

What's Inside?



The Basics



Let's Talk About Culture



Settling in Tips



Let's Have Fun



Need Help?



About Japan

Japan is an island nation located in East Asia. It lies off the eastern coast of the Asian continent. The name of Japan means "sun-origin" in Kanji, and it is therefore often called the "Land of the Rising Sun." Japan consists of more than 6000 islands, and the four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku, which occupy about 97% of Japan's land area. Japan is divided into 47 prefectures with a population of around 127 million in total. The whole country lies between latitudes 24° and 46°N, and longitudes 122° and 146°E. Japan has the sixth longest coastline in the world. Since a large area of Japan is forested and not suitable for habitation, most of the Japanese live in coastal regions where the population densities are very high.

The climate of Japan is temperate in general but varies significantly from north to south. The northernmost zone, Hokkaido, has a humid continental climate with long, cold winters and very warm to cool summers, while the southernmost zone, Ryukyu Islands, has a subtropical climate, with warm winters and hot summers. The average Winter temperature is around 5°C, and the average temperature in Summer is about 25°C. The main rainy season begins in early May in Okinawa, and the rain front gradually moves north until reaching Hokkaido in late July.

Japan has full religious freedom. Among all the religions, Shinto is the largest religion in Japan, although only a small amount of people identify themselves as Shintoists. Other majority religions are Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.



Japan's Facts & Figures

Land Area : 145,936 sq. kilometer

Number of Prefectures : 47

Population : 126,700,000

Time Zone : GMT + 9 hours

Currency : Japanese Yen

Religion : Shintoism, Buddhism and Christianity

Language : Japanese

National Flag : Nisshoki (also known as Hinomaru)

National Anthem : Kimi ga Yo

Weather : The weather in Japan is generally temperate, with

four distinct seasons. Even in Winter, the temperatures seldom drop below 0°C. It is hot and humid in Summer and temperatures are often in the high 30's.



Local Culture

Japanese culture is very rich and ancient and changing actually. Japan has many antique areas beside modern areas, and this is very attractive and provoke a significant interest to foreigners visitors. There is always this sense of contradiction between the old and the new, the past and the futuristic new view, strong traditions and new young attitudes.

More than 1,000 years ago Buddhist art forms came from China and Korea and a lot of the religious and cultural are imported as well as traditions like Zen, the tea ceremony and art of bonsai were brought from China. The two main religions in Japan are: Shintoism and Buddhism.

Japan offers a large overview of Japanese culture through museums, arts and fine art and lots of shrines and temples. Japan also offers traditional performing arts of No and Kabuki theatre and Bunraku plays beside Modern concerts by symphony orchestras, opera, international concert, ballet and touring theatre companies. Japanese Popular manga is the Contemporary forms of popular culture and is becoming very popular around the world. Japanese video games provide not only entertainment but an escape for Japanese from the problems of modern life.

The Japanese language: Writing is a combination of three scripts: hiragana, derived from the Chinese cursive script, katakana, derived from Chinese characters, and kanji, imported from China. The Latin alphabet, rōmaji, is also often used in modern Japanese, especially for company names.

The National Flower is the cherry blossom which is celebrated yearly in early spring and the Ume or Plum. Japanese people love to have Hanami or to admire cherry and Plum blossoms blooms!

Many popular traditions are still celebrated. As example Japanese people love to celebrate the new year with many traditional customs:

Mochi-Tsuki or the pounding of steaming hot rice to make rice cakes for new year celebrations!

Kagami-mochi decoration is a new year cake made by-stacking two round rice cakes of different size and decorated with new year. Daidai is also put on the top because it is believed to bring the family a prosperous future for generations.

Kagami- biraki celebrated on 11th of January is a unique annual custom to wish for peace and strength from the new year deity.

Cultural Do's & Don'ts

Do's

Bow politely when you meet someone, thank them, or say goodbye.

Prepare gift when returning from a trip or moving into a new home. These are among the many reasons for Japanese to exchange gifts.

It is important and formal practice to exchange of business or name cards in Japan. You should use two hands when giving and receiving cards. This practice also goes for giving and receiving gifts.

Remove footwear when entering a private home, traditional accommodation (minshuku or ryokan), and temple halls.

Before entering the shrine, use the ladles provided to pour water over your hands to rinse them, and pour water into your hand to use to rinse your mouth.

Don'ts

Do not leave chopsticks standing upright in a bowl of rice, or use them to pass food directly to another person's chopsticks.

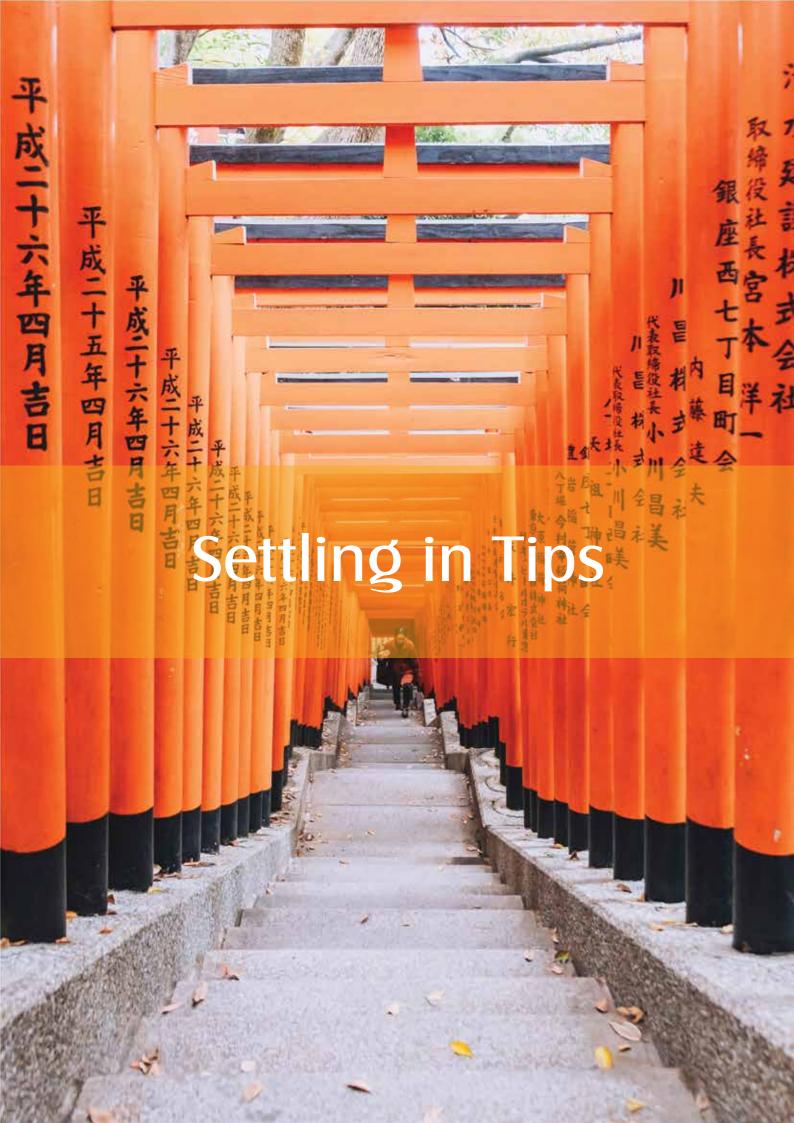
Do not blow your nose at the table – do it in the restroom.

Do not pour your own drink. When pouring glasses from a shared bottle of wine or sake, you should pour drinks for others in your party, and allow someone else to pour yours for you.

Do no speak on your mobile phone while on trains and buses as it is considered as improper behaviour.

Do not forget to put slippers on after taking off your shoes. You can find slippers at the entrance.

Do not open taxi doors as drivers open them with an automatic button.



Getting Around

Bus Services

The bus network is sophisticated in Japan. You can simply go most of the places by bus within a city, yet, the stops are often announced in Japanese, even in the touristed areas like Tokyo and Kyoto.

In Tokyo, you should pay the driver up front. You can pay by scanning sn IC card or depositing coins in the fare box. However, it is the opposite in Kyoto. Passengers there pay before getting off the bus.

Buses that head out of cities or traverse rural areas calculate fares based on distance. When you board, you will pick up a paper ticket marked with a zone number from the dispenser; when you get off, you will have to match your zone number to the electric signboard in the front of the bus and put the posted fare and ticket into the fare box.

All buses have change machines near the front door that can exchange \\$100 and \\$500 coins and \\$1000 notes.

Taxi Services

You can easily find a taxi in big cities like Tokyo and Kyoto. A red light means the taxi is available and a green light means it's taken. When you get in a taxi, you don't need to open the door by yourself. The driver opens and closes the doors remotely for you. Although most of the drivers rarely speak English, they have navigation systems. It will be more convenient to have your destination written down in Japanese beforehand, or better yet, a business card with an address. Fares are fairly uniform throughout the country and all taxis run by the meter. Flagfall is around ¥600 to ¥710 for the first 2km, after which it's around ¥100 for each 350m. There's also a time charge if the speed drops below 10km/h and a 20% surcharge between 10 pm and 5 am.

Train & Subway

Subway systems operate in big cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, etc. They are usually the fastest and most convenient way to get around the city. The Tokyo metro area and Kansai metro area are further linked by a network of JR and private rail lines. Stops and line names are posted in English.

Personal car

Owning a car in Japan is not that simple. Buying a car involves a lot of paperwork and complicated procedures, but in most cases, you can have your car dealer to do them for you. To own a car, you must first find a parking space and get a sealed certificate or a signature certificate from their embassy. You also have to purchase automobile liability insurance when you buy a car. It covers compensation for damages of expected profit lost due to the injury or death of third parties. Besides, various taxes are imposed when you own a car. When you want to get a new car or want to sell your car before you leave Japan, you can go back to the car dealer where you bought your car.

Car Lease

Leasing a car is also an option for you if you think owning a car is complicated. You don't need to pat a large amount of payment beforehand but pay it monthly. Maintenance fee and insurance are included, so the only cost to the driver is gas. However, Japanese lease companies require a minimum lease term of 3 years in general. If you breach a contract, you will have to pay the cancellation fee. Therefore, you have to be careful of the terms before signing the contract.

Food

Tipping

Tipping is not common in Japan. Leaving cash on the table at a restaurant will often result in a waiter chasing you down the street to give it back.

Local Food

The staple food in Japan is rice, which has been cultivated across the country for over 2000 years. The typical Japanese meal must consist of a bowl of rice. Besides a simply cooked rice, Japanese have different kinds of rice dish. Rice cake, which is also called Mochi, is traditionally made from steamed and pounded glutinous rice and eaten on New Year. Another well-known example would be sushi. The sushi rice is cooked rice flavored with vinegar, and raw fish is placed on the top of it. Even the famous Japanese sake is made by fermenting rice.

Besides rice, noodles are essential to the Japanese as well. Udon, soba, and Ramen can be easily found in a Japanese restaurant. Udon noodles are made from wheat flour. It can be a hot dish or a cold dish while soba is buckwheat noodle and is usually served cold with a dipping sauce. Ramen is thin egg noodle and is served in a hot broth with slices of roast pork on it.

Living in an island nation, Japanese eat seafood. There are many Japanese dishes with seafood, such as sushi, sashimi and tempura. You may be surprised that meat consumption was illegal in Japan until 1870s. Since Japan opened up to western culture, meat has become part of daily diet.

International Food

There is a wide range of international restaurant in Japan. You can select from fast food chain to luxury westen restaurant. Other than the "real" international cuisine, you may also find international cuisine originating in Japan, which is known as "Yoshoku". It is influenced by European cooking but adjusted to the palates of the Japanese. A pioneer of Yoshoku would be "Napolitan", which is spaghetti dressed in tomato sauce and fried with sausage, onion and green pepper.

Medical Care

Private and Int'l Clinics & Hospitals

General Practice, Travel Clinic

American Clinic Tokyo

Akasaka / Yotsuya
General Practice, Travel Clinic
Credit Cards

Sendagaya International Clinic

Central Tokyo General Practice, Travel Clinic Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Hiroo International Clinic

Azabu / Hiroo General Practice, Internal Japanese insurance

Kitahara Life Support Clinic

Hachioji Internal, Neurosurgery, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Plastic Surgery Japanese insurance

Nakamura Azabujuban Clinic

Azabu / Hiroo Internal medicine, gastroenterology and hepatology Japanese insurance

The King Clinic

Harajuku / Omotesando General Practice, Travel Clinic Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

National Medical Clinic

Azabu / Hiroo Internal, Pediatrics Credit Cards

Kameda Kyobashi Clinic

Central Tokyo

Dental, General Practice, Internal, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Oncology, Orthopedics, Radiology (CT/MRI/PET), Surgery Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Tokyo Midtown Medical Center

Roppongi

Dermatology, Internal, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, Plastic Surgery, Travel Clinic Japanese insurance

Minato Mita Clinic

Shiba

Internal, Mental Health, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Acupuncture, Dermatology lapanese insurance



International Dental Clinic

Shibuya

Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Kan Dental Clinic

Central West Tokyo

Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Azabudai United Dental Office Tokyo

Azabu / Hiroo

Credit Cards

Trust Dental Clinic

Harajuku / Omotesando

Credit Cards

Dermatology

<u>Garden Clinic Hiroo</u> Azabu / Hiroo Credit Cards Japanese insurance

<u>Tokyo Skin Clinic</u> Roppongi

Ophthalmology

Kamoshita Eye Clinic Roppongi Japanese insurance

<u>Tameike Eye Clinic</u> Akasaka / Yotsuya Japanese insurance

Eye Rose Clinic Central Tokyo Japanese insurance

Mental Health

<u>Counselling Tokyo</u> Central West Tokyo

<u>Tokyo Mental Health</u> Ginza / Tsukiji

<u>Tokyo Psychiatry Clinic</u> Akasaka / Yotsuya Credit Cards

Otolaryngology

<u>Jingumae E.N.T. Clinic</u> Harajuku / Omotesando Japanese insurance

Nishiya ENT Clinic Shinagawa / Shirokane Japanese insurance

Obstetrics & Gynecology

<u>Kioicho Ladies Clinic</u> Kioicho Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

St. Luke's MediLocus Central Tokyo Internal, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Radiology (CT/MRI/PET) Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Esthetic

Active-Ageing Chiropractic Tokyo Setagaya Chiropractic practice, Pilates

Plaza Plastic Surgery Azabu / Hiroo Plastic Surgery Credit Cards

Chiropractic practice

<u>Tokyo Chiropractic</u> Harajuku / Omotesando Chiropractic practice

Tokyo Physio Azabu / Hiroo Physiotherapy Credit Cards

Government Hospitals

NTT Medical Center Tokyo

General Hospitals

Shinagawa / Shirokane

Dental, Dermatology, General Practice, Internal, Mental Health, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, Radiology (CT/MRI/PET), Surgery

Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

The Cancer Institute Hospital of JFCR

Specialist Hospitals

Central South Tokyo

Oncology

Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

<u>Kitahara International Hospital</u>

Hospitals

Hachioji

Internal, Neurosurgery

Japanese insurance

National Center for Global Health and Medicine

General Hospitals

Shinjuku

Dental, Dermatology, Internal, Mental Health, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, Physiotherapy, Plastic Surgery, Radiology (CT/MRI/PET), Surgery, Travel Clinic, Urology Japanese insurance

St. Luke's International Hospital

General Hospitals

Ginza / Tsukiji

Dental, Dermatology, Internal, Mental Health, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, Plastic Surgery, Radiology (CT/MRI/PET), Surgery, Urology

Credit Cards, Japanese insurance

Expat Housing in Japan

A typical Japanese style apartment (often below 350,000 Yen/month) will probably not come with any appliances, require a smaller deposit but will also require key money (Reikin). This is an upfront payment to the landlord, charged for letting you rent the apartment and is often negotiable but typically 2 months' rent and non-refundable. With more expensive apartments; you may find that key money is requested but can be a point of negotiation.

Permanent Housing

Buying a vacant house in Japan and fixing it up is the dream of many city dwellers. With the price for a new condo at all-time highs in most Tokyo neighborhoods, many people are considering purchasing a pre-owned residence as a way to get more for their limited budget.

This has caused more adventurous purchasers to look to stretch their budget further by searching for a suitable abandoned or vacant house ("akiya", or 空き家 in Japanese). There is even a growing list of companies such as 家いちば (ieichiba) dedicated to helping consumers find and purchase their own akiya. The number of abandoned homes is in the millions and growing.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, there were approximately 8.2 million akiya in 2013. Today in 2019, this number likely exceeds 10 million.

Depending on your neighborhood and locality, this means that in the future it will be more common for you to never see your neighbors, simply because you have none.

Can I get a Flat 35 mortgage for my akiya?

In order to get a Flat 35 mortgage for a property that received a Construction Confirmation (kenchiku kakunin or 建築確認) prior to May 31, 1981. You have to obtain a document (a taishin kijun tekigou shoumeiosho or 耐震基準適合証明書) that certifies the property complies with the Japanese earthquake resistance laws now in effect. This means that the building must first be inspected and brought up to code through renovation/reconstruction. You must also obtain a "taishin kijun tekigou shoumeiosho" in order to receive beneficial tax treatment of real estate acquisition taxes (不動產取得稅) when acquiring a 20-year-old or more detached house, or a 25-year-old or more condominium.

International Schools

Below is a brief overview of Tokyo's most popular international schools.

The American School in Japan 1-1-1 Nomizu, Chofu-shi, Tokyo, 182-0031, Japan https://www.asij.ac.jp +81 (0)422-34-5300

The British School in Tokyo 1 Chome-21-18 Shibuya, Tokyo 150-0002, Japan https://www.bst.ac.jp/ +81 (0)3-5467-4321

Tokyo International School 2-13-6 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047 http://www.tokyois.com +81 (0)3-5484-1160

Nishimachi International School 2-14-7 Moto Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0046, Japan http://www.nishimachi.ac.jp +81 (0)3-3451-5520

International School of the Sacred Heart 4-3-1 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0012, Japan https://www.issh.ac.jp/ +81 (0)3-3400-3951

Willowbrook International School 2-14-28 Moto-azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0046 Japan https://willowbrookschool.com/ +81 (0)3-3449-9030

Montessori School of Tokyo 3-5-13 Minami Azabu, Minatoku, Tokyo 106-0047, Japan +81 (0)3 5449 7067

Daily Needs

Banking

Banks are well represented in Japan. The two main banks which provide information in English are: Citibank and Shinsei Bank. ATM's are found throughout Japan in post offices, banks and convenience stores. Those with Cirrus cards can access ATM's in all "7 "convenience stores.

Apply for your bank account

- There are a number of banks catering to English speaking customers Citibank and Shinsei Bank are the main two (many foreigners open accounts with Citibank as the accounts, phone service and online service is in English)
- Remember your passport, resident's card (zairyu) and your address, plus a phone number or, preferably, your cell phone number.
- If you are a US citizen you will also need your social security number.
- Unfortunately a Citibank credit card account cannot be opened at the same time as a regular bank account. Credit card accounts are useful for paying utilities (e.g. phone, gas companies, etc.) through monthly automatic fee payments.
- Citibank is currently insisting on all addresses being registered at the post office identified as the one for your new apartment. This is to ensure that the registered mail notifying you to pick up your Citibank Card from the post office (within 2 weeks of application) will be delivered.

Your local post office:

Your AT Mobility consultant will identify this post office for your information. Complete the form "Change of Address Notice", hand this in or post it to ensure your address is registered at the post office.

Credit Cards:

To apply for a credit card through Citibank, you will need to ring the Citibank call center and request the credit card application forms. These will be mailed to your address and you must return them to Citibank. The credit card application will take approximately 14 days to process and will be sent by registered mail to your address.

Citi Card Call Center:

10am-8pm (M-F); 10am-6pm (weekends & public holidays)

Tel: 0120-866-924

Groceries

The two main international supermarkets are located in the main expatriate suburbs of Azabu Juban - Nissin and Hiroo - National Azabu.

Other famous supermarkets:

Tokyu Store, Life, Precce, Hanamasa, Kinokuniya International Store, Cotsco, etc.

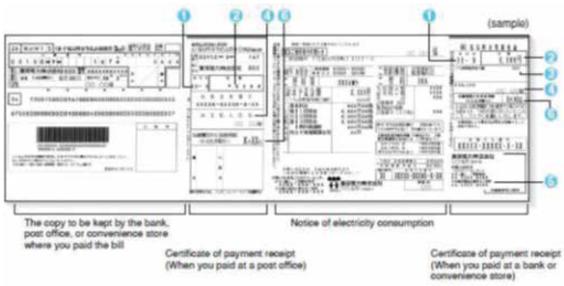
Department Stores in Tokyo:

Daimaru Tokyo, Isetan, Matsuya Ginza, Mitsukoshi, Seibu Shibuya, Takashimaya, Don Quijote, Kitte Marunouchi, Omotesando Hills, Ropponghi Hills, etc.

Utilities

A circuit breaker switch is located inside the apartment. If you use too much electricity at once, the circuit breaker switch will automatically turn off. In that case, turn off some electric appliances and turn the circuit breaker switch back on. Read more about Japanese voltage and plugs.

Meter reading notice and electricity bill will be sent to your registered address monthly. The bill can be paid at the Post office, Banks or a convenience store with cash. You can also apply for Direct Debit from a Japan-based bank account. Once you set up the Direct Debit, you will only receive the Notice.



How to Read the Notice/ Bill

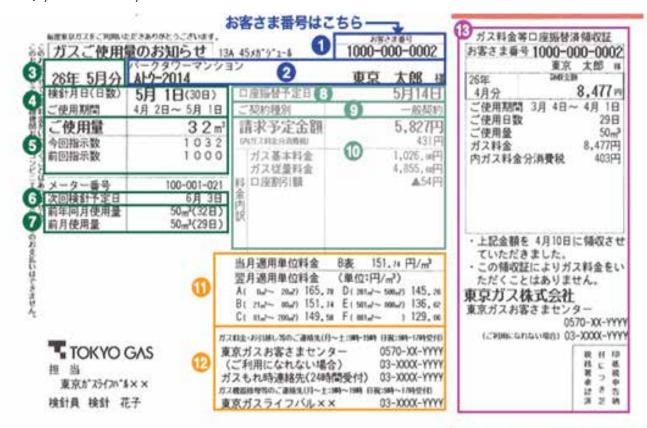
- 1. Billing Month 2. Amount Billed 3. Consumption Tax
- 4. Your Name -Name of person who pays the electricity bill
- 5. TEPCO Customer service number 6. Deadline for payment

Gas is used in many Japanese apartments for cooking, hot water, and gas heaters. There are various types of gas depending on the region and supplier. If you acquire a gas appliance, make sure that it is compatible with the type of gas in your apartment.

In case you smell gas, turn off the gas valve, extinguish open fires, open all windows and doors, and do not turn on any electrical appliances until you find the cause of the problem. If you cannot find the cause, inform the gas company. It is recommended to use gas leak detectors.

In case of an earthquake, switch off the main gas valve.

Meter reading notice and gas bill will be sent to your registered address monthly. The bill can be paid at the Post office, Banks or a convenience store with cash. You can also apply for Direct Debit from a Japan-based bank account. Once you set up the Direct Debit, you will only receive the Notice.



How to Read the Notice

1. Customer ID

2. Address and Name

3. Billing Month

- 4. Date of Meter reading and Period
- 5. Consumption
- 6. Planned date of next Meter Reading
- 7. Past record of consumption (previous year same month and previous month)
- 8. Planned date of payment deduction from the account.
- 9. Type of Contract
- 10. Amount to be Billed
- 11. Unit consumption cost for this month and next month
- 12. Tokyo Gas contact details. 13. Notice for payment deduction from your account.

Meter reading notice and water bill will be sent to your registered address bi-monthly. The bill can be paid at the Post office, Banks or a convenience store with cash. You can also apply for Direct Debit from a Japan based bank account. Once you set up the Direct Debit, you will only receive the Notice.



How to Read the Notice

- 1. Customer ID
- 2. Period and Consumption
- 3. Amount to be Billed
- 4. Planned date of payment deduction from the account.
- 5. Planned date of next Meter Reading.
- 6. Planned debit amount from the account.
- 7. Notice for payment deduction from your account.
- 8. Meter Reading company contact details.

Home Repairs

Japanese House Repairs, Traditional Architecture, Restoration https://www.japanrepair.com/

Repair, maintenance | BicCamera https://www.biccamera.co.jp.e.lj.hp.transer.com/tss/repair.html

Telephone and Mobile

Apply for your Mobile Phone

- There are a few main providers Softbank and Docomo are the providers of Apple iPhones, Docomo is the provider of Samsung Galaxy phones.
- Remember your passport, resident's card, money for incidentals, bank account information, credit card and your address.

Domestic Help

Only foreigners who stay in Japan under statuses of residence such as "Investor/Business Manager," "Legal/Accounting Services," etc., may employ foreign domestic workers. However, a highly skilled foreign professional may bring a foreign domestic worker to Japan subject to certain conditions.

Major requirements

When the highly skilled foreign professional continuously employs a domestic worker who has been employed by him/her in a foreign country.

- o The highly skilled foreign professional's household annual salary is at least 10 million yen.
- o The highly skilled foreign professional may bring only one domestic worker.
- o The highly skilled foreign professional plans to pay the domestic worker at least 200 thousand yen per month.
- o The relevant domestic worker has been employed by the highly skilled foreign professional for at least one year before entering Japan.
- o The relevant domestic worker is expected to leave Japan with the highly skilled foreign professional.

When the highly skilled foreign professional employs a domestic worker not falling under (i)

- o The highly skilled foreign professional's household annual salary is at least 10 million yen.
- o The highly skilled foreign professional may bring only one domestic worker.
- o The highly skilled foreign professional plans to pay the domestic worker at least 200 thousand yen per month.
- o The highly skilled foreign professional has certain family circumstances (i.e., Where he/she has a child under 13 years of age or a spouse unable to do housework due to illness or for other reasons).



Networking

To expand your network in Japan, you can join communities or associations for expats. Below is a brief overview of associations and communities you may be interested in joining after relocating to Japan.

Tokyo American Club

It is founded in 1928 and is one of the largest private clubs in Tokyo. It offers a diverse range of activities and amenities to the members.

https://www.tokyoamericanclub.org/index.php/en/

The Japan -British Society

It is founded in 1908 and has about 1,700 members. It provides the opportunity for members to meet each other on an informal and friendly basis.

https://www.japanbritishsociety.or.jp/en/

The Australia Society Tokyo

It is founded in the 1950s and continues to organize all kind of social events for Australians and friends living in Tokyo. It provides opportunities to make new friends regardless of how long you stay in Japan.

http://www.australiasocietytokyo.com/

International House of Japan

It is an independent and non-profit organization aiming to promote international understanding through cultural exchanges among Japanese and people from all around the world.

https://www.i-house.or.jp/eng/

College Women's Association of Japan

It is a Tokyo based volunteer organization of multinational women interested in education, cultural exchange, and friendship.

https://cwaj.org/



Emergency Contacts

Emergency

Emergency call to police : 110 Emergency call to coast guard : 118 Fire, ambulance, emergency rescue : 119

English-speaking police (Tokyo) : 03-3501-0110 Violence Hotline : 03-3580-2222

Others

AMDA International Medical Information Center (Tokyo) : 03-5285-8088
Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center : 03-5285-8181
Emergency Translation Services (Medical) : 03-5285-8185
Japan Helpline for foreigners : 0570-000-911
Tokyo English Life Line (mental health issues) : 03-5774-0992
Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau : 03-5796-7111

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