



## Welcome to Asia!

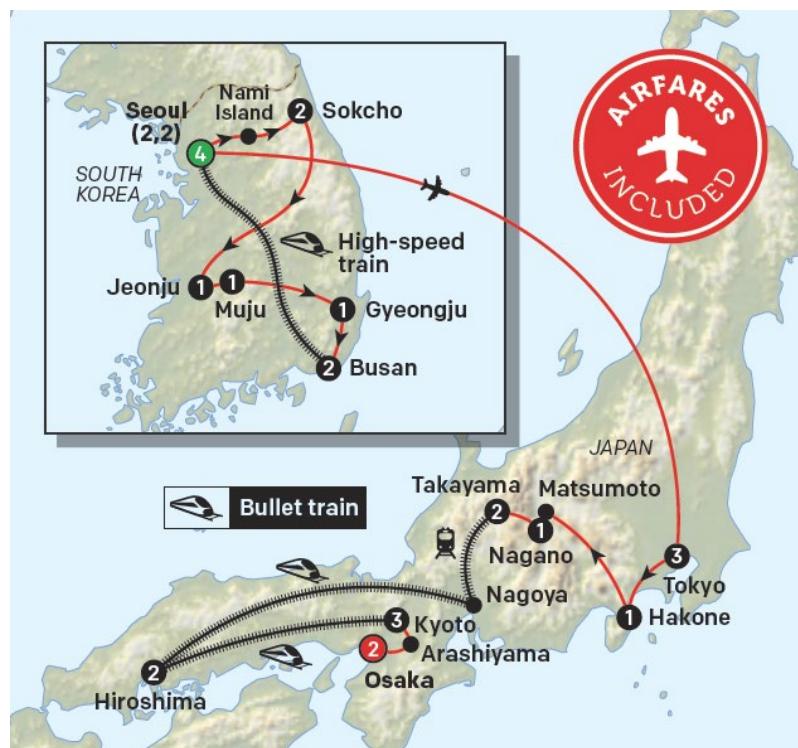
We are so happy to welcome you along for your Bunnik tour. Each tour is planned with great care, as if it were for our own family. For us it's about sharing the joy of travel and discovery.

You'll gain real insight into every destination you visit with the support of our expert local guides and have a load of fun travelling in the comfort of a small group.

In this **Tour Information Dossier** we've compiled some useful information on the countries you will visit on your upcoming tour. We hope this informs you, excites you and enhances your holiday time in Asia.

### Happy travels!

Marion, Dennis & Sacha Bunnik



## Before you go... Asia



### Passport & Visas

We require that your passport is valid for travel for at least six months from the date you are planning to return to Australia. Your passport must be valid to travel internationally and must be machine-readable. You also need to carry a valid return ticket on you.

Whether travelling on an Australian passport or the passport of another country, all travellers require visas for a number of countries and it is your responsibility to secure what may be required before departing Australia. You can consult with your travel agent but it is also recommended that you check the foreign embassy website for your respective destination as it can also provide you with useful information.

### Useful Websites

Australian Government Advisory and Consular Service: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

Customs Australia: [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)

Time: [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock)

Climate: [www.weatherbase.com](http://www.weatherbase.com)

Currency Conversion: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)

Allergy website: <http://allergictravelerapp.com/how/>

### Emergency Numbers – Australian Embassy

Country	Address	Tel
South Korea	19 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Kyobo Building 1 Jongro-1-Ga, Jongno-Gu, Seoul 03154	+82 2 2003-0100
Japan	2-1-14 Mita, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 108-8361	+81 3 5232-4111

***If an emergency occurs while you are en route to your destination or while you are on tour, please refer to the emergency contact details provided in your documentation wallet.***

### Health & Wellbeing

- For specific vaccination and health issues/alerts please contact your local GP or the Travel Doctor (Travellers Medical & Vaccination Centre) on 1300 658 844 or online at [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au).
- We recommend taking your usual cold and flu medication as well as diarrhoea and vomiting medication. It can be tricky finding the equivalent to what you're used to taking when you're overseas.
- If you have a food allergy which needs to be managed on tour, please advise your travel consultant as soon as possible, and your National Guide upon arrival.
- If you do become ill while away please seek medical treatment as soon as possible so that you can get back to enjoying your holiday and to prevent the spread of infection amongst the group. We recommend using hand sanitising gel before meals and upon entering the bus.

- For general health and wellbeing on the tour please ensure you wash your hands frequently, especially before eating. Carry insect repellent and sunscreen and a supply of disinfecting wipes or cleansing gel which can be found at most chemists.
- Keep well hydrated by making sure you purchase enough water to drink and for brushing teeth etc. Increasing your water intake is very important in helping to reduce the effects of altitude sickness.

### Let's Talk Fitness

At Bunnik Tours, we don't put specific age limits on our tours, but we also recognise some travellers may find our itineraries challenging. We have a duty of care to all tour participants and the tour guides, so we do have a firm policy on the level of fitness required by all our clients in an attempt to ensure your safety and the safety of other travellers on our tours.

To get the most from your Bunnik tour, you will need a good level of fitness and mobility and an open mind. Many of the best sights can only be accessed on foot. You should be able to walk at least 3.5 kilometres or 2-3 hours on uneven ground with no walking aids and climb several flights of stairs or short, steep hills. You should also be able to carry your own bags to and from your hotel room if required, plus get on and off various modes of transport unaided.

In some regions, tour participants should also expect the occasional long day of travelling, at times on dirt or gravel roads; extended periods at high altitude (3 -4,000 metres); periods of walking through humid forests and limited medical facilities in remote areas.

### Staying Safe

- Always carry your passport and other travel documents in your hand luggage. Keep photocopies in a separate bag and leave a copy at home with family or friends in case of an emergency.
- Keep your passport safe at all times. We recommend using the safe in your hotel room – and always remember to clear the safe before checking out of the hotel.
- Write down a list of emergency numbers and email addresses eg. bank details, relatives/friends, doctor. This way if you lose your phone you'll still be able to contact people if you need to.
- Take twice the amount of medication than you'll need and divide it in two and store them in separate bags – one of those being your hand luggage.
- When exploring on your own please take a business card from the hotel so that you can always find your way back and only take the necessities with you – leave your valuables in your hotel room safe.
- It never hurts to tell your fellow travellers of your plans!

### Power Points

We recommend purchasing a universal plug adaptor which can be used to fit all electrical sockets. Universal plug adaptors that can fit all electrical sockets are readily available for purchase in Australia before you depart. If you intend to take your mobile phone and/or tablet, it is suggested you purchase a universal plug adaptor with built in USB ports.

As a guide, these plug types are mainly used throughout Asia:



### Practical Considerations

- Advise your Travel Consultant of any dietary requirements and seat requests
- Inform your credit card provider that you'll be overseas
- Have you had any required vaccinations? Contact your local GP or the Travel Doctor (Travellers Medical & Vaccination Centre) on 1300 658 844
- Register your details with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)
- Arrange for a spare copy of your itinerary to be left with a friend or relative
- Check with your mobile phone network provider that your phone is compatible overseas
- Exchange currency, arrange a cash passport/credit card or similar
- Advise your bank of your travel plans so that they can make a note of it. Otherwise they may cancel your credit card as a safety measure due to the overseas transactions. Also make a note of the 24-hour emergency contact number of the bank or building society which issued your credit card in the unlikely event that your card is lost or stolen.
- If you haven't already, have a read through all your tour documents as they will provide you with lots of useful information
- Arrange for Australia Post to hold onto your mail for the time you're away
- Cancel your newspaper delivery / Foxtel, etc.
- Scan a copy of your passport and important documentation and email to yourself

### Packing List Suggestions

- Travel documents e.g. passport(s), travel insurance certificate and e-tickets
- Day-pack to carry your personal belongings while out and about
- Money belt and luggage padlocks
- Local language phrase book
- Ear plugs, eye mask and travel pillow
- Snacks such as muesli bars, nuts and crackers which you can snack on throughout the day
- First aid kit and personal medications (a doctor's letter may be needed if carrying large amounts)
- Sun protection e.g. hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, lip balm and insect repellent
- Antibacterial wipes or hand gel
- Electricity conversion plugs, spare batteries and memory card
- Torch and alarm clock
- Comfortable walking shoes and a pair of evening shoes
- Clothing to suit weather conditions (refer to our website - [www.bunniktours.com.au](http://www.bunniktours.com.au) for weather charts). Also a light jumper, a waterproof jacket/poncho/umbrella for cooler weather or wet conditions, thermal clothing is a good space saver and great for layering
- Swimwear
- Trousers, shorts/skirt that reach below the knee
- Scarf or shawl to carry in your day-pack for cool evenings (and can also be used for church or temple visits if necessary) etc.

#### Note:

The packing list has been compiled from suggestions by previous passengers and local staff – it is only a guide and Bunnik Tours recommends that you check recent weather conditions before your departure.

**We love getting feedback – Let us hear it!**

Upon your return home, please look out for an email from us containing a link to our online tour survey, which we encourage you to complete.

We pride ourselves on the quality of our tours and it is your feedback that helps to ensure we are providing you with the best touring experience.

## On Tour

### Check-In for your flights

It is important that you arrive at the airport at least three hours in advance for international flights. This will allow you plenty of time to check your baggage in, get your boarding passes and seat assignments, and make your way through security to the boarding area. Please ensure you arrive at the airport at the correct time. Early morning flights (flights departing shortly after midnight) may require you to check-in the day before. Airlines have little leniency if flights are missed.

### Comfort on your flight

- Wear loose clothes and comfortable shoes during your flights.
- Try to hydrate yourself regularly with water (avoid caffeine, alcohol and carbonated drinks).
- Alleviate the pressure on your ears by chewing gum, yawning, swallowing, or gently blowing your nose.
- Try to walk up and down the aisle to stretch out your limbs and get blood circulating. Also maybe do a few isometric exercises.
- If you arrive in the morning, try to sleep during your flight so you can stay awake through to the evening once you have arrived at your destination.

### Delayed or missed flights

In the unfortunate event that you miss a flight completely or that you are delayed substantially, please advise the airline representative that you are a group tour passenger bound for a specific start location, date and time. Always call Bunnik Tours on 1800 286 645 (or +61 8 8359 2295 if you are already overseas) to advise your new flight times or the local operator where your tour starts, whose phone number is in your tour documentation.

### Arrival Information

Upon arrival at the airport on the first day of your tour, your airport transfer is included in your tour. Different types of transfers are booked depending on the destination, therefore check your travel documents on meeting points etc. Airport transfers cannot be re-routed to other pick-up points or destinations.

Hotel check-in time is generally around 3.00pm local time, but where possible, the hotel will try and have your room available earlier. If your flight arrives in the morning, your luggage can be stored at the hotel until your room is ready.

### Tour Guide

When you're travelling, your guide will be an invaluable resource to you as they will be able to explain all the different cultural norms and traditions as well as offering dining and sightseeing suggestions during your free time. All Bunnik Tours' guides have a great love for their country and culture and will be happy to share this with you as well as answer any questions you may have.

### Tour Etiquette

Travelling in a small group is half the fun of touring and we regularly receive feedback from our clients remarking how well everyone got along on tour and lifelong friendships often develop.

However, sweeping statements and generalisations can be offensive to others. We would therefore like to remind you that other people's religious beliefs, political and sexual orientations may differ from your own, and we respectfully ask you to be mindful of this while on tour.

### What to Wear

Due to global weather changes, temperatures may deviate from the norms. We recommend layered easy care, loose-fitting clothing, an item or two for rain or unseasonable temperatures and something warmer. Always pack extra layers regardless of the season you're travelling in, as the weather can be unpredictable and it's better to pack a few extra pieces just in case. Cool cotton clothing, a hat, sunscreen, a good pair of sunglasses and most importantly, comfortable walking shoes are recommended. When visiting temples and churches, long sleeves, loose pants or long skirts are essential.

### Currency

The recommended currency to take to South Korea is the Won and the Yen for Japan, which can be purchased from your bank. Ensure you change a small amount into small denominations.

Advise your bank of your travel plans so that they can make a note of it, otherwise they may cancel your credit card as a safety measure due to the overseas transactions. Also make a note of the 24-hour emergency contact number of the bank or building society which issued your credit card in the unlikely event that your card is lost or stolen.

Whenever possible use ATMs when the banks are open (Mon – Fri) so that if a machine 'eats' your card you can then deal with it straight away. It is always advisable to carry a supply of cash in addition to your credit card.

We advise you to exchange some money into the local currency at the airport even if the exchange rate is not the best, this way you'll have money to get a drink, snack or give a tip during those first few hours of arrival. Your guide will be able to advise you on where the best places are to exchange money.

### South Korea

The Korean Won (KRW; symbol ₩) is the official currency of South Korea. A single won is divided into 100 jeon. Notes are in denominations of ₩1,000, 5,000, 10,000 and 50,000.

### Japan

The Japanese Yen (JPY; symbol ¥) is the official currency of Japan. Notes are in denominations of ¥10,000, 5,000, 2,000 and 1,000.

## Countries we visit



## South Korea

The 'Land of the Morning Calm', South Korea has become a fascinating melting pot of modernity and tradition. With a restless neighbour to its north and a history of Japanese invasion, it has doggedly pursued modernisation to become one of the world's biggest players whilst remaining fiercely loyal to its cultural traditions. The name Korea is derived from Goryeo, a dynasty which ruled in the Middle Ages. The country shares land borders with North Korea to the north, and sea borders with China to the west and Japan to the east. Roughly 50 million people live in just under 100,000 square kilometres.

This country has style and substance in abundance, yet far from being weighed down by its history and cultural traditions, South Korea is also ultra-modern, producing many of the luxury technology goods that we enjoy today – think LG televisions, Hyundai cars and Samsung phones. It's also home to a thriving K-Pop scene which adds to the fun of this country!

### Fast Facts

Country visited	Capital	Population	Language	Religion	Time Zone	Voltage	Dialling code
South Korea	Seoul	51.2 million	Korean	Agnostic, Buddhism & Christianity	2 hours behind AEST	220v	+82

*\*Time differences depend on daylight savings.*

- Snuppy, the world's first cloned dog, was created in South Korea at the Seoul National University.
- South Korea loves its newspapers. The country has 63 daily editions in print.
- South Koreans believe that people should hide their shoes on the first night of the New Year. Otherwise, a ghost will try one of the shoes, and if it finds a pair that it likes, the ghost will take it and the owner of those shoes will have bad luck all year.
- South Korea is the only nation that is completely broadband connected, at 100Mb.
- Everything closes late, with most stores open until at least 11pm. Restaurants, cafés, bars, and street food vendors stay open even later than that, usually until 4am. The country has some of the biggest shopping malls in the world – open until 4am also!

- South Koreans love sweet potato so much so that there is nearly every possible dish flavoured with it. Choose from main courses, desserts, chips, bread, salads and even lattes.
- When you are born in South Korea, you are considered a year old, which means that South Koreans will present themselves as a year older than their biological age.

### Local Etiquette and Helpful Tips

- Never point your chopsticks or pierce your food with them. They should be returned to the table after every few bites and when you drink or stop to speak. Indicate you are finished eating by placing your chopsticks on the chopstick rest or on the table. Never place them parallel across your rice bowl.
- Do not pick up food with your hands. Fruit should be speared with a toothpick.
- Bones and shells should be put on the table or an extra plate.
- Koreans consider it a personal violation to be touched by someone who is not a relative or close friend. Avoid touching, patting or back slapping a Korean.
- Do not cross your legs or stretch your legs out straight in front of you. Keep your feet on the floor, never on a desk or chair.
- Always pass and receive objects with your right hand (supported by the left hand at the wrist or forearm) or with two hands.
- To beckon someone, extend your arm, palm down, and move your fingers in a scratching motion. Never point with your index finger.



N Seoul Tower, Seoul

### Weather

South Korea's climate is humid continental and humid subtropical. It is affected by the East Asian monsoon which means that its highest level of rainfall occurs in summer in what is called 'jangma' (in June and July). Summers are hot and humid. The winters can be extremely cold with it being slightly milder along the south coast. South Korea often experiences what is called the 'sam-han-sa-on' – when a cold wave passes across the Korean peninsula - it lasts for 3 cold days followed by 4 warmer days before repeating.

### Getting Around

Getting around South Korea is easy and public transport is very well-priced. All transport works on the Korean ppallippalli (hurry hurry) system. This means that the buses and trains leave on time, and that the buses and taxis tend to be driven fast. Taxis are colour coded according to the level of service offered. A grey or white taxi is typically a basic car with a not so experienced driver, whereas a black cab denotes a luxury car with a more experienced driver. The drivers will appreciate if you tell them to "keep the change" (or jandon gajiseyo in Korean) for small amounts.

***When catching taxis, have small change on you and choose one with a meter, if it doesn't have one then negotiate the price before getting in. Also, ask your guide or hotel staff the names of reputable taxi companies.***



Kimchi

### Dining

Korean cuisine is largely based upon rice, vegetables, and meats. Traditional Korean meals are noted for the number of side dishes (banchan) that accompany steam-cooked short-grain rice. Commonly used ingredients include sesame oil, doenjang (fermented bean paste), soy sauce, salt, garlic, ginger, pepper flakes and gochujang (fermented red chilli paste).

Across the country ingredients and dishes vary. Certain regions are especially associated with some dishes (for example, the city of Jeonju with bibimbap) either as a place of origin or for a famous regional variety. Bibimbap, translated as "mixed rice" is a bowl of warm white rice topped with namul (sautéed and seasoned vegetables) and gochujang. A raw or fried egg and sliced meat (usually beef) are common additions. The ingredients are stirred together thoroughly just before eating and it can be served either hot or cold.

Main dishes are made from grains such as bap (a bowl of rice), juk (porridge), and guksu (noodles). Soups are another common part of any Korean meal but are generally served as part of the main course rather than as an entrée. Soups known as guk are often made with meats, shellfish and vegetables but can be made into more formal soups known as tang. Jjigae are a thicker, heavier seasoned soup or stew.

Kimchi is served often, sometimes at every meal and refers to fermented vegetable dishes usually made with napa cabbage, Korean radish, or sometimes cucumber, commonly fermented in a brine of ginger, garlic, scallions, and chili pepper. South Koreans eat an average of 40 pounds of kimchi each year. Guksu (noodle dishes) have been eaten in Korea since ancient times. Wheat noodles (milguksu) were specialty foods for birthdays, weddings or auspicious occasions because the long and continued shape were thought to be associated with longevity and long-lasting marriage. Jajangmyeon, a staple Koreanized Chinese noodle dish, is extremely popular in Korea as fast, take-out food. It is made with a black bean sauce usually fried with diced pork or seafood and a variety of vegetables, including zucchini and potatoes.

***Important: When dining at buffets (i.e. breakfast) please refrain from taking food away with you to 'save' for later! If you feel that you'll need snacks between meals, pack some dried fruit, nuts, muesli bars etc.***

## Shopping & Souvenirs

Koreans love to shop with markets and mega malls found in abundance across the country. It's also possible to find many smaller boutique stores that specialize in crafts including pottery and hanji (handmade paper). The country's capital Seoul has plenty of markets where you can find a great buy. Don't miss the sprawling general ones at Namdaemun or Dongdaemun, both of which remain active around the clock. Also worth checking out is the Dapsimni Antiques Market. You can barter in the open markets for lower prices, but make sure you do so politely. Of course, bargaining is becoming a rare sport as most stores now have fixed prices. Myeong-dong is Seoul's premier shopping district, its streets lined with vendors and dazzling neon signs. For a more serene retail experience explore the twisting byways of Insa-dong, Bukchon, Samcheong-dong and Tongui-dong – the areas around the royal palaces; here you can browse for traditional crafts and contemporary art pieces. Seoul also has a herbal medicine market but an equally large and famous one is located in Daegu. Everything closes late, with most stores open until at least 11pm. Some of the markets stay open even later if you want to experience a true late night shopping experience.

## Places We Visit in South Korea

### Seoul

South Korea's capital, Seoul, is the largest city in the country with a population of more than 10 million people. It has more than 2,000 years of history, founded in 18BC by one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. As well as being home to much of Korea's cultural and educational facilities, Seoul also has an abundance of historic sites including Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung Palaces and Suwon Hwaseong Fortress, as well as places of traditional culture like Gwang Jang Market and Insadong street. This important historical facet of the city is neatly counterpointed with a truly amazing shopping and entertainment experience. Asia's largest underground shopping centre, the COEX Mall, is found here and draws a huge number of visitors each year. As the birthplace of K-pop and the Korean Wave, Seoul is a modern city full of cutting edge fashion, technology, music and architecture. It was named the 2010 World Design Capital by UNESCO and one of the United Nations most livable cities – ranking higher than New York City, London and Melbourne.



Seoul

### **Mt Seorak**

Mt Seorak is the highest mountain in the Taebaek mountain range, high on the east coast of Korea. The mountain range itself is often referred to as the backbone of Korea. Well known for its amazing autumn colours, there are many wonderful places to explore. Seoraksan National Park is a true delight! The town of Sokcho is the town closest to Seoraksan National Park and is a lovely fishing town located on the coast of South Korea, where sampling the local fresh seafood is a must!

### **Jeonju**

Centrally located in the middle of Korea, Jeonju is a lovely city of rich cultural and historical significance. Some of the best things about Jeonju is its fresh produce, delicious local delicacies (including the Bibimbap, a delicious dish of rice and other things mixed together with a hot sauce, which is native to Jeonju) and wonderful Hanok architecture. The Jeonju Hanok Village is a fantastic place to experience a variety of Korean culture as you wander among traditional Hanok houses.

### **Muju**

Muju is a small, picturesque village to the east of Jeonju, in the Sobaek Mountains. It is known all over Korea for its Firefly Festival during August and September, where thousands of fireflies literally light up the night sky; and its bustling taekwondo scene. Muju has a purpose-built taekwondo park.

### **Gyeongju**

With strong ties to Korea's ancient history, Gyeongju has had civilization in the region for centuries. In fact, Gyeongju was settled by the Shilla Dynasty in 57BC, who ruled there for over a thousand years. The town itself is home to many historic buildings, temples, burial grounds, palace ruins and other national treasures – more than any other place in Korea. Gyeongju is also home to Korea's first UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple. Seokguram Grotto is one of the best kept Buddhist sites in Korea, where you can see a seated Buddha surrounded by 2 sets of 12 royal guards. Bulguksa Temple is another amazing example of Buddhist art, possibly the finest in Korea.

### **Busan**

Busan is South Korea's second largest city and home to the largest beach and longest river in the country. It served as the temporary capital of the Republic of Korea during the Korean War as it was one of the only cities that did not fall to North Korea. The city is one of the busiest port cities in the world yet still has some charming gardens and parks to soften its industrial side. A must-see in Busan is the Gukje Market, the largest traditional market in Busan and steeped in history. This market humbly began during the Korean War in 1950 as a place for war refugees to try to eke out a living which then grew into a large and busy market.



Mt Maisan



## Japan

It is only comparatively recently that Japan came out of the shell of its isolation, but the country of genteel geisha girls and pink cherry blossom has made up for lost time. There are few people in the western world who have not driven a Japanese car, eaten sushi or played on a GameBoy or Sony Playstation.

The nation of Japan consists of an island archipelago stretching from northeast to southwest off the coast of mainland China and Korea, separated from its Asian neighbours by the Sea of Japan. Between 1639 and 1859 Japan elected to cut itself off from trade or traffic with the rest of the world, except for some marginal contact through the southern Kyushu island ports. Since opening up its doors once more, just 150 years ago, the densely populated islands have developed in leaps and bounds and much of the country is now covered by sprawling neon-lit cities and one of the world's most sophisticated public transport networks.

Modern it may be, but Japan still retains plenty of its mystical oriental charm. From the etiquette demanded in social situations, to the minimalist décor behind rice paper screens, Japanese culture is alive and well and cannot be ignored, which makes a visit to Japan a fascinating experience.

The modern metropolises are dotted with a myriad of ancient shrines and temples; the countryside is riddled with hundreds of volcanoes and hot springs overlooking pastoral paddy fields; parks are festooned with rigidly raked white gravel Zen gardens or coated with layers of lilac and cherry blossom.

Japan's islands are mountainous in the interior - 75 percent of the country's landmass is made up of mountains – and most of the people are tightly packed within the limitations of the coastal plains, particularly on the main island of Honshu. Tokyo, the capital and largest city, situated on Honshu's east coast, has a population of 12 million. Despite this seething mass of humanity, Japan is well ordered. Everything runs on time, and crime levels are almost non-existent. It is still possible to find beautiful vistas and wide empty spaces in the countryside, and when you are forced to mingle with the urban throngs, you will find the Japanese to be charming, courteous and friendly to foreign faces.

### Fast Facts

Country visited	Capital	Population	Language	Religion	Time Zone	Voltage	Dialling code
Japan	Tokyo	127 million	Japanese	Shinto, Buddhism	2 hours behind AEST	100v	+81

*\*Time differences depend on daylight savings.*

- Japan is made up of approximately 3,000 islands, with 4 main islands (Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku and Hokkaido) making up 97% of its total land area.
- Japan's world-renowned *shinkansen* (nicknamed the "bullet train") first went into operation in October 1964, just in time for the Tokyo Olympics, and reaches speeds of 300kph, making the 600km trip from Tokyo to Osaka only 2 1/2 hours.
- How to distinguish a Shinto shrine from a Buddhist temple? Shrines almost always have gates known as *torii* (or "bird perch") – two pillars topped by two horizontal beams. In contrast, Buddhist temples often have gateways with tiled roofs that look like miniature versions of the temple itself.
- You'll see "samurai castles" perched on hilltops around the country, but only 12 are original. Others, including the famous Osaka Castle, are modern concrete replicas, due to the damage done during World War II.
- In Japan, the Emperor is the head of state and the Prime Minister is the chief of government.
- The highest mountain in Japan is an active volcano, Mount Fuji. Approximately 10% of the world's active volcanoes are located in Japan.
- It is estimated that Japan has an average of 1,500 mild earthquakes per year – that makes approximately 4 per day!
- Japan had the highest life expectancy rate in the world and also the highest literacy rate – almost 100%. On the other hand, its crime rate is one of the lowest in the world.

### Local Etiquette and Helpful Tips

- Status and rank have played a very important role in Japanese society from the days of the shoguns, and they still do today. Even the Japanese language is stratified, and different forms are used with people of different rank. As a result, much of the country's business and social etiquette revolves around determining the rank of an individual and behaving accordingly. Negotiating Japanese traditions and customs is both fascinating and challenging.
- You will be expected to remove your shoes when visiting a restaurant, a home, a traditional inn (*ryokan*) and many of Japan's attractions. And don't, under any circumstances, walk into a temple wearing shoes!
- Please use *hashi* (chopsticks) for Japanese food. Use Western utensils – and only Western utensils – for Western food. Stabbing your french fries with chopsticks may be fun, but it'll just make you look silly.
- The moist towelette you get in restaurants should be used to wipe off your hands before you eat.
- Buy a colourful handkerchief (they're sold everywhere). You may need it to wipe your hands after washing in the restroom – towels are generally not provided. (Although some establishments have installed electric hand dryers.)
- Try to learn some basic phrases, including "thank you" (*arigato*), "good morning" (*ohayo*), "good day" (*konnichiwa*), "good evening" (*konban wa*) and "goodbye" (*sayonara*).
- Don't expect to find escalators in every subway or train station. Although they are becoming more common, many stations are not yet equipped with them.
- Take along an inflatable pillow to support your back on the bullet train, especially if you're tall. The seats were designed for shorter people. Tall people also need to watch out for the height of doors: some are very low, especially in older establishments. Train doors are especially unforgiving – if you're not careful you may end up wishing you'd brought a helmet!
- The Japanese sense of personal space is different than that of Westerners, and crowding and jostling are considered perfectly acceptable behaviours

### Weather

The temperature varies widely over the country on any given day. In general, the best times to visit are in October and April, when the foliage is changing and the temperatures are mild during the day and cool at night. May, June and July are the雨iest months, and June, July and August are hotter and more humid. Okinawa's beaches are nicest in July and August.

### Getting Around

Japan is famous for its highly efficient public transport systems. Trams, subways and trains are the easiest for foreign travellers to navigate and you'll find subway networks in Kyoto and Tokyo. They are usually the fastest and most convenient way to get around the city. Buses are more challenging as the destination names are written in kanji and often there are no numbers to identify which bus you want.

***When catching taxis, have small change on you and choose one with a meter, if it doesn't have one then negotiate the price before getting in. Also, ask your guide or hotel staff the names of reputable taxi companies.***



Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto

### Dining

As would be expected, the sushi and sashimi (small blocks of raw fish) are excellent. Other specialties include Kobe beef served as steak (very expensive) or in sukiyaki; cooked salt- and freshwater fish (often served whole); miso soup; and a wide variety of vegetable dishes. Tempura and teriyaki are two popular ways of preparing seafood and vegetables.

Chilled mori soba (cold buckwheat noodles) are refreshing in the summer, and hearty nabe hot pots are warming in the winter. If you're feeling a little adventurous, try broiled eel – it's delicious. Tofu is commonly eaten, either chilled with a simple dip, cooked in soups and stews, or basted and grilled (dengaku).

For those on a budget, noodle shops offer meals that are simple, quick and satisfying. Ranging from basic stand-up counters on station platforms to more sophisticated places serving a range of side dishes, these are Japan's original fast food outlets (feel free to slurp – in Japan it means you are enjoying the dish). Yakitori, a very popular dish, is made from chunks of chicken or squid on skewers, grilled over charcoal and served with a sauce made from soy and sake.

Japan is not an easy country for strict vegetarians to visit, as most of the soup stocks and dipping sauces are made with fish extracts. You can find excellent Chinese food, including popular gyoza potstickers and the ubiquitous ramen noodles. In Hiroshima, try okonomiyaki, a pancake filled with cabbage, meat, seafood and sometimes noodles.

Following your meal, try some refreshing green-tea ice cream. There are several varieties, and it's available in Japan's numerous convenience stores.

Less expensive restaurants and those in department stores often have window displays of the foods they serve – the plastic food in the displays is amazingly realistic. Sometimes this display takes the place of a menu. If you cannot understand a printed menu, you can (discreetly) look at the dishes on the other tables and (discreetly) point out to the waiter what looks good to you. Generally, Japanese food is made from fresh ingredients and is not highly seasoned (though soy sauce is used throughout).

The appearance of a meal is an important aspect of the art of Japanese food preparation, so take a moment to appreciate the visual presentation before you dig in. Try a Japanese breakfast – at least once. Even if you don't prefer cooked rice, fish and miso soup for breakfast, it's an adventure and the presentation will brighten your day. Expect to eat a lot of eggs if you order the "American" or "Western" breakfast. Western food is widely available in larger cities – especially Italian (spaghetti and pizza are almost as widespread as they are in the West). Outside Tokyo, French food tends to be formal and pricey. Lower down the food chain, there are fast-food and burger chains – both home-grown and imported – on virtually every corner.

Green tea is the preferred beverage with many meals, but you can find alternatives like soft drinks. Don't expect to find decaffeinated coffee, however. The Japanese drink the real stuff – and really strong. You should sample some sake while in Japan – the famous rice wine is more akin to a liqueur than a wine, and can be an acquired taste, but it's an essential part of the Japanese experience.

***Important: When dining at buffets (i.e. breakfast) please refrain from taking food away with you to 'save' for later! If you feel that you'll need snacks between meals, pack some dried fruit, nuts, muesli bars etc.***

### Shopping & Souvenirs

Shop for pearls (including black pearls from Okinawa), lacquer ware, silks, woodblock prints, pottery, furniture, jewellery, furs, cloisonne, paper lanterns, yukatas (the cotton robes worn to the bath), dolls, Imari porcelain, shells, red coral, cameras, china, crystal, art, local handicrafts, calligraphy supplies, karate gear, kitchen knives, packaged seaweed, green tea, kites (especially traditional kites), beautifully printed books, toys, comic books, weavings and silk screens. You can purchase good-luck charms (usually covered in silk brocade) from the gift shops of the many shrines. Don't assume you're going to get bargains on electronic goods, pearls or silks – familiarise yourself with sale prices of these items prior to leaving home.

About lacquer ware (shikki or urushi): there are many styles from various parts of the country, and modern designs (in/out trays, for example) are at least as plentiful as the more traditional bowls, boxes and trays. Look carefully before you buy – these days, much so-called lacquer ware is synthetic varnish on plastic, rather than real lacquer applied over wood.

Take time to visit one of the department stores. They sell everything from rice paper to pressed flowers to a dozen kinds of stuffing for pillows. The Japanese are ardent consumers, so it's fun to shop with them.

### Places We Visit in Japan

#### Tokyo

One of the world's main economic centres, Tokyo is a city that presents a different view of itself at every turn. Starkly modern, it becomes a jewel box at night with a glittering display of neon and fluorescent lights. But you can retreat to quiet residential back streets and sculpted gardens and still find the harmony, scale and simplicity the Japanese have prized for centuries. Look down one street and you'll see nothing but neon and concrete, but around the corner, you may find yourself in the bonsai-lined courtyard of a traditional inn.

Several times in history Tokyo has been almost totally destroyed, by fires, earthquakes, floods or war, but it has always rebuilt itself. That might explain why it retains only vestiges of Old Japan. You'll find an amazing hodgepodge of old and modern architecture, often side by side, and a maze of streets where even taxi drivers have to consult their maps. You can get utterly lost just a few moments' walk from your hotel. Tokyo is a safe place, however, and there are few better cities to be lost in, thanks to the kobans (police boxes) throughout the metropolis, a world-class public transit system and shy but friendly people who almost always help if you ask.

Because of the expense and the language barrier, the majority of visitors to Tokyo are there on business. But there is plenty for leisure travellers to see and despite its reputation as being fearsomely expensive, it doesn't have to be. With some planning, it's possible to visit Tokyo on a reasonable budget.



Shibuya Tokyo

#### Hakone

Hakone is part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, less than 100 kilometres from Tokyo. It is famous for its hot springs, outdoor activities, natural beauty and the view of nearby Mt. Fuji. Hakone is one of the most popular destinations among Japanese and international tourists looking for a break from Tokyo.

#### Mount Fuji

This almost perfectly conical volcano is a familiar symbol of Japan. It is 3,774 metres high and beautifully snow-capped in winter. Other scenic areas close to Mount Fuji include Hakone, small mountains with hot spring resorts, forest hiking, the Open Air Sculpture Museum and a large lake.

#### Takayama

Takayama is a city located in Gifu, Japan and is a sister city to Denver, Colorado. The city is quite old, dating back to the Jōmon period. Takayama is best known for its background in carpentry. It is believed carpenters from Takayama worked on the Imperial Palace in Kyoto and on many of the temples in Kyoto and Nara. The town and its culture as they exist today, took shape at the end of the 16th century when the Kanamori clan built Takayama Castle. About a hundred years later the city came under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. However, the high altitude and separation from other areas of Japan kept the area fairly isolated, allowing Takayama to develop its own culture over a three hundred year period.

### Hiroshima

When the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, the city became an immediate symbol for the horrors of war. Today, Hiroshima has several moving reminders of that day of utter devastation. The centrepiece is called the A-Bomb Dome; it is the skeleton of a domed building that survived the blast. Across the street is Peace Park, where you'll find the Cenotaph for the Victims (it contains all of their names) and the Atomic Bomb Museum. The museum's photographs are compelling although also disturbing. They show the actual effects of heat and radiation on human flesh. The most moving monument is the Children's Peace Memorial, which celebrates the desire for long life and happiness, traditionally expressed in the folding of paper cranes. You may see groups of schoolchildren adding more paper cranes, strung together in rainbow garlands, to the millions that already surround the base of the memorial.



Geisha in Kyoto

The island of Miyajima lies just off the coast from Hiroshima, which is a short ferry ride from the end of the streetcar line. The main reasons to go there are the solitude, the view and the Shrine of Itsukushima, which is built on wooden piers over the water. The shrine's torii (the huge gate at the entrance to a Shinto shrine) is out at the head of a bay – its orange paint, stunning against the blue water, has made this one of the most photographed places in Japan. The original shrine was constructed in the 6th century to honour the fishing gods, and for centuries boats coming to the island had to pass under the enormous torii.

### Kyoto

If you can visit only one city in Japan, Kyoto is the one. This ancient city (home to almost 1.5 million people) was the capital of Japan for more than a thousand years and is still considered the country's spiritual capital. Kyoto is graced with an abundance of temples, palaces, gardens and museums (as well as plenty of tourists, so expect crowds).

At night, when you have some free time, stroll through Pontocho, the traditional night time entertainment spot. This narrow little street may be the most romantic street in Japan. You might even see a geisha (or a maiko – a young apprentice) scurrying to a theatrical performance or an assignation at a local bar. Fans of Arthur Golden's novel Memoirs of a Geisha might like to stroll around the Gion neighbourhood, where the story was set. It's also possible to be dressed and made up as a geisha in studios catering (mostly) to Japanese women. Contact the tourist office for details.

### Osaka

Osaka, Japan's third largest city, is ultra-modern but seemingly without the frantic pace of Tokyo. Osaka is a visitors delight with warm, friendly locals, a pretty riverside, amazing shopping districts and a neon bright nightlife. Eating is one of Osaka's most favourite pastimes and the city offers a wonderful array of dining opportunities. The shopping is also to die for and a visit to the Shinsaibashi district is highly recommended.

### Useful Phrases

English	Korean	Japanese
Hello	An-yöng-ha-se-yo.	Kon'nichiwa
Good morning	An-yöng-hi ju-mu-shö-ssö-yo?	Ohayōgozaimasu
Good evening	Shik-sa-ha-shö-ssö-yo?	Konbanwa
Goodbye	An-nyöng-hi ga-se-yo!	Sayōnara
Please	Jwe-song-ha-ji-mahn	Kudasai
Thank you	(Nö-mu) kam-sa-ham-ni-da!	Arigatou
Yes	Ne	Hai
No	A-ni-yo	Ie
Do you speak English?	Yöng-ö hal jul a-se-yo?	Eigo o hanasemasu ka?
I don't understand	Mo-na-ra-düt-kke-ssö-yo.	Wakarimasen
Please write it down	Chö-gö ju-se-yo!	Sore o kakitomete kudasai
How much does it cost?	I-ge öl-ma-ye-yo?	Sore wa dorekurai shimasu ka?
Where is...?	...-i ö-di-ye-yo?	Doko ga...?
Telephone	Jeonhwa	Denwa
Toilet	Hwa-jang-shil	Toire
Tea	Cha	Ocha
Coffee	Keopi	Kōhī
Bottled water	Saengsu	Mizu
Cheers!	Ma-ni dü-se-yo!	Kanpai!
I am allergic to...	Naneun alleleugi haeyo	Watashi wa arerugi ni narimasu...
Does this have ... in it?	I geu an-e ... i isseubnikka?	Kore ni ... ga haitte imasu ka?
Peanuts	Ttangkong	Pinattsu
Nuts	Gyeongwalyu	Natto
Seafood	Haesanmul	Shifudo
Shellfish	Jogae	Kai
Meat	Gogi	O niku
Gluten	Geulluten	Guruten
Wheat	Mil	Komugi
Eggs	Dalgal	Tamago
Dairy	Nagnong	Nyūseihin
Pork	Dwaeji gogi	Butaniku
Lactose	Yudang	Nyūtō
Soy	Ganjang	Daizu
I am...	Naneun ... ibnida	Watashi wa...
Vegetarian	Chaesigjuui ja	Bejitarian
Celiac	Boggang	Go to: <a href="http://www.celiactravel.com/cards/japanese">www.celiactravel.com/cards/japanese</a>
Diabetic	Dangnyobyeong hwanja	Tōnyō-byō

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