

Country Fact Sheet: Japan

Tipping

There is no culture of tipping in Japan, and nobody expects it. The only exception is in high class ryokan; where a token of JPY2,000 might be left in an envelope for the room attendant. Compulsory service charges are levied in some hotels and restaurants.

Communications

Keeping in touch with friends and family back home, or even with others in Japan, can present some problems for the foreign visitor as not all mobile phones will work. Having said this, more modern phones such as iPhones or smart phones should work; however, your network provider will need to have a roaming agreement with a Japanese carrier and those roaming charges are likely to be hefty. We would strongly recommend that you check with your provider to see what the charges are first.

Now Wi-Fi hotspots are much more commonplace than they used to be in Japan and nearly all hotels offer wired or wireless connections, so using laptops, tablets and phones for email or VOIP applications such as Skype to keep in touch will usually offer the most effective and economical methods of keeping in touch. You should be able to hire a LAN cable from reception.

If you want to limit costs, one option is to order a rental Japanese phone handset in advance via the internet or from the airport upon arrival (there are several options available). A handset, complete with Japanese phone numbers, can be rented and used for the duration of your trip, and you would then be billed for the handset rental and any calls you subsequently make. We have been told of a company called Mobal; which if booked online in advance, rents these handsets for free, with the handsets able to be collected from Terminal 1 at Narita Airport (<https://www.mobalnarita.com/>). Japanese phones all come with email function as standard rather than SMS. Prepaid cards for mobile phones are also available and work in much the same as pay-as-you-go cards. The phone company keeps a record of your credit cards details and will usually charge your card once your trip is over. Another option is to rent a compatible Japanese handset to use with your own SIM card and the usual international call charges will be applied to your monthly bill or taken off your prepaid credit. Please note, you will need to unlock your phone before using this SIM, and you'll need to contact your provider to do this. The SIM will allow you to connect your device to mobile internet with up to 2GB data traffic. Please let us know your device brand and model at the time of booking and we can arrange this for you at a cost of JPY4,500 per SIM card. This must be arranged more than two weeks prior to arrival.

Another useful tool we have had very good feedback on is the pocket Wi-Fi service from Japan Wireless. With this service you rent a pocket sized internet router, which you can easily store in your day bag and allows you to connect your smartphone or tablet to Wi-Fi while you are out and about. Wi-Fi will be available in nearly all the

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hotels and on your travels. Having a pocket Wi-Fi router will enable you to use mapping tools and phone apps like Skype on the go. It is recommended that you make arrangements for your pocket Wi-Fi rental before you depart for Japan to ensure your device is waiting for you at your first hotel. If you are travelling to more remote areas, such as Koyasan or Hakone, you may want to choose the service plan that has a wider coverage. See <http://japan-wireless.com/> for more information.

If you are keen to use your smartphone when you are exploring in Japan, an excellent app or website to use around Tokyo is **CITYMAPPER**. Its real benefit is having live public transportation information to plot your journey for that day around the capital, as it offers real-time maps and detailed information for getting from A to B. Even without a mobile network or international roaming, this tablet or smartphone app allows you to save forthcoming journeys, which you can then pull up while on the go.

If you are unsure about the options available to you, please ask your Japan specialist, who will be happy to guide you.

The international code for Japan is +81. Remember to drop the (0) off if calling with the international code.

Money & Expense

Despite the high levels of technology and development, Japan remains a largely cash-dependent culture, (thanks to the low crime rates that still prevail), although we are now experiencing a more widespread use of credit cards. Do not be afraid to carry cash on your person as Japan is an extremely safe and honest country. Present exchange rates for the Yen are approximately £1 = JPY145/ US\$1 = JPY120/ CA\$1 = JPY90. Notes are in denominations of JPY 10,000, 5,000, 2,000 and 1,000. Coins are in denominations of JPY 500, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1. In terms of day-to-day living expenses, allow £40 - £70/US\$65 - US\$110/CA\$75 - CA\$130 per person per day for basic daily expenses (drinks, meals, etc.). A local beer will normally cost around JPY500, a set lunch around £15/US\$20/CA\$22 and dinner £40/US\$50 - US\$65/CA\$55 - CA\$73, although it can vary wildly on the ambience and rating of said restaurant, including service charges which is common.

You can use your credit cards to pay for larger purchases, such as in department stores/hotel and restaurant bills. Japanese people tend to carry enough cash with them for the day for everyday smaller transactions. Some shops will ask if you would like to pay for your goods *ikkai*, or once in full, which is recommended.

The ubiquitous vending machine in Japan is everywhere selling a huge range of items, not just cans of soft drink. At one of these, or in a convenience store, it is not unusual to hand over a JPY 10,000 note to pay for a drink!