates a Wi-Fi zone with a reach of around ten metres. You can wirelessly connect up to ten devices simultaneously so even if you are a family of five all wielding your iPhones you can all still get online through a single Pocket Wi-Fi device.

Mobile coverage is very good in Japan, meaning you can have Wi-Fi internet with you almost

wherever you travel. Of course some rural areas might not have such a good signal but in the cities you will be connected all the time. Even on the *Shinkansen* bullet train you will find you are online all the way.

If you want to guarantee mobile internet for the duration of your trip you should reserve in advance. PuPuRu offer a pocket Wi-Fi service. For more information and to book please visit: <https://pupuruwifi.com/en/>

### Mobile phones

Many mobile phones will not work at all in Japan. However, 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 busiest times of the year.

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).

For customers outside of North America, we have teamed up with PuPuRu mobile phone rental (PuPuRu also offer a pocket Wi-Fi service - see above). To hire a mobile please visit: <https://www.pupuru.com/en/service/>

# Luggage

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 (on a round-the-world ticket, for example), then make sure you have a smaller bag as well as your large bag. Japan has a superb system of luggage forwarding (*takkyubin*) 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 1,800 yen (for a medium-sized bag) up to 2,400 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 Checklist

On this page you will find our packing checklist. 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 might be cool or even cold so a jumper or fleece jacket and a light waterproof jacket are advisable. Every day you will be doing a fair amount of walking so a pair of good-quality, comfortable walking shoes is also recommended.

### Documents

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

### The obvious things!

- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ T-shirts / polo shirts / casual shirts
- ✓ Two 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 backpack
- ✓ Overnight bag

### 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.

- ✓ Toothbrush, toothpaste
- ✓ 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 (summer)
- ✓ 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

20 kg (44 lbs) max / 12 kg (26 lb) recommended

One main bag + one daybag + one overnight bag

### 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
- ✓ 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)
- ✓ Umbrella - As it will likely rain over the course of your visit a folding umbrella can be useful. However, please note that these are available everywhere in Japan for a very low cost.

### You do NOT need

- ✗ **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, though it is getting ever more difficult to find
- ✗ **Regular batteries** - all standard battery sizes are available to buy in convenience stores for UK prices
- ✗ **A hair dryer** - these are provided at nearly all night stops. Hair dryers brought from the UK will generally not work due to the lower voltage in Japan



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# Climate

Japan has four distinct seasons with winter being 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 a very diverse country and this does have an effect on the temperature. Kyushu Island and the western regions of Honshu 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 in 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 mountainous 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 pretty sure that it will rain during your stay in Japan! In fact the average rainfall is nearly double that of the UK so it really does rain a lot, although in a far more concentrated manner. 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 several dry days as well as the very rainy ones! The 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 the rainy season at all!

City	Average High	Average Low	Rainy Days	Sunny Days
<b>January</b>				
Sapporo	-1°C / 30°F	-8°C / 18°F	60%	40%
Tokyo	10°C / 50°F	2°C / 36°F	15%	75%
Kyoto	9°C / 48°F	3°C / 37°F	20%	60%
Fukuoka	10°C / 50°F	3°C / 37°F	25%	40%
Ishigaki	19°C / 66°F	14°C / 57°F	35%	35%
<b>February</b>				
Sapporo	0°C / 32°F	-7°C / 19°F	55%	45%
Tokyo	10°C / 50°F	2°C / 36°F	15%	70%
Kyoto	9°C / 48°F	3°C / 37°F	15%	60%
Fukuoka	11°C / 52°F	4°C / 39°F	25%	55%
Ishigaki	19°C / 66°F	14°C / 57°F	35%	30%
<b>March</b>				
Sapporo	4°C / 39°F	-4°C / 25°F	50%	55%
Tokyo	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	25%	60%
Kyoto	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	30%	60%
Fukuoka	14°C / 57°F	6°C / 43°F	35%	50%
Ishigaki	21°C / 70°F	16°C / 61°F	35%	40%
<b>April</b>				
Sapporo	11°C / 52°F	3°C / 37°F	30%	55%
Tokyo	18°C / 64°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	55%
Kyoto	20°C / 68°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	60%
Fukuoka	19°C / 66°F	11°C / 52°F	35%	55%
Ishigaki	24°C / 65°F	19°C / 66°F	40%	35%
<b>May</b>				
Sapporo	17°C / 63°F	8°C / 46°F	30%	55%
Tokyo	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	50%
Kyoto	24°C / 75°F	15°C / 59°F	35%	60%
Fukuoka	24°C / 75°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	55%
Ishigaki	26°C / 79°F	22°C / 72°F	30%	45%
<b>June</b>				
Sapporo	21°C / 70°F	12°C / 54°F	25%	55%
Tokyo	25°C / 77°F	19°C / 66°F	35%	45%
Kyoto	27°C / 81°F	20°C / 68°F	30%	55%
Fukuoka	27°C / 81°F	19°C / 66°F	25%	55%
Ishigaki	29°C / 84°F	25°C / 77°F	45%	40%
<b>July</b>				
Sapporo	25°C / 77°F	17°C / 63°F	25%	40%
Tokyo	29°C / 84°F	23°C / 73°F	35%	30%
Kyoto	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	40%	45%
Fukuoka	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	40%	40%
Ishigaki	31°C / 88°F	26°C / 79°F	25%	80%
<b>August</b>				
Sapporo	26°C / 79°F	19°C / 66°F	25%	50%
Tokyo	31°C / 88°F	24°C / 75°F	25%	55%
Kyoto	33°C / 91°F	25°C / 77°F	20%	70%
Fukuoka	32°C / 90°F	25°C / 77°F	25%	65%
Ishigaki	31°C / 88°F	26°C / 79°F	40%	70%
<b>September</b>				
Sapporo	22°C / 72°F	14°C / 57°F	30%	50%
Tokyo	27°C / 81°F	21°C / 70°F	35%	40%
Kyoto	29°C / 84°F	21°C / 70°F	30%	60%
Fukuoka	28°C / 82°F	21°C / 70°F	35%	55%
Ishigaki	30°C / 86°F	25°C / 77°F	35%	70%
<b>October</b>				
Sapporo	16°C / 62°F	7°C / 45°F	35%	60%
Tokyo	22°C / 72°F	15°C / 59°F	35%	40%
Kyoto	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	30%	55%
Fukuoka	23°C / 73°F	15°C / 59°F	20%	60%
Ishigaki	28°C / 82°F	23°C / 73°F	25%	65%
<b>November</b>				
Sapporo	8°C / 46°F	1°C / 34°F	45%	40%
Tokyo	17°C / 63°F	10°C / 50°F	25%	55%
Kyoto	17°C / 63°F	10°C / 50°F	20%	60%
Fukuoka	18°C / 64°F	10°C / 50°F	30%	55%
Ishigaki	24°C / 75°F	20°C / 68°F	25%	55%
<b>December</b>				
Sapporo	2°C / 36°F	-4°C / 25°F	50%	35%
Tokyo	12°C / 54°F	5°C / 41°F	15%	65%
Kyoto	12°C / 54°F	5°C / 41°F	20%	65%
Fukuoka	13°C / 55°F	5°C / 41°F	30%	45%
Ishigaki	21°C / 70°F	16°C / 61°F	25%	45%