



Spring Elegance

▶ TOKYO ▶ MATSUMOTO ▶ TAKAYAMA ▶ KANAZAWA ▶ KYOTO ▶ HAKONE ▶ 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

Spring is one of the finest times to visit Japan, as the winter chill makes way for warm sunny days. With this of course comes the excitement that accompanies the annual *hanami* or blossom-viewing celebrations as cherry trees across the country burst into bloom!

The Tokyo metropolis is where we'll start and finish the tour. It's a fascinating city, full of things to see and do, constantly alive and buzzing with activity. With stays in old-town Asakusa and the ultra-modern Shinjuku district we will have a chance to experience the very different faces of modern Tokyo life.

During our stay in Tokyo there will be a chance to take an excursion to one of the many places of interest that lie within easy reach of the capital; the elaborate shrines of Nikko, the world's largest Buddha at Ushiku or the sleepy temples and shrines of former capital Kamakura are just three of the many options.

In between our two stops in Tokyo we'll enjoy some of the gentler sides of life in Japan. Situated in the shadow of the awe-inspiring peaks of the Japan Alps the towns of Matsumoto - with its impressive feudal castle - and Takayama, a town of old narrow streets, sake breweries and craftsmen's residences, will provide a pleasant contrast to the seeming chaos of the capital. In Kanazawa, situated on the Japan sea coast, we will visit beautiful Kenroku-en garden, one of the finest in all Japan.

Three nights in Kyoto, Japan's capital of history and culture, gives you plenty of time to explore the menagerie of temples and shrines which cast you back in time

to a very different Japan. Our unique guided walking tour of the famous Gion district will give you the chance to catch a glimpse of geisha along the beautiful Kyoto backstreets. With tickets to the famous Miyako Odori (Spring Geisha Dances) also included in the tour price.

From Kyoto there is the option to take a day trip to Hiroshima, Himeji or Nara using the included Japan Rail Pass - at no extra cost!

A journey east on the famous 'Bullet' Train to the mountainous hot-spring region of Hakone with its forest covered mountains and stunning views of Mt. Fuji, brings our travels round Japan to a close. We will have a two-night stay in the imperial surroundings of the Fujiya, Japan's first and most atmospheric Western-style hotel, before returning to Tokyo and spend a final night amidst the skyscrapers of Shinjuku. We'll be sure to enjoy one last evening of great food and entertainment before saying our farewells.

With your Tour Leader always on hand to point you in the right direction for all the sights, restaurants, bars, museums, and special events, the Spring Elegance tour is a never-to-be-forgotten Japan experience.

And of course if the Gods smile upon us and the weather co-operates, you may get the chance to join the Japanese for a night of partying under the famous Japanese cherry blossom.

Day-by-Day

Day 1 Tokyo (D)

The tour begins today in Tokyo, Japan's electric capital city. Your Tour Leader will be there to meet you on your arrival at

Narita International Airport. 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 at the airport to meet you. The tour leader will supply you with a Tokyo Transport PASMO Card allowing you to move around the city easily on the subways and train systems like a real Tokyoite! Our 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's dinner of your Tour Leader's choice. Options include *Okonomiyaki* - a kind of savoury pancake, or at an *Izakaya* (Japanese style pub). Food is on us so this is a great chance to start getting to know the other members of the group.

Day 2 Tokyo (B)

After breakfast today we will embark on a full day tour of the city using our PASMO cards. 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 perhaps check out the amazing view of Tokyo to be had from the 45th floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building. Of course if exploring independently is more your thing then that is no problem at all and whatever it is you want to do your leader will help you out. Tonight dinner isn't included so we recommend heading out to indulge in some of the myriad of culinary delights available.





Day-by-Day continued

Day 3 Tokyo / Excursion Day (B)

Today you can take one of the many day trips available or alternatively, stay in Tokyo and explore more of the city's attractions at your own pace using your PASMO card – the choice is yours!

Day 4 Matsumoto (B)

Today, if you'd like to join us at the city's morning fish market, we'll be making a 4.30am start! This is a fascinating excursion and we are sure you will have seen nothing like it before in your life! The Japanese are serious about their fish and here you'll get to see where it all comes from. You may like to try a *sushi* breakfast at one of the market's tiny *sushi* bars. If this isn't to your taste don't worry though - breakfast at the hotel will still be available.

The journey to Matsumoto will take about three and a half hours in total. We will have a chance to visit Matsumoto's premier attraction, the black castle. This is one of the finest examples of an original castle still surviving in Japan, escaping as it has the ravages of fire and war which have destroyed so many of Japan's other feudal castles. For dinner you might like to try a meal of soba noodles (made with buckwheat), the speciality food of the region.

Day 5 Takayama (B&D)

Today it's on by highway bus to Takayama. The journey takes just over 2 hours and we'll be arriving late morning. After leaving our bags at the *ryokan* we will have a chance to start exploring this intriguing mountain town. Shrines and *sake* breweries are among the attractions! Dinner will tonight be served at our inn and this is sure to be one of the culinary highlights of the trip as we indulge in a classic Japanese *ryokan* meal.

Day 6 Takayama (B)

Takayama has an abundance of things to do and see. The morning markets, where fresh produce is brought in daily from the surrounding fields by local farmers, are a great way to start the day. Move on to one of the traditional merchant residences for a look at life in Takayama in years gone by. Don't miss the Hida-Takayama folk village, a fantastic outdoor museum made up of a collection of old traditional-style houses from all around the Hida region - a rare chance to catch a glimpse of what rural life was like in pre-industrial Japan. Dinner is not included tonight so head out to sample some of the region's famous beef or visit one of the town's lively local eateries!

Day 7 Kanazawa (B)

Today we'll make the three-hour journey by limited express train to Kanazawa, home of Kenroku-en, one of Japan's finest gardens. After spending some time here, perhaps we'll check out the *Ninja* temple

and *Samurai* houses before heading out for dinner. Our accommodation is superbly located right in the centre of Kanazawa and within walking distance to the main sites.

Day 8 Kyoto (B&D)

This morning we'll take the express train on to Kyoto for our three-night stay in this famous city. Kyoto is a great city to explore on foot. There are several walking tour routes, each with different places of interest along the way. Your Leader will accompany the group along a chosen route. This afternoon you might join our tour of Gion and the Geisha districts with a local Geisha expert, giving you a truly unique insight into this hidden world. You will have tickets to the famous Spring Geisha Dances, followed by dinner at a Gion restaurant. It's sure to be an exciting day!

Day 9 Kyoto (B)

A full day to explore some of Kyoto's wealth of sights. Check out some temples and shrines such as the exquisite hilltop Kiyomizu-dera, the Golden Pavilion or one of Kyoto's many Zen gardens.

Day 10 Kyoto / Excursion Day (B)

Today is Excursion day - you can use the included Japan Rail Pass to make a day trip to Hiroshima, Himeji, Nara or perhaps Japan's lively second city of Osaka. Alternatively, there is so much to see in Kyoto that you may wish to spend the day just meandering through the narrow backstreets discovering some of Kyoto's hidden gems.

Day 11 Hakone(B&D)

Today we get to enjoy a trip on the 'Bullet' Train as we make our way (at speeds approaching 300km per hour!) to the Fuji Hakone National Park at the foot of Mount Fuji. The total journey takes just under 4 hours, including local transport. Included in the tour price is a "Hakone Free Pass" which allows you unlimited travel on nearly all of the local transport in the Hakone region; a great way to explore! Our accommodation is the classic Fujiya Hotel, sure to be one of the accommodation highlights of the tour and a real treat! Dinner tonight is included at a local restaurant near our hotel.

Day 12 Hakone (B)

A full day to explore Hakone. You may like to take a short hike along what remains of the old Tokaido highway that used to be the major road linking Edo (modern day Tokyo) with Kyoto and Osaka. The open-air sculpture museum features pieces by many world-renowned artists all set against a stunning mountain backdrop. There is an assortment of museums to visit and of course one of Hakone's famous 'trick boxes' would make for a great souvenir.

Day 13 Tokyo (B)

Back to Tokyo. In contrast to our initial stay

in old-world Asakusa, we'll be staying in Shinjuku, the busiest and most modern district of the city. This is your chance to do all that last-minute shopping and to check out the sights you missed first time round. In the evening we hope that everyone will join us for a last meal together and a few drinks before we all head our separate ways after what we hope will have been a real holiday experience to treasure.

Day 14 Sayonara (B)

It is that sad time when we all have to say our goodbyes and head our separate ways. Your transfer back to the airport is included, allowing you to relax knowing that you will be in good time for checking in. We wish you all the best for a safe journey home and hope that perhaps one day you will return to Japan for some more adventures in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Accommodation

The following accommodation is used on the Spring Elegance tour:

Tokyo Hotel Sunroute Asakusa
Excellent business hotel located in the heart of the traditional Asakusa district
Tel. 03 3847 1511

Matsumoto Richmond Hotel
Stylish business hotel in the heart of the city and a short walk from the castle
Tel. 0263-37-5000

Takayama Tanabe Ryokan
Beautiful old Japanese inn located in the heart of Takayama
Tel. 0577 32 0529

Kanazawa APA Chuo Hotel
Conveniently located and comfortable business hotel
Tel: 076-224-7755

Kyoto Sunroute Hotel
Comfortable Western style hotel located just minutes from the bustling heart of Kyoto and the famous *geisha* districts of Gion
Tel. 075 371 3711

Hakone The Fujiya Hotel
Japan's first and most famous Western-style hotel
Tel. 0460-2-2211

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

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





More Tour Information

What's Included

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

- ✓ 13 nights accommodation
- ✓ All transport between destinations in Japan including airport transfers on arrival and departure
- ✓ Meet and greet upon arrival at Narita Airport
- ✓ Breakfast everyday
- ✓ Sumida River cruise
- ✓ Tokyo Transport PAMSO pass
- ✓ 4 evening meals
- ✓ 7 Day Japan Rail Pass
- ✓ 'Miyako Odori' tickets in Kyoto and Geisha district walking tour
- ✓ Hakone Free Pass to cover local transport in Hakone region
- ✓ Luggage forwarding between Tokyo & Takayama, Takayama & Kyoto and Kyoto & Tokyo
- ✓ Full time services of your Tour Leader
- ✓ InsideJapan Tours' complimentary Info-Pack

NOT included

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Additional local transport at any destination except that covered by the 'Free Pass' in Hakone and PASMO in Tokyo
- ✗ Entrance fees to shrines, temples, museums etc.
- ✗ Lunches, 9 evening meals, drinks
- ✗ Baggage handling - you will be expected to carry your own luggage

Bathroom arrangements

At all night stops on the Spring Elegance tour your room will have full en-suite facilities (attached bath, shower and toilet). The Japanese inn will also have traditional large, shared use baths available.

Policy on single rooms

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

Your Tour Leader

Our tours are led on the ground by a Tour Leader, a Japanese speaking Brit, Aussie or American who is there to ensure that you get the most out of your trip and that the whole adventure goes smoothly. The Leader travels with the group and stays at the same hotels and *ryokan* so please feel free to ask for help or advice at any time.

Your Tour Leader is not a guide so may not know every historical detail of every shrine, temple or palace; equally however, s/he is available pretty much all day everyday and will even accompany (willing) tour members to karaoke...

Flexibility

Our tours aim to be as flexible as possible, so there is no set-in-stone itinerary for each day. Each morning the Tour Leader will outline what 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 convenient transport links. 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. 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)
- ✓ Comfortable shoes or trainers
- ✓ Walking shoes / boots
- ✓ Open-toed sandals
- ✓ Small hand towel (many public toilets do not have hand dryers/towels)
- ✓ 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
- ✗ **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 / 7-11ATMs.

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 these 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!

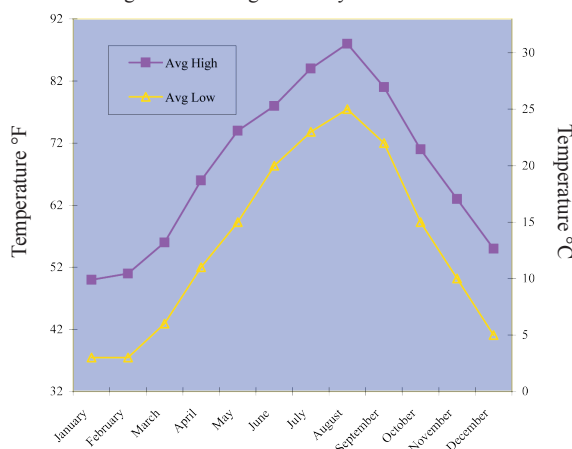
Temperatures in Hokkaido can reach as low as -25 °C in winter with very heavy snowfall. The same goes for the Japan Alps and other mountain regions of Japan. Be sure to take all this into account when packing for your trip. If you are heading up into the mountains you will need warmer clothing. Even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

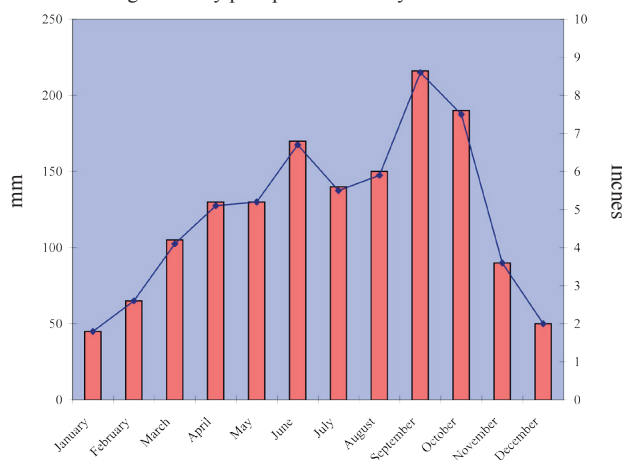
does rain a lot. The wettest month of the year is September. However, this is mainly because of typhoons dumping huge amounts of rain in very short spaces of time, so you do get a lot of dry days as well as the very rainy ones!

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, Kafka On The Shore
- 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, Grottesque
- 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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