

TRAVEL GUIDE

TELAMON TRAVEL

Japan

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2026
EDITION





Welcome to Japan

Where tradition, craftsmanship, and modern life exist in quiet balance.

Japan is shaped by intention — in its rituals, landscapes, and the way daily life unfolds. Ancient temples and contemporary architecture coexist seamlessly. Seasonal cuisine, thoughtful design, and a deep respect for nature define the rhythm of travel throughout the country.

From historic streets and mountain onsen to vibrant cities and contemplative gardens, Japan invites travelers to slow down and move with awareness. Luxury here is subtle and deeply considered, found not in excess, but in precision, presence, and care.

This guide is your curated introduction to Japan, offering clarity, context, and inspiration as you begin shaping a journey that feels both immersive and deeply personal.



AT A GLANCE

Capital: Tokyo

Language: Japanese (English spoken in major cities and hotels)

Currency: Japanese Yen (JPY)

Time Zones: Japan Standard Time (UTC+9)

Visa Requirements: U.S. travelers may stay up to 90 days visa-free

Population: Approx. 125 million

Safety Index: Consistently ranked among the world's safest destinations

When to Visit Japan

HIGH SEASON | MARCH-APRIL & OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

Ideal for: Cherry blossoms, autumn foliage, cultural highlights

Spring and fall are Japan's most celebrated seasons, defined by gentle weather and dramatic seasonal change. Cherry blossoms in spring and vivid foliage in autumn transform cities, temples, and countryside alike, making this a visually striking time to travel.

SHOULDER SEASON | MAY & SEPTEMBER

Ideal for: Mild weather, fewer crowds, regional exploration

These months offer a more relaxed travel rhythm with pleasant conditions and increased flexibility. It's an ideal time for travelers who want access to major sites without peak-season congestion.

LOW SEASON | DECEMBER - FEBRUARY & JUNE

Ideal for: Onsen retreats, winter scenery, local immersion

Winter reveals a quieter, more contemplative side of Japan, especially in hot spring regions. June's rainy season brings lush landscapes and a slower pace, rewarding travelers with a more local feel.



Top 5 Experiences in Japan

01. EXPERIENCE THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS

Seasonal blooms transform parks, temples, and riverbanks into fleeting landscapes, celebrated through festivals and centuries-old traditions.

02. STAY IN A TRADITIONAL RYOKAN

Tatami rooms, sliding screens, and kaiseki meals offer an intimate introduction to Japanese hospitality and ritual.

03. EXPLORE ANCIENT KYOTO

Temples, shrines, and preserved streets reveal the spiritual and cultural foundations of the country.

04. INDULGE IN JAPANESE CUISINE

Dining ranges from refined tasting menus to neighborhood favorites, guided by seasonality, precision, and restraint.

05. SOAK IN A MOUNTAIN ONSEN

Hot spring bathing provides deep restoration, often framed by forests, volcanic landscapes, or snow-dusted peaks.

We'll help curate these experiences seamlessly
— with thoughtful pacing and insider access throughout.

EXPLORE JAPAN





More to Explore

Japan reveals itself through contrast — urban energy and rural calm, ancient customs and contemporary life. These regions offer distinct atmospheres, each contributing to a deeper understanding of place and rhythm.

KYOTO

Japan's cultural heart, defined by temples, gardens, and traditional neighborhoods where seasonality and ritual shape daily life.

TOKYO

A city of remarkable nuance, blending historic districts with cutting-edge design, fashion, and one of the world's most dynamic dining scenes.

HAKONE

A restorative onsen region known for hot springs, lake views, and clear-day glimpses of Mount Fuji, offering a peaceful counterpoint to city travel.

KANAZAWA

Celebrated for preserved samurai districts, refined arts, and one of Japan's most beautiful landscape gardens.

TAKAYAMA

An alpine town with historic streets and strong local traditions, ideal for experiencing rural Japan at a slower pace.

Curated Tip: We design itineraries that balance cities with restorative regional stays, allowing each destination to unfold naturally.



Where to See Historic Japan

Japan's history is woven into daily life, preserved through sacred sites, gardens, and architectural landmarks that continue to shape the present.

FUSHIMI INARI TAISHA | KYOTO

A winding path of vermilion torii gates through forested hillsides, best experienced early in the day.

KIYOMIZU-DERA | KYOTO

A hillside temple with panoramic views and a strong sense of seasonality, especially in spring and autumn.

NARA PARK & TODAI-JI | NARA

Home to ancient temples and Japan's iconic Great Buddha, set among open parkland and centuries of tradition.

KENROKUEN GARDEN | KANAZAWA

One of Japan's most celebrated landscape gardens, designed for beauty in every season.

HIMEJI CASTLE | HYOGO

Japan's most renowned original castle, admired for its elegance, scale, and carefully preserved grounds.

Curated Tip: Private guides and thoughtfully timed visits can transform these sites into more meaningful experiences.

Cultural Etiquette *and Smart Travel Tips*

Japan is welcoming and wonderfully navigable, and traveling with awareness of local customs enhances every interaction. Many traditions are subtle rather than strict, rooted in respect for shared space and consideration for others.

DO

- **Bow slightly when greeting**, especially in hotels and shops. A small bow is a polite acknowledgment and a sign of respect. It's not expected to be formal — a gentle nod is perfectly appropriate for visitors.
- **Be punctual.** Timing is respected and expected. Trains, reservations, and appointments run precisely, and arriving on time is seen as courteous.
- **Speak softly** on public transportation and in shared spaces. Quiet is valued in trains, elevators, and indoor public areas. Conversations are kept low, and phone calls are typically taken elsewhere.
- **Remove shoes when required** (homes, many ryokan, some temples). You'll usually see a clear visual cue or provided slippers. This custom reflects cleanliness and respect for private and sacred spaces.

DON'T

- **Tip for services.** It can be declined and may cause confusion. Service is included and offered with pride.
- **Talk on the phone on trains.** Phone use is common, but calls are avoided on public transport. Texting or silent use is preferred.
- **Eat while walking.** Food is meant to be savored rather than consumed on the move. Eating while walking is generally discouraged outside of festivals.
- **Skip the queue.** Lines are observed carefully, even when unmarked. Following the natural flow shows awareness and respect for shared systems.

Curated Tip: If you're unsure, follow the room. Japan's social rhythm is consistent, and small gestures of respect are always appreciated.



A Taste of Japan

Japan's cuisine reflects seasonality, technique, and a deep reverence for ingredients. Meals are approached with intention, whether enjoyed at a quiet counter seat or within a refined dining room.

Dining favors balance over excess. Precision, simplicity, and timing guide each course, creating experiences that feel thoughtful, immersive, and designed to be savored.

LOCAL STAPLES

- **Sushi and sashimi** prepared with regional fish, reflecting coastal proximity and market traditions
- **Ramen** shaped by local broths, noodles, and techniques that vary meaningfully by region
- **Tempura** fried to a light, delicate crispness, often served simply and seasonally
- **Donburi bowls and yakitori**, widely enjoyed across cities as everyday favorites
- **Regional specialties** that highlight local ingredients and culinary heritage

TRADITIONAL DINING

- **Kaiseki**, a multi-course meal built around seasonal ingredients and careful composition
- Courses designed to reflect nature, balance, and visual harmony
- Most often enjoyed in ryokan and fine dining restaurants, where pacing and presentation are integral to the experience

TEA & SWEETS

- **Matcha and sencha** woven into daily life as well as formal ceremony
- **Wagashi (traditional sweets)** crafted to reflect seasonal change and celebration
- **Kyoto** as the spiritual and cultural heart of tea tradition, where ritual and refinement remain deeply preserved



Wellness in Japan

Wellness in Japan is subtle and deeply ingrained in daily life. Rather than overt indulgence, restoration is found through ritual, environment, and restraint.

From mineral-rich hot springs and forested landscapes to contemplative gardens and time-honored practices, Japan offers a grounding approach to wellbeing that unfolds naturally throughout the journey.

ONSEN & THERMAL BATHING

- **Natural hot springs** fed by volcanic activity, rich in minerals
- **Communal bathing traditions** that emphasize calm, cleansing, and presence
- **Onsen towns** such as **Hakone**, **Kinosaki**, and the **Japanese Alps**, each with distinct character
- **Indoor and outdoor baths** designed to reflect seasonal surroundings

NATURE & RESTORATIVE LANDSCAPES

- **Forest bathing (shinrin-yoku)**, a practice rooted in mindful immersion in nature
- Mountain regions offering fresh air, scenic walking paths, and slower rhythms
- Coastal and rural areas where silence and space encourage nervous system reset

ZEN & MINDFUL MOMENTS

- Temple gardens designed for contemplation and balance
- Tea culture as a ritual of focus and grace

WELLNESS-FOCUSED STAYS

- **Ryokan integrating onsen bathing**, minimalist design, and seasonal cuisine
- Select hotels offering spa experiences inspired by Japanese tradition

Curated Tip: We recommend restorative stays aligned with your comfort level and desired balance of immersion and ease.





Getting Around Japan

Japan's transportation system is one of the most efficient and reliable in the world, making it possible to move seamlessly between cities, regions, and rural areas.

RAIL TRAVEL

- The **Shinkansen (bullet train)** connects major cities quickly and comfortably, with reserved seating and generous luggage allowances on most routes
- Regional and local trains provide excellent coverage, even in smaller towns
- Stations are well marked, punctuality is exceptional, and travel feels calm and orderly

TAXIS & LOCAL TRANSPORT

- Taxis are plentiful in cities and reliable throughout the country
- Drivers are professional, vehicles are spotless, and doors open automatically
- While English may be limited, destinations are easily shown on a phone or hotel card
- Short rides are common and convenient, especially at night or with luggage

PEDESTRIAN-FOCUSED AREAS & RICKSHAWS

- In select historic districts such as Kyoto and Asakusa, traditional rickshaws (often mistaken for pedicabs) offer a slow, scenic way to explore
- These experiences are guided, intimate, and well suited to cultural neighborhoods rather than transit

LUGGAGE FORWARDING (TAKKYUBIN)

- A widely used service that delivers luggage between hotels, often overnight
- Allows you to travel light on trains and enjoy a more relaxed journey

Curated Tip: We design transportation to support the experience, balancing speed with comfort so travel days enhance, rather than interrupt, the journey.



Packing Tips for a Seamless Escape

Packing for Japan is about comfort, versatility, and consideration for setting. Days often involve significant walking, transitions between environments, and moments where footwear and layers matter more than expected.

ESSENTIAL WARDROBE

- Comfortable walking shoes suitable for long days on pavement
- Lightweight layers to accommodate shifting temperatures and air-conditioned interiors
- Modest attire for temples and traditional settings
- Slip-on footwear for ease when shoes are removed

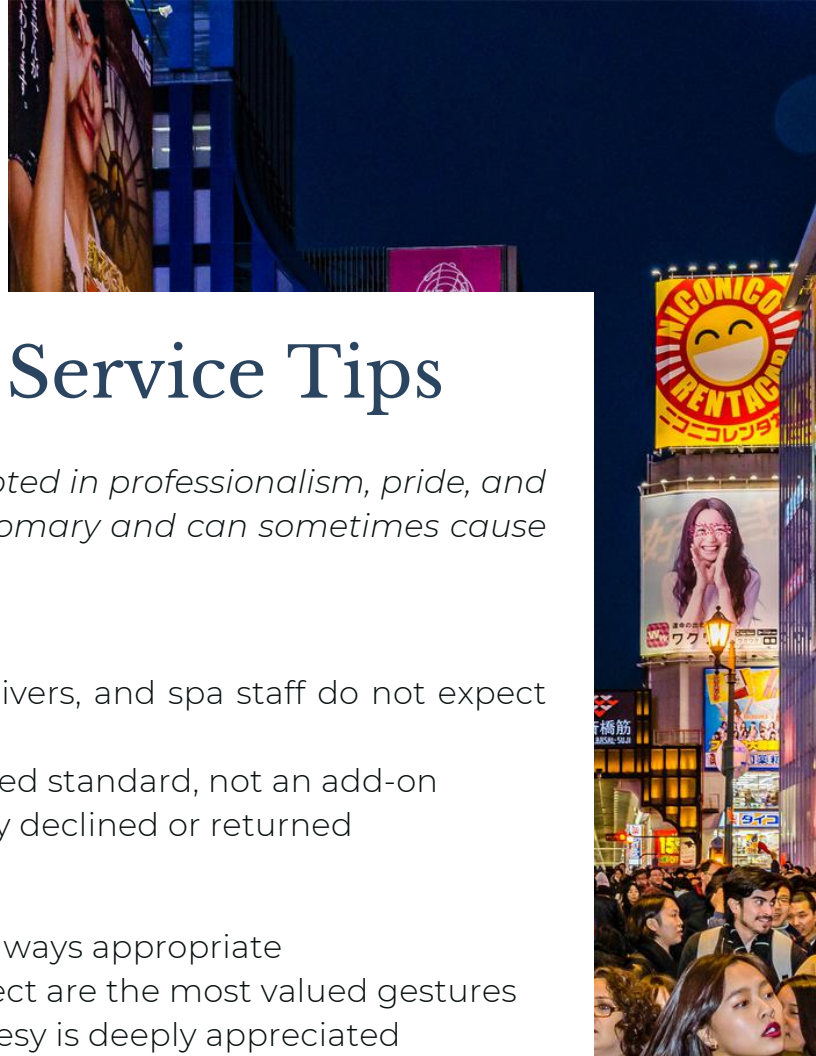
PRACTICAL MUST-HAVES

- A compact day bag or crossbody
- Portable charger for navigation and translation apps
- Socks that are easy to remove and presentable
- A light rain layer, especially in spring or early summer

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Neutral, understated clothing blends in best in urban areas
- Avoid overly revealing or athletic attire outside of gyms or resorts
- Tattoos may need to be covered in some onsen or traditional spaces

Curated Tip: Some ADHD medications, cold remedies, and stimulants commonly used in the U.S. are restricted or prohibited. We can guide you on what you should or shouldn't pack.



Gratuities & Service Tips

Japan's approach to service is rooted in professionalism, pride, and attentiveness. Tipping is not customary and can sometimes cause confusion or discomfort if offered.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Restaurants, hotels, guides, drivers, and spa staff do not expect tips
- Exceptional service is considered standard, not an add-on
- Attempts to tip may be politely declined or returned

HOW TO SHOW APPRECIATION

- A sincere verbal thank you is always appropriate
- Politeness, patience, and respect are the most valued gestures
- Returning courtesy with courtesy is deeply appreciated

WHEN EXCEPTIONS MAY APPLY

- Some private guides catering specifically to international travelers may accept gratuities, though they are never expected
- In these cases, we'll advise you clearly and appropriately in advance

SERVICE CHARGES & DINING NOTES

- Some restaurants include a small seating or appetizer charge (otoshi), particularly in izakaya-style dining
- In ryokan and traditional inns, service is included in the nightly rate and tipping is neither expected nor appropriate

Curated Tip: If a charge appears unfamiliar, it is almost always customary. We're happy to clarify anything in advance so you can dine with confidence.



Travel Safety Overview

Japan is widely regarded as one of the safest destinations in the world, with excellent infrastructure, low crime rates, and a strong culture of respect and order. Travelers consistently report feeling comfortable navigating both cities and rural regions.

GENERAL SAFETY

- Violent crime is rare
- Public spaces, transit systems, and streets are well monitored and orderly
- Solo travelers, couples, and families all travel comfortably here

COMMON-SENSE AWARENESS

- Keep an eye on belongings in busy stations and tourist areas
- Follow local signage and instructions, especially in transit hubs
- Observe posted rules in public spaces

NATURAL ALERT SYSTEMS & PREPAREDNESS

- Japan has advanced emergency alert systems that send notifications directly to mobile phones
- Hotels and public venues provide clear, calm guidance during weather events or seismic activity
- Infrastructure and public response systems are designed for safety and efficiency, minimizing disruption

HEALTH & ASSISTANCE

- Healthcare is excellent, particularly in cities
- Pharmacies are widely available and well stocked
- **Emergency numbers:** 110 (police) | 119 (fire/ambulance)

Curated Tip: We work exclusively with trusted hotels, transportation providers, and local partners, so support is always close at hand.





Your Escape Awaits

Japan offers a refined kind of luxury — shaped by balance, intention, and care.

From historic cities and seasonal cuisine to restorative landscapes and quiet rituals, Japan invites you to travel with presence. We're here to design a journey that feels seamless, thoughtful, and distinctly yours.

Laura + Ann



Let's curate your dream
Japanese escape.

Laura Adams
Certified Travel Advisor

Ann Mayers
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