



# Experience Japan

日本 beyond  
the classroom





# Why visit Japan?



## Native interaction, firsthand experiences

Nothing compares to interacting with native Japanese people as a tool for learning the language. School exchanges with Japanese students (both within the classroom and extra-curricular activities) provide an invaluable opportunity for Australian and New Zealander students to experience Japanese culture and lifestyle. Meeting and spending time with the local people is also a good alternative way to do this. Homestay should also be an essential part of a school trip to Japan. Many cities now offer a range of experiential programs in English such as tea ceremony, taiko drumming, and Japanese sweet making.



## Affordable Japan

Although Japan is often perceived as an expensive travel destination, there are, in fact, a wide variety of budget accommodation options, transportation passes and sightseeing discounts, making Japan an affordable destination. The price of many goods in Australia and New Zealand is almost the same as those in Japan, and some things are even cheaper in Japan! Dining out in Japan does not have to be expensive. Restaurant dining in Tokyo, for example, is certainly no more expensive than in most other world capitals. Also, there are many inexpensive, good quality hotels, even in Tokyo.



## Well developed transport network

Japan's transport network is very extensive and allows for speedy and efficient travelling. Major cities within the country are connected to each other by air, rail and highways. Japan's railway system, in particular, has an excellent reputation for its punctuality and safety. Riding on the internationally renowned *shinkansen* (bullet train) will be an exciting experience for students. For a visitor, the Japan Rail Pass offers excellent value and convenience. In major urban areas, subways and buses are clean, punctual and convenient, with signage and announcements provided in English for the visitor.



A visit to Japan is a feast for all the senses: cityscapes beyond imagination, awe inspiring natural beauty, vibrant and unique festivals, delicious regional delicacies, refined and elegant gardens and architecture.

On a school trip to Japan, you can experience firsthand a culture far more beautiful and diverse than your textbook could ever portray.

Become a part of this fascinating country, be captured by the people and the surroundings - it will be the greatest learning experience you can find. With genuine and heart-warming hospitality, Japan awaits you.

Here are some reasons to visit Japan on a school trip:



### High security standard

Japan has long led the world as one of the most crime-free economically advanced countries. Even large cities like Tokyo and Osaka are remarkably safe. Not only are crimes against visitors virtually unheard of, but even personal belongings accidentally left in trains or taxis, on park benches, or in restaurants are generally turned in to the local police station and eventually make their way back to the rightful owner.

Japan also has highly developed medical facilities and advanced international telecommunication. Students are able to walk around by themselves in safety.



### Location, Location, Location

Japan lies off the east coast of the Asian continent, and is only one hour behind Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) and three hours behind New Zealand Standard Time (NZST). This means almost no jetlag and no precious travelling time is wasted!

The country stretches in a narrow arc – 3,000 km from north to south – so each region has a unique climate and culture. From skiing in the winter in Hokkaido or Nagano, to snorkelling and scuba diving in the summer in Okinawa, there is an activity to suit every interest in Japan.



### Sister city and sister school relationships

International exchange and cooperation are very popular between Australia and New Zealand, and Japan.

Australia has six sister states and 102 sister cities in Japan (as of August 2009; CLAIR Sydney) and New Zealand has 42 Japanese sister cities (as of August 2009; CLAIR Sydney). In addition, both countries have many sister schools in Japan.

Exchange visits to sister cities and schools play an important role in maintaining these sister affiliations.

The JNTO can provide you with information on schools and organisations eager to participate in school exchange or homestay.





# Attractive Japan



## Coexistence of the traditional and modern

Although Japan is renowned for its industries and cutting-edge technology, it has many natural and architectural World Heritage properties. Despite its advanced technology, traditional arts and crafts, foods and customs are important parts of modern Japanese society. Japan has flourished around the world in fields like fashion, entertainment and animation, but at the same time, traditional cultural pursuits continue to be handed down and practised.

Hama-rikyu Garden, in the foreground, is a Tokyo municipal park located at the mouth of the Sumida River. It was remodelled as a public garden park on the site of a villa of the Shogun Tokugawa family in the 17th century.

The Shiodome area adjacent to Hama-rikyu was reborn in 2002 as a gigantic multipurpose community known as Shiodome Shiosite. Here high-rise buildings, hotels, restaurants and shops are interconnected by underground walkways and a pedestrian deck.



©Hokkaido Tourism Organization

## Culinary diversity

Sampling Japan's culinary delights is an experience to be enjoyed and remembered fondly for the rest of your life. Japanese cuisine offers palate-tickling sensations that range from elegant *kaiseki* cuisine to the hearty basics of noodles and rice bowls.

*Ramen* noodle is one of the most popular foods in Japan. Originally from China, this noodle soup has been integrated into the Japanese diet and is now a ubiquitous dish in Japan.

*Donburi*, a rice bowl dish of fish or meat, and vegetables served over rice, is extremely popular as well. Examples of *donburi* are: *Tempura donburi* or *Ten-don* : rice topped with *tempura*; and *Katsu-don*: rice topped with pork *katsu* (pork cutlets).

Each region has developed its own local delicacies: Genghis Khan, barbecued lamb, is a must to eat in Hokkaido and *Okonomiyaki*, is an Osaka and Hiroshima speciality. Though, each city has its different style so it recommended to try both!



©C. Sawami



Marvel at beautiful mountain landscapes and coastlines, exotic animals not found in Oceania, and historical and natural World Heritage listed sites. Enjoy skyscrapers in Tokyo and Osaka, world class theme parks like Tokyo Disney Resort and Universal Studios Japan, and cool pop culture.

Indulge yourself in traditional *ryokan*, relax and rejuvenate in an open-air bath and sample local cuisine made from fresh seasonal ingredients.

Japan offers all this (and more!), with refined sophistication and heartfelt hospitality.

These are just a few reasons Japan is so attractive.



### Four diverse seasons

The Japanese archipelago stretches from north to south, which means that each region has a different climate and that Japan is abundantly blessed with seasonal changes. Each season brings with it a distinct beauty.

Spring brings flowering cherry blossoms. With summer comes warm weather, festivals and fireworks, and the brilliant green shimmer of young rice paddies.

As autumn arrives the changing foliage provides a display of vibrant reds, yellows and oranges. Winter means snow and white-capped mountain peaks.

Whatever the time of year, the mountainous islands of Japan are bound to offer truly impressive natural scenery.



©Japan Ryokan Association

### Exemplary customer service & warm hospitality

Japan has a great range of accommodation properties. Types of accommodation vary widely in terms of style and price. You can choose to stay in the familiar comforts of a western-style hotel, or enjoy the comfort and personal attention of a traditional Japanese inn.

About 300 Youth Hostels (YH), providing affordable and clean accommodation in friendly surroundings, are located throughout Japan. Homestay is also a popular option for school trips.

Regardless of the style of accommodation, you can experience warm Japanese hospitality and excellent customer service.



### Cool Japan: Unique culture

Japan is the land of landscape gardening and the tea ceremony, but it's also the unofficial king of pop culture.

Pokemon, created by Nintendo in 1996 for its handheld video game, Game Boy, spread to the rest of the world in the forms of a television series and trading cards, followed by Digimon, Dragonball and ONE PIECE.

Hello Kitty has captured the hearts of girls everywhere with cute purses, notebooks and other accessories stamped with its trademark cat.

With anime and cosplay at the forefront, Japan's pop culture will show you a world beyond your wildest imagination.



©Toshio Hagiwara



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©MaDreamin



# Destinations for School Trips

## Golden Route



Japan's popular destinations are dotted along the route from Tokyo through Kyoto to Hiroshima. This model route is called the Golden Route and showcases the different aspects of Japanese scenery and culture.

Tokyo and Kyoto are often cited as counter-cities, the former as a modern and energetic metropolis, and the latter representing tradition and heritage from ancient times. From historical architecture to cutting edge technology, these cities are the hub of attractions and culture.

Osaka and Nara are located a short distance from Kyoto and can be visited on a day trip or for a few nights to explore more. Osaka is the "kitchen of Japan" where you can enjoy a variety of rich, homestyle food whereas Nara is an ancient capital of Japan and is a home to invaluable treasures and history.



As a city of peace, Hiroshima teaches us lessons about peace and the importance of life. It is also known for a beautiful symbolic red shrine gate.

These cities are connected by the efficient bullet train and are easily accessible from one another. If you can not make up your mind where to go, you can not go wrong with the Golden Route.



## Sample Itinerary

DAY	ITINERARY	DAY	ITINERARY
Day 1	Depart Australia Arrive Tokyo/Narita	Day 5	Kyoto - Osaka/Nara - Kyoto -Day trip to Osaka or Nara
Day 2	Tokyo -Full day in Tokyo	Day 6	Kyoto – Hiroshima -Transfer to Hiroshima -Explore Hiroshima and Miyajima
Day 3	Tokyo - Kyoto -Transfer to Kyoto by bullet train -Half day in Kyoto	Day 7	Hiroshima - Tokyo -Transfer to Tokyo -Spend the rest of day in Tokyo until departure -Depart Tokyo/Narita
Day 4	Kyoto -Full day in Kyoto	Day 8	Arrive Australia

## Hot Destinations

Aside from the Golden Route, here are two outstanding destinations. Japan, being an island nation stretching from north to south and having four distinct seasons, its regions vary in climate and geographical conditions. It is blessed with gifts from the mountains and the sea, and it is the countryside where you will appreciate the true beauty of Japan. A combination of a few nights in big cities and a journey to rural areas will highlight the cultural and environmental differences of the cities and countryside and also offer multiple activities. Explore the region and encounter the local people. It will be a new and exciting experience.



### Hokkaido

Hokkaido is Japan's northernmost island and is only a short flight from Tokyo and Osaka. The island's low humidity makes the summer pleasant, while in winter you can enjoy winter sports. It is also known for its quality local produce and cuisine and hot springs, and is a popular destination throughout the four seasons.



©Nagano Prefecture

### Nagano

Nagano is located in the central part of Honshu, and is blessed with natural wonders, hot springs and a historical atmosphere. It is home to Zenkoji (temple), a national treasure built back in the early 7th century, magnificent 3,000 metre high mountains, and the famous snow monkeys, who soak in hot springs just like people do!





Tokyo City View

# Tokyo



## Imperial Palace



Formerly called Edo Castle, it was opened during the Meiji Restoration. Palaces for formal ceremonies and the residence of the Emperor and Empress are located on the 100 hectare site. The east side of the residence is open to the public as the Imperial Palace East Garden.

## Asakusa



©Yasutomi Nishi

Said to have been built in 628, Sensoji in Asakusa is the oldest temple in Tokyo. At the front of Sensoji is the Kaminarimon (gate) with an eye catching big red lantern. From the gate, take a stroll along Nakamise Dori, one of the preserved local streets lined with traditional restaurants and shops.

## Edo-Tokyo Museum, Ryogoku



Edo-Tokyo Museum provides a great chance to look at the development of Tokyo (formerly Edo). It houses large-scale models and traditional art, and shows films, all of which guide you through 400 years of Tokyo's history.

## Harajuku



Takeshita Dori in Harajuku is where many of Japan's fashion trends are born. Shops, boutiques, cafes and fast food restaurants, lining this narrow 400 metre long street, are popular among teenagers.



Tokyo is the capital city of Japan with a population of around 13 million people. It is the centre of politics, economy and culture in contemporary Japan. Tokyo has many faces: skyscrapers towering up to the sky, preserved streets and traditional facades, a myriad of amusement facilities, and tranquil and elegant gardens and temples. A trip to any of the areas just outside of Tokyo, such as Yokohama, Kamakura, Hakone or Nikko is an excellent way to see and experience another side of Japan without travelling long distances.



Ginza

### Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Shinjuku



This building is one of Tokyo's landmarks and has two observatories on the 45th floors which are open to the public free of charge. The observatories command a panoramic view of metropolitan Tokyo and on a fine day it is even possible to see Mt. Fuji.

### Roppongi



© Yasufumi Nishi

Roppongi is famous as Tokyo's international district. Many art galleries and shopping-dining complexes have been built in the area. Roppongi Hills houses the Mori Art Museum and Tokyo City View observation deck. Tokyo Midtown includes the Suntory Museum of Art and a garden.

### Electric Town, Akihabara



Akihabara is often called Electric Town because of the great amount of stores selling electronics and electrical appliances at discount prices. This area is an exciting destination for anyone interested in advanced technology and product gadgets.

### Tokyo Anime Centre, Akihabara



Akihabara is also famous for its own anime culture. At Tokyo Anime Centre you can get the latest animation information, enjoy events, public recording and also listen to the stories directly from the creators and voice actors and actresses.

### Miraikan, Odaiba



This museum aims to familiarise people with science through experience based exhibits and interaction with scientists and engineers. You can participate in the fun side of science with robot demonstrations and exhibitions on cutting edge technology, outer space, the environment and much more.

### Tokyo Water Cruise



Tokyo's water bus system offers an exciting way to get to and from Odaiba. Along the way you can see beautiful sights including Hama-rikyu Garden. The boats run regularly on a circular route and there are six routes to choose from.



# Tokyo Suburbs

Nikko

## Tokyo Disney Resort®



Located 15 minutes by train from Tokyo Station, Tokyo Disney Resort is home to Tokyo Disneyland, Tokyo DisneySea, Resort Hotels, Cirque du Soleil® Theatre Tokyo and a shopping, entertainment and dining complex. Here you can experience ultimate fun!

## Nikko



Nikko, approximately two hours by train from central Tokyo, is blessed with some spectacular natural scenery. Toshogu is a World Heritage shrine, renowned for its luxurious and elaborate architecture and craftsmanship. Kegon Falls in northwestern Nikko, is one of Japan's three most famous waterfalls.

## Yokohama



This harbour city has a rich international flavour attributed to it being one of the first ports in Japan to open its doors to foreign trade 150 years ago. The Minato Mirai 21 area is full of modern skyscrapers, shopping complexes and amusement spots. The night view of this area is a must see attraction.

## Kamakura



Kamakura, located one hour by train from Tokyo, was once the capital of the Shogunate. It is now noted for its historic sites and nature. The Great Buddha sits peacefully in the grounds of the Kotokuin Temple. It is approximately 11 metres tall and one of the two largest Buddha in Japan.

## Hakone



Hakone is a famous hot spring resort located one and a half hours by train from central Tokyo. Here you can relax in a hot spring and also enjoy world renowned art works at art museums. The view of Mt. Fuji from Hakone's Lake Ashi is also a popular attraction.

## How to Bow



While a handshake has been gaining wide acceptance in Japan, it is still common practice to bow when greeting people, especially when meeting someone for the first time. People bow their heads to show each other respect. Good manner depends on the situation, from a simple nod (informal) to a deep bend of the entire torso (formal).



# Osaka



Osaka is Japan's third largest city, with a population of around 2.6 million. The city has a longer history than Tokyo as a metropolis of Japan, and has prospered as a centre of commerce for many years. It has today developed into the central city of West Japan, with an international airport and many amusement facilities. Osaka city is mainly divided in two areas, Kita (north) and Minami (south), and it is Minami area where you will find more bustling character of Osaka. The vitality and charm of Osaka's distinctive performing arts and food culture attract many visitors to the city.

## Osaka Castle



Built in 1585 by the great warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Osaka Castle is considered the symbol of this vibrant city. The castle is eight-storeys high, and its tower houses a number of artefacts from the many battles fought there.

## Dotonbori, Minami



Dotonbori is the bustling centre of downtown Osaka. The area is packed with restaurants, and huge neon signs towering over the streets are reflected in the Dotonbori Canal. Within a walking distance are *Kabuki* and *Bunraku* theatres where UNESCO listed performing arts can be enjoyed.

## Universal Studios Japan®



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The United States' movie theme park established its first park outside of the US in 2001. Besides variety of shows and attractions, Universal Studios Japan® offers educational program for schools, and encourages students to learn what is behind the scenes and increase vocational interests.

## Factories and Museums



In Osaka, there are variety of factories and museums to explore. The Osaka Science and Technology Centre (OSTEC) Exhibition hall showcases Japan's latest technologies and a hint of eco-friendly life, and the Instant Ramen Museum will teach visitors the importance of invention and discovery.



Enkoji

# Kyoto



## Kinkakuji (Golden Pavillion)



Kinkakuji, a three-storey wooden temple covered with gold leaf, is one of Kyoto's most famous and iconic sights. Originally built in 1397, Kinkakuji was burned down in 1950 and reconstructed in 1955. This beautiful World Heritage listed property is surrounded by picturesque gardens.

## Kiyomizudera



Kiyomizudera is a grand temple in the Higashiyama District. The temple's main hall, with its large verandah projecting out over the temple gardens, was built entirely without nails. Enjoy a stroll along Sannenzaka, a sloped street lined with quaint wooden houses and craft and bonsai shops, near the temple.

## Gion (Gion Corner)



©Colin Sinclair

Gion Corner provides selection of traditional Japanese arts such as tea ceremony, flower arrangement, ancient court music, and geisha dance performances. You may have a chance to see a *maiko* (apprentice geisha), in a colourful eye catching kimono passing by on the streets of Gion.

## Arashiyama/ Sagano



The natural beauty of Arashiyama, in Kyoto's west, has been attracting visitors for centuries. Arashiyama is particularly famous for cherry blossoms in spring and the vibrant colours of the changing leaves in autumn. Not far from here, are the bamboo groves of Sagano which are an oasis of green.



Kyoto, one of Japan's ancient capitals, prospered as a hub of politics, economy and culture for some 1100 years, before the capital was relocated in the 19th century to its present location, Tokyo. Kyoto is home to many elaborate gardens, temples and shrines built during this long period. Kyoto is overflowing with World Heritage listed cultural artefacts and architecture. In the traditional cobblestone streets of Kyoto, *maiko* (apprentice geisha) walk through the rows of old houses. Traditional arts and crafts continue to thrive in Kyoto, and it is here that you will experience the Japan of old.



### Philosopher's Path (Ginkakuji to Nanzenji)



©Colin Sinclair

The Philosopher's Path is a scenic walkway which starts at World Heritage property, Ginkakuji, runs along a canal and finishes at Nanzenji. Ginkakuji is a Zen temple famous for its elaborate Japanese gardens and Nanzenji is a temple well known for its architecture and artwork from the late 16th century.

### Nijo Castle



Nijo Castle was built in the 17th Century for Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, and is best known for its ornate interiors and "nightingale floors". The wooden floorboards were designed to make squeaking sounds, like a nightingale when walked upon, which alerted the Shogun's guards to intruders.

### Uji



Uji, an area southeast of Kyoto famous for green tea, is the home of World Heritage listed temple, Byodoin which was built in the early 11th century as a pavilion for a Fujiwara noble. Not far from the temple is the Tale of Genji Museum, dedicated to the famous epic novel written by Murasaki Shikibu.

### Hands-on experience



Kyoto is famous for its exquisite traditional cuisine and handicrafts. Try Japanese calligraphy, Zen meditation, and Japanese cooking classes to learn about and appreciate the culture. Kyoto Handicraft Centre and WAK JAPAN provide various programs for you to discover.

### Ryokan stay



©Japan Ryokan Association

*Ryokan*, traditional inns, are an excellent way to experience traditional Japanese lifestyle first-hand. They offer Japanese style dinner and breakfast, relaxing *onsen*, and genuine hospitality. It may be a challenge to sleep in a *futon* on *tatami* mats, but a stay in a *ryokan* will be an unforgettable experience.

### Follow the customs



©Japan Ryokan Association

In Japan, people generally take off their shoes at the entrance in most homes and *ryokan*. They then either put on slippers that may be provided or walk around in socks. Before soaking in a hot spring, it is a customary to rinse yourself and keep towels out of the bath. Try to appreciate and follow the traditional customs.



Todaiji©Yasufumi Nishi

# Nara



Founded as the first permanent capital of Japan, Nara commemorates its 1300th anniversary of foundation in 2010. With its countless shrines, temples, and museums, which take you back through history, Nara is an ideal place to stroll around and discover the heart of Japanese culture. At present, Nara has the honour of preserving the world's oldest wooden monuments, which are designated as World Cultural Heritages. Many of the heritages are located in northern Nara with a highlight in Nara Park surroundings where you will find **Todaiji**, National Museums, **Kasuga Taisha**, and other valuable facilities.

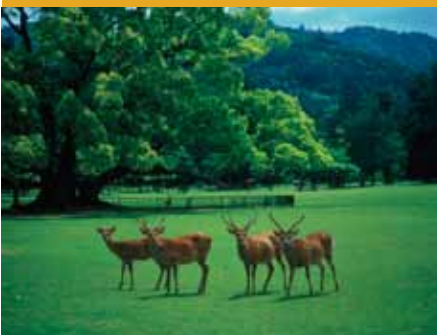
## Todaiji



©Yasufumi Nishi

Todaiji, the world's largest wooden structure, houses a 15 metre tall Buddha. The Great Buddha is said to represent the universe and infinity, and can be quite overwhelming. The temple was originally built in 728, and its many magnificent pagodas are famous symbols of Nara.

## Nara Park



Established in 1880, Nara Park is a finely wooded area and the location of many of Nara's main attractions. Deer roam freely through the park, and are seen as messengers of the gods in Shinto religion. The deer can be fed with special biscuits called *shika senbei* which are available at the park.

## Horyuji



Horyuji is the world's oldest existing wooden structure, with Kondo, the temple's main building, said to have been completed in 607. Various examples of Japanese Buddhist art are on display here and the temple's five-storey pagoda is a wonderful example of Japanese architecture.

## Kasuga Taisha



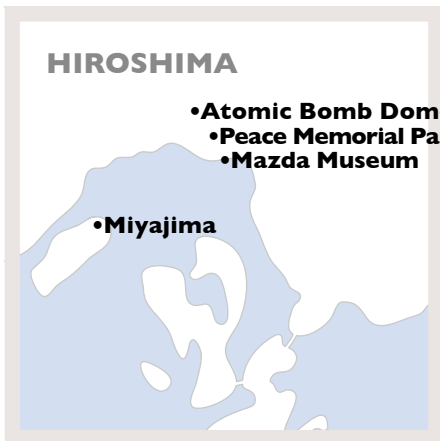
©Nara Prefecture

This shrine is considered one of the three great Shinto shrines of Japan. The vermilion colour of the shrine creates a striking contrast to the surrounding verdant groves and the 3,000 stone and bronze lanterns donated from the 11th century.



# Hiroshima

Miyajima



A short bullet train ride from Osaka (around 90 minutes) will bring you to the city of Hiroshima. Hiroshima is known as the first city devastated by an atomic bomb during World War II. Today, Hiroshima is a city of peace, where citizens continue to advocate the importance of peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons by conveying their experiences through monuments and museums. Off the coast of Hiroshima is the small island of Miyajima, home to the symbolic grand red *torii* standing in the sea. The red *torii* of Itsukushima Shrine floating in the sea, is famous as one of Japan's three most beautiful views.

## Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima



©Shingo Nagami

A short walk through a lively shopping street selling souvenirs and local delicacies, will take you to Itsukushima Shrine. With its beautiful architecture and grand *torii*, Itsukushima Shrine has been an icon of Miyajima since 593. The shrine was inscribed as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1996.

## Peace Memorial Park and Museum



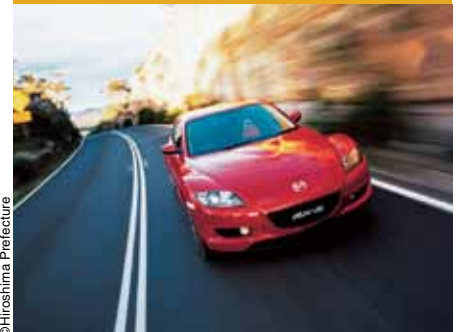
The Peace Memorial Museum is a moving and inspiring journey through the experiences of Hiroshima's people after the bombing in 1945. The gardens surrounding the museum are dotted with statues and monuments and the tranquil green landscape provides visitors with a chance to reflect upon the past events.

## Atomic Bomb Dome



The Atomic Bomb Dome was the only building left standing after the explosion and has become a symbol of world peace. It was registered as a World Heritage in 1996 and serves to remind us all of the tragedy that occurred and the importance of peace.

## Mazda Museum



©Hiroshima Prefecture

Hiroshima is the hometown of well known car maker, Mazda. The Mazda Museum exhibits the history, techniques and process of its car manufacturing, and shows a real car assembly line. Reservation required.



AsahiYama Zoo©Hokkaido Tourism Organization

# Hokkaido



Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido, is blessed with a beautiful natural environment and abundance of seafood and farm fresh produce. The island was inhabited by indigenous people, Ainu, before people from the mainland settled there around the 18th century. With its mountains and lakes, Hokkaido is an all season outdoor adventure paradise. Its light, dry powder snow attracts skiers and boarders in winter. The natural hot springs dotted all over the island are great for relieving fatigue.

## Sapporo



©Y. Shimizu

Sapporo boasts a myriad of tourist attractions including fish and produce markets, and a host of historical buildings from the pioneering days. Located in the surrounding areas are Moerenuma Park, designed by Isamu Noguchi, and Jozankei Onsen, a hot spring town.

**Access by air: From Tokyo: 1 hour 30 minutes from Haneda Airport to Sapporo's Shin-Chitose Airport. From Osaka: 1 hour 50 minutes either from Itami Airport or Kansai International Airport to Sapporo's Shin-Chitose Airport.**

## Otaru



©Otaru City

Otaru has developed as a major port town in Hokkaido. The beautiful Otaru Canal lined with restored warehouses housing glasswork shops, galleries and restaurants, creates a nostalgic atmosphere of days gone by. The city is also famous for its good sushi and sweets.

## SKI



Japan's snowfields offer a diversity of runs, great snow conditions, breathtaking scenery, and hot springs for a relaxing soak after a day on the slopes. Ski lessons in English are also available. Check out Hokkaido's major snow resorts of Niseko, Rusutsu, Furano and Tomamu.

## The Ainu culture



©Hokkaido Tourism Organization

The Ainu are indigenous people who have long lived in Hokkaido. Their culture and lifestyle is believed to have been established around the 13th to 14th century and today there live fewer Ainu. There are museums and centres dedicated to Ainu which aim to preserve and hand down their unique culture.



# Nagano

Kamikochi©Nagano Prefecture



Nagano is located in central Japan and became well known internationally as the host of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics. In winter the snowfields attract skiers, boarders and other winter sports enthusiasts. In summer it becomes a flower paradise with blooming alpine plants and is a popular destination for hiking and outdoor activities. The area also has a rich history with old temples and castle towns. In Nagano, students can experience farmstays and exchange with the locals also.

## Zenkoji, Nagano



As the home of well known temple, Zenkoji, Nagano city has attracted many visitors. Originally founded in the 7th century, Zenkoji is designated a national treasure for its wooden structure and cultural importance. Cultural activities like Zen meditation and tea ceremony are available at the temple.

## SKI/ Snow Monkey



©Nagano Prefecture

Another good destination to ski in Japan is Nagano. The area offers myriads of cultural activities to join and day tours to temples, traditional towns, and Jigokudani Yaenkoen where snow monkeys soak in hot springs. The best resorts in the area are Hakuba, Shiga Kogen, Nozawa Onsen, and Myoko.

## Matsumoto



©Nagano Prefecture

Although the central part of Matsumoto has been modernised, the city still retains much of its heritage from old times when the locality prospered as a feudal castle town. Matsumoto Castle's five-storey, six-layer tower is Japan's oldest existing castle tower and is designated a national treasure.

## Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route



The Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route runs through 3,000 metre high alpine mountains. It offers beautiful panoramas in every season. The area receives a great amount of snow and in spring before the snow melts away, you can view a 20 metre high snow wall which you can walk by on a tour.



# School Visits and Homestays

## School Visits

One of the highlights of an educational trip is a school visit. Making a visit to a local school provides students an unforgettable intercultural experience. At local schools, students will go through a welcome reception, cultural activities, and class participation at your request. In Japan, English is the first foreign language to learn and is mandatory at schools. Sports and other club activities are quite common after classes. Joining such classes and club activities, students will have an opportunity to interact with local students of their own age and share their experiences that will be a great asset for students to learn different cultures and customs.



Japanese schools have a different education curriculum and most of them have three semesters: April to July, September to December, and January to March. Japan's distinct four seasons bring natural beauty and offer truly impressive scenery and variety of attractions only available in each season. When visiting a school, however, sometime during the term while the school is open is preferred.

Approach your sister schools or sister cities in Japan. For schools without sister affiliations, JNTO can introduce you to Japanese schools and areas.



## Homestays

The best way to experience Japanese culture and lifestyle is to stay with a local family. There are so many things to experience; local food, festivals, performing arts and traditional crafts, and of course, the local people.



It was common in Japan that three generations with five to six children live together in a big country house. Growing up with a big family teaches children to respect their elders, to live together in a community and to support each other. As time has passed, nuclear families with fewer children have become the norm in cities. In countryside, however, traditional houses and the leisurely, comfortable lifestyle remains.

Spend time with a host family to introduce your own culture, try cooking local cuisine made with locally grown produce and seafood, and learn simple phrases of the language.

Staying at farm villages will also be a good lesson in understanding the system of food supply, natural environment preservation, and what really is an affluent life.

In the north of Kyoto you can stay in thatched roof houses and in Nagano you can experience a unique farm village. Sincere hospitality and warm smiles await you there.





# Basic tips



©Y. Shimizu

## Travellers Cheques and Credit Cards

Japan is still very much a cash society so it is handy to carry some yen with you.

Travellers cheques are accepted by leading banks, hotels, *ryokan* and stores in major cities. International credit cards such as American Express, VISA, Diners Club and MasterCard are also accepted at major establishments. However, credit card transactions outside major cities are not always possible.

Foreign credit and cash cards can be used at most Post Office and Seven Bank ATMs throughout Japan.

## Tipping

Individual tipping is not customary in Japan, as a 10-15 percent service charge is usually added to the bill in hotels and restaurants.

## Population

The population of Japan is 127.6 million (as of April 2009). The population density of Japan is 343 persons per km<sup>2</sup> on average: ranging from 97 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in Hokkaido to 5,833 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in Tokyo (as of 2007).

## Education

Schooling is compulsory until the third year of Junior High School (15 years

of age), but 97.8 percent of students go on to complete Senior High School. Also, 52.8 percent of Senior High School students continue their study at university.

## Religion

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan, but Buddhism, introduced to Japan in the 6th Century, is also a mainstream religion. In fact, many Japanese see themselves as both Shintoist and Buddhist, and rituals from both religions are part of modern society.

## Passport and Visa

You must have a valid passport when visiting Japan. Australia and New Zealand passport holders do not need a visa when staying in Japan for 90 days or less for sightseeing purposes.

## Vaccination

There are no requirements for foreign travellers from any country regarding certificates of vaccination.

## Climate

The climate of Japan is generally mild, but as the country stretches 3,000km north to south, there is some variation according to region. The extreme north

is subarctic and the extreme south is subtropical. The period of highest precipitation in most areas is during the rainy season, roughly from mid-June to mid-July.

## Electricity

The electric current for home use is 100 volts AC, but there are two cycles in use: 50 hertz in eastern Japan, and 60 hertz in western Japan. Outlets accept square two-prong plugs.

## Drinking Water

Tap water is safe to drink anywhere in Japan.

## Peak Travel Season

The peak travel seasons in Japan are: New Year period – December 29 to January 3

Golden Week – April 29 to May 5 and adjacent weekends

Bon Festival season – a week centring on August 15

## Currency

The unit of currency in Japan is the yen (indicated as ¥). Coins are ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100 and ¥500. Bank note denominations are ¥1,000, ¥2,000, ¥5,000 and ¥10,000.



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# Experience Japan

日本 beyond the classroom



- Major Cities
- Shinkansen (JR)
- Japan Railways (JR)
- ✈ Major International Airports
- ✈ Other International Airports