

BIG FIVE®

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Japan



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Kyoto, Japan Elevation: 135 feet Latitude: 35 01N Longitude: 135 43E

Average High Temperature Years on Record: 109

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	66	46	48	53	66	73	80	87	89	82	71	60	51

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 109

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	48	30	32	33	44	51	60	69	71	64	51	41	32

Tokyo, Japan Elevation: 26 feet Latitude: 35 33N Longitude: 139 47E

Average High Temperature Years on Record: 21

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	66	48	49	54	64	72	76	82	86	79	69	61	53

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 21

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	54	35	36	41	50	58	66	71	75	69	58	49	40

WEATHER

Except for the Hokkaido area and the subtropical Okinawa region, the weather is mostly temperate, with four seasons. Winters are cool and sunny in the south, cold and sunny around Tokyo (which occasionally has snow), and very cold around Hokkaido, which is covered in snow for up to four months a year. Summer, between June and September, ranges from warm to very hot, while spring and autumn are generally mild throughout the country. Rain falls throughout the year but June and early July is the main rainy season. Hokkaido, however, is much drier than the Tokyo area. Rainfall is intermittent with sunshine. Typhoons are only likely to occur in September or October but rarely last more than a day.

TIME ZONES

Japan is GMT + 9. Japan does not participate in Daylight Savings Time.

PASSPORT / VISA REQUIREMENTS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

Visas: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

Note: Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the

event your passport or other documents are lost or stolen. Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, escort you to your hotel, and assist with check-in. DEPARTURE TAX: None as of this writing.

CUSTOMS INTO JAPAN

The following goods may be imported into Japan by those over age 19 without incurring customs duty:

- 400 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 500g of tobacco or 500g of a combination of these.
- 3 bottles (approximately 0.76l each) of spirits.
- 56ml of perfume.
- Gifts up to the value of ¥200,000.

Prohibited Imports: Counterfeit, altered or imitated coins, paper money, banknotes or securities; all plants with soil; most meats and fruits (prohibited meats include eggs, bones, horns etc of cows, goats, sheep, bees, chickens, dogs, ducks, geese, horses, rabbits and turkeys); animals without health certificates; firearms and ammunition; narcotics; obscene articles and publications (including films).

US CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Anyone traveling internationally should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Also, discuss your

general fitness level for participating in the activities related to your specific tour (i.e. snorkeling, hiking, nature walks, etc.). Currently there are no vaccinations required to enter Japan, except as noted below.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

Other Risks: Tuberculosis and hepatitis B occur; vaccination is sometimes advised. Typhus occurs in some river valleys. Japanese encephalitis may occur.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Lightweight cottons and linens are required throughout summer in most areas. Light to medium weight clothing is best during spring and autumn; medium to heavyweight items for winter months, according to region. Much warmer clothes will be needed in the mountains all year round. There is much less rainfall than in Western Europe.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary with destination and type of planes used. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final itinerary.

MONEY

Currency: Japanese Yen (¥). Notes are in denominations of ¥10,000, 5000, 2000, and 1000. Coins are in denominations of ¥500, 100, 50, 10, 5, ¥and 1.

Currency Exchange: All money must be exchanged at an authorized bank or money changer.

Credit & Debit Cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa, and other major credit cards are widely used. Check with your credit or debit card company for merchant acceptance. ATMs are widely available although many do not accept foreign credits or debit cards. *They only operate during normal banking hours and weekend services can be restricted to Saturday morning.* A wide selection of foreign credit and debit cards are accepted, however, at over 21,000 post offices ATMs, which are generally open Mon-Fri 0700-2300, Sat-Sun 0900-1900. Citibank machines also accept foreign credit cards and are often open 24 hours.

Travelers Checks: These can be exchanged at most major banks, larger hotels and some duty-free shops. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers check in Japanese Yen or US dollars.

Currency Restrictions: The import and export of local and foreign currency is unrestricted, subject to declaration of amounts equivalent to ¥1,000,000 or above.

NOTE: Japan has a strong cash culture, and because of the low crime rate it is usual to see people carrying large amounts of cash with them. It is only recently that credit cards have begun to become more popular. Still you will want to exercise common sense when carrying cash.

LANGUAGE

Japanese is the official language. Some English is spoken in major cities.

Internet: There are many internet cafes in Tokyo and in the main cities in Japan.

Phone calls: When dialing from the U.S. to Japan, you must dial 011, then 81 (Japan's code), then the city code (listed below) then the telephone number. Tokyo-3, Yokohama-45, Osaka-6, Kyoto-75.

Mobile telephone: The Japanese mobile network uses PDC (Personal Digital Cellular System) technology, which is not compatible with GSM or other mobile services. Visitors to Tokyo can hire handsets. Handsets can also be hired from a number of other companies in Japan.

ELECTRICITY

In eastern Japan, the voltage is 110V, 50 cycles/Hz. In western Japan, including Nagoya, Kyoto, and Osaka, it is 60 cycles/Hz. Most hotels offer a converter in the bathroom and some even have outlets to accommodate foreign appliances.

FOOD & DRINK

Food and drink are generally considered safe but there is risk of parasitic infection and toxins from raw seafood. Japanese cuisine is popular in the West. If you want sushi, place to try it is a Kaiten Sushi Bar, where many varieties pass the customer on a conveyor belt allowing complete choice over which to try, at more reasonable prices than a traditional sushi bar. Fine Oriental food (Korean, very hot, and Chinese) is served in restaurants. An amazing number and variety of international restaurants are also available, catering for every possible taste and budget, from French and Italian to Chinese, Indian and Thai. Western dishes in expensive places are good, but cheaper restaurants may be disappointing.

National specialties:

- *Teriyaki* (marinated beef/chicken/fish seared on

a hot plate).

- *Sukiyaki* (thin slices of beef, tofu and vegetables cooked in soy sauce and then dipped in egg).
- *Tempura* (deep fried seafood and vegetables).
- *Sushi* (slices of raw seafood placed on light and vinegary rice balls – very tasty and refreshing).
- *Sashimi* (slices of raw seafood dipped in soy sauce).

Please note: Restaurants have table service and in some places it is customary to remove footwear. Waiter service is common in bars. There are no licensing hours. Drinking is subject to long-standing rituals of politeness. The hostess will pour a drink for the visitor, and will insist on the visitor's glass being full. It is also appreciated if the visitor pours drinks for the host, but it is bad manners for a visitor to pour one for himself.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:

<http://www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide>

SHOPPING

A blend of Oriental goods and Western sales techniques confronts the shopper, particularly at the big department stores, which are more like exhibitions than shops. Playgrounds for children are available. Special purchases include kimonos, mingei (local crafts including kites and folk toys); Kyoto silks, fans, screens, dolls; religious articles such as Shinto and Buddhist artifacts; paper lanterns; lacquer ware; hi-fi equipment, cameras, televisions and other electronic equipment. Bargaining is not usual. Tax exemptions are available in authorized tax-free stores. Certain items costing more than ¥10,000 are exempt from tax.

Shopping hours: 1000-1900/2000 every day of the week and on public holidays

OVERVIEW

Japan is separated from the Asian mainland by 160km (100 miles) of sea. About 70 per cent of the country is covered by hills and mountains, a number of which are active or dormant volcanoes. A series of mountain ranges runs from northern Hokkaido to southern Kyushu. The Japanese Alps (the most prominent range) run in a north-south direction through central Honshu. The highest mountain is Mount Fuji at 3776m (12,388ft). Lowlands and plains are small and scattered, mostly lying along the coast and composed of alluvial lowlands and diluvial uplands. The coastline is very long in relation to the land area, and has very varied features. The deeply indented bays with good natural harbors tend to be adjacent to mountainous terrain.

Religion: Shintoism and Buddhism are Japan's two principle religions. Shintoism is founded on myths and legends emanating from worship of natural phenomena. Since it was unconcerned with problems of afterlife which dominate Buddhist thought, and since Buddhism easily accommodated itself to local faiths, the two comfortably coexisted. Today many Japanese are adherent of both faiths.

HISTORY

It is legend that Japan was founded in 600 BC by Emperor Jimmu, descendant of the sun goddess and ancestor of the present ruling family. About AD 405, the Japanese court adopted the Chinese writing system officially. During the 6th century, Buddhism was introduced. These two events revolutionized Japan's culture and marked the beginning of Chinese cultural influence. From the establishment of the first fixed capital at Nara in 710 until 1867, the emperors of the Yamato dynasty were the nominal rulers, but actual power was usually held by powerful court nobles, regents, or "shoguns" (military governors).

The first contact with the West occurred about 1542, when a Portuguese ship, off its course to China, landed in Japan. During the next century, traders from Portugal, the Netherlands, England, and Spain arrived, as did Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan missionaries. During the early part of the 17th century, Japan's shogunate suspected that

the traders and missionaries were actually forerunners of military conquest by European powers. This caused shogunate to place foreigners under progressively tighter restrictions. Ultimately, Japan forced all foreigners to leave and barred all relations with the outside world except for severely restricted commercial contacts with Dutch and Chinese merchants at Nagasaki. This isolation lasted for 200 years, until Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy forced the opening of Japan to the West with the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854.

Within several years, renewed contact with the West profoundly altered Japanese society. The shogunate was forced to resign, and the emperor was restored to power. The "Meiji restoration" of 1868 initiated many reforms. The feudal system was abolished, and numerous Western institutions were adopted, including a Western legal system and constitutional government. In 1898, the last of the "unequal treaties" with Western powers was removed, signaling Japan's new status among the nations of the world. In a few decades, by creating modern social, educational, economic, military, and industrial systems, the Emperor Meiji's "controlled revolution" had transformed a feudal and isolated state into a world power.

Japanese leaders of the late 19th century regarded the Korean Peninsula as a "dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." It was over Korea that Japan became involved in war with the Chinese Empire in 1894-95 and with Russia in 1904-05. The war with China established Japan's dominant interest in Korea, while giving it the Pescadores Islands and Formosa (now Taiwan). After Japan defeated Russia in 1905, the resulting Treaty of Portsmouth awarded Japan certain rights in Manchuria and in southern Sakhalin, which Russia had received in 1875 in exchange for the Kurile Islands. Both wars gave Japan a free hand in Korea, which it formally annexed in 1910.

World War I permitted Japan to expand its influence in Asia and its territorial holdings in the Pacific. The postwar era brought Japan unprecedented prosperity. Japan went to the peace conference at Versailles in 1919 as one of the great military and industrial powers of the world and received official recognition as the new international order. It joined the League of Nations and received a mandate over Pacific islands north of the Equator formerly held by

Germany.

During the 1920s, Japan progressed toward a democratic system of government. However, parliamentary government was not rooted deeply enough to withstand the economic and political pressures of the 1930s, during which military leaders became increasingly influential.

Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1933, Japan resigned from the League of Nations. The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 followed Japan's signing of the "anti-Comintern pact" with Nazi Germany the previous year and was part of a chain of developments culminating in the Japanese attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941.

After almost 4 years of war, resulting in the loss of 3 million Japanese lives and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered on the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Harbor on September 2, 1945. As a result of World War II, Japan lost all of its overseas possessions and retained only the home islands. Manchukuo was dissolved, and Manchuria was

returned to China; Japan renounced all claims to Formosa; Korea was granted independence; southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles were occupied by the U.S.S.R.; and the United States became the sole administering authority of Ryukyu, Bonin, and Volcano Islands. The 1972 reversion of Okinawa completed the United States' return of control of these islands to Japan.

After the war, Japan was placed under international control of the Allies through the Supreme Commander, Gen. Douglas MacArthur. U.S. objectives were to ensure that Japan would become a peaceful nation with a democratic self-government supported by the freely expressed will of the people. Political, economic, and social reforms were introduced, such as a freely elected Japanese Diet (legislature) and universal adult suffrage. The country's constitution took effect on May 3, 1947. The United States and 45 other Allied nations signed the Treaty of Peace with Japan in September 1951. The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty in March 1952, and under the terms of it, Japan regained full sovereignty on April 28, 1952.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides are produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Barnes and Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com, and Longitude Books, www.longitudebooks.com, have collections of books, searchable by country.

A HISTORY OF JAPAN

R.H.P. Mason, J.G. Caiger

In this newly revised edition of their classic work, Mason and Caiger trace the enthralling evolution of modern Japan from its early pre-history through the post-Cold War period to the collapse of the Bubble Economy in the early 1990s. New findings shed additional light on the origins of Japanese civilization and the birth of Japanese culture. Not merely a chronology of wars, imperial successions, and treaties, *A History of Japan* provides an in-depth analysis of the religion, culture, and arts of the Japanese people from the 6th century B.C. to the present. This updated contemporary classic continues to be an essential text in Japanese studies.

JAPAN: A MODERN HISTORY

James L. McClain

This provides a comprehensive narrative that integrates the political, social, cultural, and economic history of modern Japan from the investiture of Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1603 to the present. *Japan: A Modern History* integrates the everyday experiences of farmers, artisans, families, soldiers, and laborers into the general narrative. Throughout, the point of view is that of the makers of their own history. Professor McClain provides in-depth coverage of the early modern period and the subsequent emergence of new dimensions in all areas of Japanese life. Numerous maps, illustrations, chronologies, and a helpful glossary reinforce central themes and events.

LEARNING TO BOW: INSIDE THE HEART OF JAPAN

Bruce Feiler

Learning to Bow has been heralded as one of the most insightful books about the clash of American and Japanese cultures. Bruce Feiler recounts the year he spent teaching inside Japan's renowned school system: watching boys and girls learn gender roles, experiencing the impact of strict schools rules, understanding the roots of Japan's business success.

MAKING OF MODERN JAPAN

Marius B. Jansen

Magisterial in vision, sweeping in scope, this monumental work presents a seamless account of Japanese society during the modern era, from 1600 to the present. A distillation of more than fifty years' engagement with Japan and its history, it is the crowning work of our leading interpreter of the modern Japanese experience.

FOR YOUNG READERS

THE BIG WAVE

Pearl S. Buck

Age Range 8 to 12 – Kino lives on a farm on the side of a mountain in Japan. His friend, Jiya, lives in a fishing village below. Everyone, including Kino and Jiya, has heard of the big wave. No one suspects it will wipe out the whole village and Jiya's family, too. As Jiya struggles to overcome his sorrow, he understands it is in the presence of danger that one learns to be brave, and to appreciate how wonderful life can be.

COLORS OF JAPAN

Holly Littlefield, Helen Byers (Illustrator)

Japan's land, history, and culture are explored using colors. For example, red in the Japanese flag represents the sun and evokes the facts that Japan is sometimes known as the Land of the Rising Sun and traces its first emperor to the sun goddess. Each color's significance in Japanese life is explored. The Japanese letters for each color are printed on each page that describes the color. Beautiful watercolor illustrations enhance the information presented. The introduction includes a map of Japan as well as a world map showing Japan in relation to the rest of the world.

I LIVE IN TOKYO

Mari Takabayashi (author & illustrator)

Have you ever been to Tokyo, Japan? Far away, in the Pacific Ocean, Tokyo is a busy city of color, activity, celebrations, super gigantic buildings, and much, much more. In this city lives a seven-year-old girl names Mimiko. Here you can follow a year's worth of fun, food, and festivities in Mimiko's life, month by month. You'll learn about the Doll's Festival, riding the bullet train, the right way to put on a kimono, and Mimiko's top ten favorite meals—just try not to eat the pages displaying the delicious wagashi! Mari Takabayashi evokes the flurry and enchantment of daily life in Tokyo with exquisitely detailed illustrations and descriptions.