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*JAPAN
WITHOUT
SECRETS*



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**Japan without secrets. Modern
Japan: The Complete Guide**

«Издательские решения»

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Dreaming of Japan but daunted by the logistics? This guide shatters the myths! Discover the best seasons to visit, real costs for every budget — from backpacker to luxury — plus insider tips on visas, money, transport, and connectivity. Explore 15+ cities (Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Okinawa), hear candid interviews with locals about mindset and etiquette, and get vital safety advice. No sugar-coating — just practical facts, actual prices, and money-saving hacks to save your nerves and wallet.

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Japan without secrets Modern Japan: The Complete Guide

Fozildzhon Fatulloev

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Japan without secrets

A complete guide to modern Japan: travel, culture, traditions, money, transportation, food, safety, and life as a Japanese person.

Chapter 1

Why the World Admires Japan (Introduction)

Japan is one of those countries that almost everyone has heard of, but very few truly understand. Most people associate it with anime, samurai, robots, technology, or, conversely, ancient temples and traditions. But in reality, the reason for the world's fascination with Japan goes much deeper than the beautiful images found in movies and on the internet.

When people first arrive in Japan, they often have the strange feeling of being transported to another world. Everything here seems familiar — the cities, the transportation, the shops, the people — yet everything works differently. It's quieter, calmer, and more organized. Trains arrive punctually, even in huge cities there's no sense of chaos, people don't raise their voices in public places, and queues feel like a natural part of everyday life, not a forced wait.

And the most surprising thing is that this order doesn't seem imposed. It's not a system of strict control, but rather a way of life to which people have become accustomed since childhood. Therefore, tourists often can't immediately understand why everything around them functions so harmoniously, even though no visible effort is made to achieve it.

Japan is unique in that it simultaneously contains two worlds that in other countries often conflict with each other. On the one hand, you can see ancient temples, wooden houses, traditional gardens, people in kimonos, and ceremonies dating back hundreds of years. On the other hand, you can see skyscrapers, bullet trains, vending machines selling everything from drinks to food, and technology that looks like it came from the future. But instead of a struggle between the past and the future, here they peacefully coexist, where one does not interfere with the other, but rather complements the other.

Even Japanese culture and aesthetics have become part of the global perception of beauty. Many people around the world, even those who have never visited the country, still encounter its influence through design, animation, architecture, minimalism, fashion, and cuisine. The Japanese philosophy of simplicity and harmony has gradually permeated global culture, teaching people to appreciate not only brightness and scale, but also silence, emptiness, and balance.

Tourists are particularly surprised by the level of public order and respect among people. It's rare to see conflicts in public places, loud arguments, or aggressive behavior. People try not to disturb each other, respect personal space, and treat others with consideration. This is evident even in the most mundane situations — on public transportation, in stores, or on the street. And while this may seem normal to locals, it often becomes one of the most powerful experiences for visitors.

Equally surprising is the feeling of security. In Japan, you can safely leave your belongings in a café and return for them later without constantly worrying about their safety. Many tourists report that for the first time in their lives, they begin to truly relax while traveling, as the usual tension and need to constantly monitor their surroundings disappear.

Another source of fascination is Japanese cuisine. People often think of Japan as just sushi, but in reality, the country's gastronomic culture is much broader and deeper. Here, food is not just a way to satisfy hunger, but part of a cultural experience. Each dish is created with attention to detail, taste, texture, and even appearance. This approach reflects respect for the product and the person who will eat it.

Modern Japan also impresses with its level of technology, but it's important to understand that technology here doesn't exist for show. It's integrated into everyday life to make it more convenient

and peaceful. Vending machines on every corner, smart toilets, precise public transportation, automated services — none of this seems like “the future for the future’s sake,” but rather a natural extension of everyday life.

However, perhaps the most important reason Japan inspires such admiration is its culture of respect. This isn’t just a set of rules of conduct, but a deep social foundation upon which the entire society rests. From childhood, people learn to be considerate of others, to be careful in their words and actions, and to respect the space and time of others. This is what creates the very atmosphere of calm that every visitor feels.

That’s why one trip to Japan is rarely enough. This country doesn’t reveal itself immediately. It’s not meant for superficial tourism, where simply seeing the main sights and leaving is enough. To truly understand Japan, you need time, observation, and a willingness to notice details. With each new visit, it reveals new sides, revealing sides that are impossible to see on the first visit.

Ultimately, most people who have visited Japan leave with the same feeling. They can’t always explain why this country made such an impression on them, but they almost always say they want to return again. And perhaps this is the main answer to the question of why Japan inspires admiration around the world.

Chapter 2

When is the best time to visit Japan?

Step 1. Japan is a country with very different climates and natural environments.

The first thing that is important to understand is that Japan stretches from north to south for almost 3,000 kilometers.

This means that at the same time, different parts of the country can have completely different weather.

For example, when it snows in Hokkaido, it may be dry and cool in Tokyo, but almost summer in Okinawa.

This is why “travel time” plays a huge role here.

Step 2. Each season changes not only the weather, but also the atmosphere of the country itself.

In most countries, the change of seasons is simply a change in temperature.

In Japan this is not the case.

Here it changes:

- color of nature
- human behavior
- type of events and holidays
- even the external rhythm of life

That is, you arrive not just to different weather — you arrive to a different “version of the country”.

Step 3: Spring makes Japan soft and emotional

In spring, Japan becomes visually very delicate.

When cherry blossoms bloom, cities look calmer, the air seems lighter, and people are in a special mood.

This is the time when:

- people walk in parks more often
- family and friendly gatherings take place under the trees
- Tourists take the most “beautiful” photos

That’s why spring is perceived as a romantic and emotional period.

Step 4: Summer makes Japan lively and energetic

In summer the country changes completely.

There is a lot of movement:

- street festivals
- night holidays
- fireworks
- bright clothes and yukatas

Even cities are becoming more “busy” and active.

But with this comes heat and humidity, making summer feel like a more intense and fulfilling season.

Step 5: Autumn makes Japan calm and deep

Autumn is the moment when the country “calms down”.

The heat subsides, there are fewer tourists, and nature begins to change colors.

Red and orange leaves make the landscapes more “deep”, almost philosophical.

At this time:

- easier to travel
- more silence
- more space for observation

Autumn is often perceived as the most “harmonious” season.

Step 6: Winter makes Japan quiet and atmospheric

In winter, Japan takes on a different character.

Cities are becoming quieter, there are fewer people on the streets, and in some regions there is snow.

This is especially felt in:

- hot springs (onsens)
- mountainous areas
- illuminated temples in the evening

This is the season when the country looks more “internal” and calm.

Step 7. The main conclusion

Therefore the phrase:

“Japan is a country where the timing of a trip completely changes the experience.”

means the following:

you can come to the same country,

but to see **four completely different worlds**, depending on the season.

And this is what makes a trip to Japan not a one-time experience, but a series of different discoveries.

Spring

Spring in Japan is considered the most desirable time to travel, and this isn't just a tourist stereotype. During this period, the country truly changes visually, emotionally, and even in its rhythm of life. The weather becomes mild and very comfortable: the winter chill has disappeared, but the summer heat and humidity have not yet returned. The air remains fresh, the sky is often clear, and the cities appear lighter and more vibrant, as if, after a long pause, they are beginning to breathe again.

The main reason for the popularity of spring is the cherry blossom season. It lasts only a short time, typically about one to two weeks in each region, and begins around the end of March, gradually spreading across the country. The exact dates vary slightly each year depending on the weather, so this phenomenon is always a bit unpredictable, which is precisely what makes it all the more precious.

During this period, Japan literally transforms into a landscape that's hard to compare to anywhere else. Trees are covered in delicate pink and white blossoms, creating the impression that cities, parks, and rivers were specially designed for a movie. Even ordinary places — roads, embankments, courtyards — begin to look like tourist postcards, although at other times they might be quite ordinary.

But it's important to understand that cherry blossoms aren't just a natural phenomenon, but a part of Japanese culture. For the Japanese, this time is called *hanami*, meaning “flower viewing.” People gather in parks, bring food, sit under trees, talk, and spend time with family, colleagues, or friends. There's a special philosophy to this: a reminder that life's beauty is temporary and should be appreciated in the moment.

However, spring also has a very practical downside, which is important to know in advance. This is the country's most popular tourist season. Because of this, prices for hotels, air tickets, and even some domestic services are noticeably higher. Popular destinations can be overcrowded, especially in Tokyo, Kyoto, and other well-known cities. Sometimes you have to book accommodations months in advance to get to the desired area without overpaying.

The benefits of spring in Japan

In spring, Japan is at its most beautiful and photogenic, making it one of the most visually stunning seasons. The weather is usually comfortable for walking, with no extreme heat or cold, and the natural landscapes become especially soft and harmonious. This is the ideal time for those who want to see Japan “as in pictures” — with blossoming trees, clean streets, and vibrant parks.

Another important advantage is the atmosphere. In spring, the country becomes more emotional and “open” to observation: people walk more, spend time outdoors, and life itself seems more public and festive.

The downsides of spring in Japan

The main drawback of spring is the high tourist load. During cherry blossom season, millions of tourists flock to the country, causing popular destinations to become very crowded. This can reduce the travel experience, especially for those hoping for quiet strolls and solitude.

The second drawback is the high cost. Spring is considered peak season, so accommodation and flight prices are usually at their highest of the year. Furthermore, due to high demand, it's best to book in advance, otherwise the selection becomes limited.

Summer

Summer in Japan is a season that almost always leaves tourists with mixed impressions. It's difficult to call it definitively good or bad, as it simultaneously shows the country at its most vibrant and most tiring.

On the one hand, Japan becomes incredibly vibrant and vibrant in the summer. Nature reaches its peak: everything is green, dense, and “full of life.” The mountains appear especially deep and voluminous, the forests become dense and rich in color, and the coastlines take on a striking contrast between the sea and the greenery. During this period, the country feels at its most dynamic, as if constantly in motion.

But on the other hand, it's precisely in summer that one of the most challenging factors for travelers comes into play: the climate. Most parts of Japan become extremely hot and humid. Temperatures often rise to 30—35 degrees Celsius, but the high humidity makes the air feel much heavier than in countries with drier climates. This means that even a simple walk around the city can quickly become tiring, especially in the middle of the day.

Early summer brings another important factor: the rainy season. During this period, the weather becomes unstable: rain falls frequently, sometimes daily, but it usually doesn't turn into sustained all-day downpours. Most often, it's a combination of overcast skies, short showers, and humid, stifling temperatures. This can be inconvenient for travel, especially if your route involves long walks and active movement.

However, despite the climatic challenges, summer in Japan boasts one of its strongest cultural aspects. It is during this season that the country truly shines through festivals and celebrations. Almost every week, various cities host matsuri — traditional street festivals. People wear light summer kimonos (yukatas), the streets are decorated with lanterns, stalls with food, games, and sweets appear, and the entire space transforms into a living, festive scene.

Evening fireworks displays hold a special place. They're not just entertainment, but a vital part of summer culture. Huge crowds gather by rivers or in parks to watch the fireworks, which can last for a very long time, creating a full-fledged spectacle.

The benefits of summer in Japan

Summer is the best time if your trip is not just about sightseeing but also about immersing yourself in Japanese culture. This is the season to experience the maximum number of traditional festivals, experience the atmosphere of Japanese streets, and see how the country “lives outside,” not just inside.

Summer also opens up access to natural locations at their peak beauty: mountain trails, national parks, and coastlines look especially vibrant and vibrant.

Cons of Summer in Japan

The main drawback is the climate. The heat combined with high humidity makes long walks physically challenging. Even at normal temperatures, the body quickly overheats, requiring travelers to take frequent rest breaks.

The second drawback is the rainy season, which makes the weather less predictable. While it doesn't always completely hinder travel, it can impact plans and routes.

It's also worth keeping in mind that summer isn't a “comfortable tourist season” in the classic sense. It requires more preparation than spring or fall.

Rainy season

In Japan the rainy season is called **tsuyu** (**rainy season**) and does not begin at the same time throughout the country, because the climate differs significantly between the southern and northern regions.

On average across regions it looks like this:

- Okinawa (south): early or mid-May to late June
- Kyushu and southern Japan: approximately early June to mid-July
- Central Japan (Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka): approximately June 8—10 to mid-July
- Northern Japan (Hokkaido): the rainy season is weak or almost absent

A simple explanation

To put it as clearly as possible:

The main rainy season for tourism in central Japan is roughly from June 10 to July 15.

It's important to understand that this doesn't mean constant rain every day. It's usually a combination of cloudy weather, high humidity, and intermittent precipitation. There are even completely dry days.

Why is this important for travel?

This period affects your trip as follows:

- June is considered the most unstable month for weather in central Japan.
- Late June and early July are the peak of humidity and frequent rainfall.
- From mid-July, the transition to more stable summer weather begins.

Expert opinion

The rainy season in Japan cannot be considered a single period for the entire country. It is a climatic transition that:

- starts earlier in the south
- ends later in the central and northern regions
- It feels different depending on the city

In practical terms, for the traveler, this means that June and the first half of July are the most likely period for unstable weather in central Japan, but not necessarily continuous rain.

Typhoons

Typhoons are powerful tropical cyclones that occasionally reach Japan. Simply put, they are strong storms with intense winds and prolonged rainfall. They most often form in the Pacific Ocean and move toward the Japanese islands, so the country is periodically caught in their path.

The most likely typhoon season is late summer and early fall. In practical terms, this is roughly from August to October, when the ocean is warmest and storm conditions become more active. However, it's important to understand that this doesn't mean typhoons are constant or affect the entire country at once. There may be more of them one year, fewer the next, and not every typhoon passes through densely populated areas.

Despite the severity of the natural phenomenon, Japan is considered one of the best prepared countries in the world for typhoons. This is because such weather conditions occur regularly, and the infrastructure and society are adapted to them. Buildings are designed to withstand strong winds and precipitation, the transportation system has clear protocols for stopping and resuming service, and weather warnings are distributed in advance via phone calls and official channels.

For travelers, a typhoon doesn't usually signify a disaster or a serious threat, but it can temporarily impact plans. Most often, this means one or two days of limited activity, during which it's best to avoid traveling between cities, long-distance travel, and simply stay indoors. During these periods, transportation may be delayed or temporarily suspended, especially air and rail service.

It's important to emphasize that the real-life experience of most tourists shows that encountering a typhoon while traveling is rare rather than the norm. Even if it does occur, its impact is usually limited to inconvenience rather than danger.

Ultimately, typhoons in Japan aren't a reason to avoid travel, but a factor to consider when planning. With the right approach and basic itinerary flexibility, they rarely pose a serious travel problem.

Cherry blossoms

Cherry blossoms are perhaps Japan's most famous and symbolic natural phenomenon, making the country recognizable worldwide. Every year, millions of people follow blossom forecasts to ensure they don't miss this brief but captivating period.

It's important to understand that the cherry blossom season is short-lived. In each region, this period typically lasts about one to two weeks, sometimes a little longer or shorter depending on the weather. But it's precisely this brevity that makes the phenomenon so precious. Cherry blossoms cannot be "stretched out" or scheduled with any certainty, so they are always perceived as a moment to be experienced.

The cherry blossom itself is more than just a beautiful tree. It carries profound meaning in Japanese culture. The blossoming and rapid fall of its petals symbolize the transience of life, its fragility and impermanence. This is a philosophical idea that is deeply rooted in the Japanese worldview: all beauty is fleeting, and therefore should be appreciated in the moment.

When the cherry blossoms bloom, Japanese cities truly transform visually and emotionally. Parks, streets, embankments, and even ordinary residential areas become softer and brighter in appearance. The pink and white hues create a sense of tranquility, and even bustling metropolises like Tokyo appear quieter and more "soft" for a few days.

During this period, a special tradition emerges in the country: hanami, or flower viewing. People go to parks, sit under trees, bring food and drinks, socialize, and spend time with family, friends, or colleagues. It's not just a picnic, but a social and cultural event that unites people around a single natural phenomenon.

This time of year is especially popular for tourists. Many plan their trip to Japan specifically for cherry blossom season. Because of this, popular destinations become very busy, and booking accommodations and transportation requires advance planning.

It's thanks to the cherry blossoms that spring in Japan is perceived as the most emotional season. It's the time when the country looks its most romantic and visually striking, and the journey itself is often remembered not for the sights, but for the atmosphere that lasts only a few days a year.

Autumn

Autumn in Japan is often considered the second, and sometimes even the main, peak travel season. This is because it is during this period that the country experiences its most balanced weather and, at the same time, one of its most visually beautiful.

In autumn, temperatures gradually become mild and comfortable. The summer heat subsides, the humidity drops, and the air becomes lighter and more pleasant for long walks. This is one of those seasons when you can comfortably spend the entire day outside without feeling overly fatigued by the weather.

The main natural event of autumn is the changing color of the leaves, especially those of red maples, known in Japan as momiji. Gradually, the green trees begin to shift hues, transforming into a vibrant palette of red, orange, and yellow. As a result, mountainous areas, parks, gardens, and especially temples, set against a natural backdrop, appear as if they were specially designed by artists. In some places, it seems as if the landscape itself becomes more profound and saturated than at any other time of year.

Autumn also has a calmer atmosphere compared to spring. There are fewer tourists, popular spots are less crowded, and the surrounding area feels more open. This directly impacts the travel experience: it's easier to navigate, easier to enjoy the views, and less time is wasted waiting or in crowds.

The benefits of autumn in Japan

Autumn is considered one of the most comfortable seasons for travel. The weather is stable, there are no extreme heat waves, and the humidity is significantly lower than in summer. This makes traveling physically easier and more comfortable. Autumn also offers one of the most powerful visual effects of the year — red maples and autumn colors create unique landscapes that cannot be seen in other seasons.

Another important advantage is the tranquility. Autumn in Japan is less crowded than spring, so you can visit popular destinations without the rush and crowds.

The downsides of autumn in Japan

The main drawback of autumn is that the peak of natural beauty varies depending on the season. Momiji blossoms don't bloom simultaneously across the country: in some regions, the leaves are already bright red, while in others, they're still green. This requires more precise route planning.

Also, popular destinations may still see high tourist traffic during peak fall foliage periods, especially in famous parks and historic areas.

Red maples

Red maples in Japan are more than just a beautiful autumnal phenomenon; they are a fully-fledged part of the culture, almost comparable in significance for many Japanese to the cherry blossoms. Here, autumnal changes in nature are perceived not as a backdrop, but as a separate seasonal “calendar of events,” closely monitored each year.

In Japan, there’s even a term called the “red leaf front.” It’s an informal term used to describe the gradual progression of autumn tree color from north to south. Leaves begin to change color first in the northern regions and mountainous areas, then the process gradually moves to central Japan and eventually reaches the southern territories. As a result, different parts of the country can experience different stages of the autumn landscape over the course of several weeks.

For many people both within and outside the country, this period becomes a veritable travel season. Tourists and Japanese people alike plan trips to mountainous regions, ancient cities, parks, and temples specifically to coincide with the peak foliage coloring. Popular routes become especially popular during this time, as the combination of red, orange, and yellow hues with traditional architecture creates a distinctive and recognizable Japanese visual style.

Unlike cherry blossoms, which bloom for a very short time and often depend on precise weather conditions, autumn colors last significantly longer. This makes travel more predictable and gives tourists a better chance of seeing beautiful scenery even with slight changes in their travel dates. Therefore, many consider autumn a more reliable season for travel planning, especially if nature and visual experiences are the goal.

Winter

Japan is very heterogeneous, and it is the climate that makes it different depending on the region.

In the north of the country, especially in Hokkaido, winter is truly harsh by Japanese standards. Temperatures there typically range from -5°C to -15°C, and can drop even lower in the mountainous regions. Snowfall here is consistent and deep, making the region considered one of the best in Asia for winter sports and ski resorts.

In central Japan, including Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, winters are much milder. Average temperatures typically range from 3°C to 10°C. Severe frosts are rare, snowfall is infrequent, and it usually melts quickly. The weather is typically dry and sunny, making the cold less noticeable than in countries with high humidity.

In the south, for example in the Kyushu region and especially in Okinawa, winter hardly feels like a typical winter. Temperatures there often hover around 12°C to 18°C, and snow is virtually nonexistent. It's more of a cool season than a cold one.

Why winter feels different

It's important to understand that the perceived temperature in Japan depends not only on the temperature but also on humidity and wind. For example, +5°C in dry Tokyo can feel more comfortable than +10°C in humid countries.

The benefits of winter in Japan

Winter remains one of the quietest seasons for travel. There are fewer tourists, queues are virtually nonexistent, and accommodation prices are often lower than during the spring and fall peak seasons. Central cities are convenient for exploring, as the weather is stable and predictable.

A distinct advantage is the atmosphere. Winter churches, illuminated streets, hot springs, and mountain views create a very tranquil and visually pristine experience.

Snow festivals

Snow festivals in Japan are among the most spectacular winter events in the country, transforming the cold season into a major cultural phenomenon. The most famous of these is held in Sapporo, Hokkaido, and is called **Sapporo Snow Festival**.

Today this event is known throughout the world, but its beginning was quite simple and even accidental.

How the Snow Festival Came to Be

The festival's history begins in 1950. Japan was undergoing a period of recovery after World War II, and schoolchildren and students in Sapporo decided to create a small exhibition of snow sculptures in the city's Odori Park.

They built several snow figures — animals and simple compositions. It was more of a local pastime than a large-scale event.

But the event unexpectedly attracted the attention of city residents. People liked the idea, and in the following years, participation grew. Gradually, the festival became organized and later grew into a national and international event.

Over time, not only local residents, but also military personnel, artists, architects, and even teams from other countries joined in.

What's happening at the festival today?

The modern Sapporo Snow Festival is no longer just a sculpture exhibition. It's a massive winter exhibition spread across several venues across the city.

The festival's main feature is the giant snow and ice sculptures. Some are so large that they reach several stories in height. Among them are replicas of famous buildings, castles, temples, anime characters, historical figures, and even entire urban scenes.

Creating such sculptures requires a tremendous amount of effort. Sometimes a single large composition requires several weeks of work and thousands of tons of snow. Entire teams are involved in the process, working almost like construction crews, only instead of concrete and steel, they use snow and ice.

Festival atmosphere

During the day, the festival looks like a huge snow city, where you can walk among the sculptures, examine the details and take photos.

But it's especially impressive at night. When the lights are turned on, the ice figures glow from the inside and outside. The light reflects off the surface of the snow and ice, creating the feeling of being inside a fantasy world or a movie set.

At this moment, the city turns into a space that seems simultaneously real and unreal.

Legends and cultural meaning

Unlike sakura or momiji, snow festivals don't have ancient religious roots. They're a modern tradition, but over time, their own cultural meaning has developed around it.

For residents of Sapporo and Hokkaido, snow isn't just weather, it's a part of life. Winter here is long and snowy, and instead of viewing it as an inconvenience, people have learned to turn it into art.

Therefore, snow festivals can be seen as a symbol of human adaptation to nature: instead of fighting with snow, we create beauty from it.

Why the festival became a global event

Over time, the festival has become international because it combines several things at once:

- art
- architecture
- winter nature
- mass participation

— visual effect of scale

It's also great for tourists: it's a limited-time event that can be planned in advance.

Chapter 3

What you need to know before buying a ticket

Visa

A visa is the first real “filter” anyone faces when traveling to Japan. It’s important to understand one thing right away: Japan isn’t a visa-free country for most CIS countries, so a trip almost always begins not with choosing a hotel or an itinerary, but with preparing the necessary documents.

And here’s where many people make their first mistake: they think a Japanese visa is just a formality. This is not the case. The Japanese visa system is very careful, strict, and focused on verifying the purpose of the trip, financial stability, and the logic of the itinerary.

How Japan views tourists

When you apply, Japan actually asks three questions:

Why do you want to come to Japan?

Do you have a realistic travel plan?

Will you be able to financially support your stay and return back?

If at least one of these points looks questionable or “vague”, the likelihood of refusal increases.

Therefore, a Japanese visa is not a “questionnaire”, but a small dossier about your trip.

What does the process look like in practice?

A visa is usually obtained in advance through a consulate or visa center (depending on the country of application). Tourists must gather documents confirming:

purpose of trip (tourism)

route

place of residence

financial solvency

The most important thing isn’t just the availability of documents, but their logical coherence. For example, if you declare a 10-day trip but don’t have a clear itinerary or proof of accommodation, this raises questions.

Key documents (the essence, not the bureaucracy)

To put it in layman’s terms, you need to prove three things:

that you are really going to travel?

that you have money for the trip?

that you will return home?

Typically the following are used for this:

passport

statement

photo

travel program (itinerary by days)

proof of accommodation (hotels or invitation)

financial documents

It’s important to understand that even if you have money but don’t have a logical route, it can work against you.

A subtlety that is often misunderstood

The Japanese visa is very “logical.” This means the consulate looks not only at the documents you provide but also at how coherent your story is.

For example:

If you write that you want to see Tokyo, Kyoto, and Okinawa in 3 days, that seems unrealistic.

If you don’t have a clear place to live, the question arises of where you will be

If there is no financial justification, there is a risk that the trip will not be secured

That’s why sometimes they refuse not because “something is wrong,” but because “the trip story looks unconvincing.”

Risks and common mistakes

The most common mistake is trying to “simplify” documents or submit incomplete information. This almost always leads to problems.

The second mistake is presenting a trip without a well-thought-out itinerary. Many people underestimate the importance of a travel itinerary, but it’s precisely this that demonstrates that the trip was truly planned and not just a random occurrence.

The third error is unreliable or inconsistent data. The Japanese system is very sensitive to inconsistencies.

Timing and reality of the process

Visas aren’t issued instantly. You usually need to submit your documents well in advance, several weeks before your trip. Sometimes the process takes less time, sometimes longer, depending on the season and the consulate’s workload.

It is important to remember that before your trip, it is better not to leave everything “to the last minute,” because Japan is a country where planning plays a key role.

Advantages of the Japanese visa system

Despite its strictness, the system has one advantage: if you’ve prepared properly, the process becomes fairly predictable. A Japanese visa isn’t a “lottery” if you’ve completed everything logically.

Also, having received a visa once, in some cases it is easier to obtain repeat visas.

Cons

The main drawback is the demanding approach to detail. Documents cannot be treated formally or superficially.

The second disadvantage is the need to prepare the route and confirmations in advance, which takes time and preparation.

Passport

In a strict and practical sense, Japan is a country where a passport is not just a formality, but directly determines how easily a person can enter the country.

It is important to distinguish between two issues: which passports allow entry without a visa and which do not.

1. Which passports allow you to enter Japan without a visa?

Japan has a visa-free regime with a number of countries for short-term tourist trips (usually up to 90 days).

Main groups of countries with visa-free entry

Europe

Almost the entire Schengen area and a number of European countries, including:

- Germany
 - France
 - Italy
 - Spain
 - Netherlands
 - Sweden
 - Norway
 - Finland
 - Poland
 - Austria
 - Belgium
 - Switzerland
 - Czech Republic
 - Portugal
 - Greece
 - Hungary
 - Denmark
 - Ireland
 - United Kingdom
- and other European countries

North America

- USA
- Canada

Asia (partially)

- South Korea
- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Brunei
- Hong Kong
- Macau
- Taiwan
- Thailand (depending on passport type and agreement terms)

Oceania

- Australia
- New Zealand

Latin America (partially)

- Brazil
- Argentina
- Chile
- Mexico
- Peru
- Uruguay
- and a number of other countries in the region

Conclusion on visa-free travel

If your passport belongs to one of these countries, you can usually travel to Japan without a visa as a tourist, but the final decision always rests with the border guard upon entry.

2. Which passports cannot be used to enter without a visa?

If the country is not included in the list of visa-free agreements, then a visa is required.

This applies to most countries:

- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Turkmenistan
- Pakistan
- India (visa required in most cases)
- most African countries
- a significant part of the Middle East countries

An important principle

Japan does not rate passports as “better” or “worse.”

The decision is based solely on interstate agreements.

If there is no agreement, a visa is required.

If so, visa-free entry is possible.

3. Passport requirements (critical details)

Even if you have a visa or visa-free entry, your passport must meet basic requirements.

The passport must be:

- valid for the entire duration of the trip
- preferably with a shelf life (often at least 6 months is recommended)
- in good physical condition
- with readable data and a photograph
- with enough free pages for stamps

Common problems

A common mistake is underestimating the condition of a passport.

Problems may arise if:

- the passport is damaged
- the pages are torn or badly worn
- the photo or data is difficult to read
- the validity period is too short

Even if you have a visa, this may result in denial of entry.

4. Key practical conclusion

There are three levels of access for Japan:

1. Visa-free countries

Entry is possible without a prior visa, but subject to border control.

2. Countries with a visa regime

Pre-arrangement of a visa at the consulate is required.

3. Border control

Even with a visa, the final decision on entry is made by the Japanese border guard.

Insurance

Travel insurance is one of the most underrated aspects of a trip to Japan. Many tourists treat it as a mere chore or even try to save money, but in reality, it's often the difference between a minor issue being a mere inconvenience or a very expensive situation.

It's important to understand one simple thing: Japan has high-quality healthcare, but tourists pay for it and often have to pay on site. Even a routine doctor's visit or examination can be expensive, and in serious cases, the costs can quickly mount to thousands of dollars.

Why Insurance in Japan Is Really Important

Japan is a safe country, but the risks for tourists are not related to crime, but to domestic and medical situations:

- heat stroke in summer
- injuries during walking and hiking
- cold or infection
- food reactions
- injuries in the mountains or on excursions
- flight delays due to typhoons or weather

Even a simple situation like a hospital visit can incur an on-site fee. Therefore, insurance here serves as financial protection, not a formality.

According to travel estimates, the average cost of travel insurance for Japan is approximately **\$28 per day**, and a typical trip costs about **\$400—500 per policy**. In broader surveys, the range can range from approximately **\$46 to \$150+ per week**, depending on the coverage and age of the tourist.

What expenses does insurance cover?

Good travel insurance usually includes:

- emergency medical care
- hospitalization
- transportation to the hospital
- sometimes — medical evacuation to another country
- compensation for trip cancellation or delay
- loss of luggage or documents

In some cases, medical evacuation coverage can be very expensive, as transportation from Japan to another country is one of the most expensive parts of treatment.

How much does insurance really cost?

Prices depend on the level of coverage:

- Basic medical policies are cheaper
- Extended packages with evacuation and trip cancellation are more expensive

According to market estimates:

- Minimum options can start from around tens of dollars per trip
- The average comfortable level is about \$50—150 per week
- Full-fledged extended plans — higher, depending on age and activity

It is also important to keep in mind that insurance usually accounts for a small percentage of the total trip (approximately 2—6% of the travel cost).

Which companies are most often chosen by tourists?

According to an analysis of sales and popular travel plans for Japan, the following insurance companies are commonly found:

- IMG
- Tin Leg

— Travel Insured International

They are among the most frequently purchased items among travelers.

Also frequently mentioned in expert ratings:

— Allianz

— AXA

— World Nomads

They are usually chosen for their balance between medical coverage, reliability and ease of registration.

How to choose the right insurance

The biggest mistake is choosing insurance based solely on price. In Japan, it's more important to look at the policy's contents.

When choosing, you need to consider:

1. Medical coverage

It should be high enough because medical services for foreigners can be expensive.

2. Medical evacuation

This is one of the most important points. In complex cases, transportation can cost tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

3. Activity coverage

If mountains, skiing, hiking or active walks are planned, this should be included separately.

4. Ease of payments

Some insurance policies are more complex when it comes to processing compensation. This is more important than it seems, because in real-life situations, speed is crucial.

Insurance Features Specific to Japan

There are several important nuances:

— The tourist usually pays for the treatment himself first

— then the insurance company will reimburse the costs

— Some clinics require a payment guarantee

— In serious cases, insurance may interact directly with the hospital.

Natural risks should also be taken into account: typhoons, earthquakes, and transport delays are sometimes included in extended packages.

Common mistakes tourists make

The most common problems:

— buying the cheapest insurance without checking coverage

— lack of medical evacuation

— ignoring active recreation (mountains, sports)

— taking out insurance after the trip has already begun

— misunderstanding of payment terms

Mobile communications

Prices in Japan depend less on the carrier and more on the connection type: eSIM, physical SIM, or pocket Wi-Fi. Carriers (Docomo, au, SoftBank) often operate internally, while tourists purchase ready-made packages through intermediaries or through tourist plans.

1. eSIM (the most popular option)

This is currently the most convenient format for tourists.

Approximate prices:

— 5 days: approximately 10—20 USD

— 7—10 days: approximately 15—35 USD

— 15—30 days: approximately 25—60 USD

What influences the price:

— unlimited or traffic limit

- speed (there are “cut down” cheap versions)
- partner operator (Docomo is usually a little more expensive, but more stable)

Important point:

“Unlimited” often means:

After a certain volume, the speed decreases.

2. Physical SIM card

A slightly less convenient, but still popular option.

Approximate prices:

- 7 days: 15—30 USD
- 10—14 days: 20—45 USD
- 30 days: 30—70 USD

Peculiarity:

- often sold at airports
- sometimes only internet (no calls)
- may require a passport upon purchase

3. Pocket Wi-Fi (mobile router)

Very common in Japan, especially for tourists and groups.

Approximate rental prices:

- 1 day: 5—10 USD
- 7 days: 35—70 USD
- 14 days: 60—120 USD
- 30 days: 90—180 USD

Additional costs:

- pledge (sometimes)
- fine for loss of device (may be 100—300 USD)

Why the price is higher:

because you are renting a physical device with unlimited internet.

4. Roaming (the most expensive option)

Approximate prices:

- 1 day: 5—15 USD (sometimes more)
- 7 days: 30—100+ USD
- 30 days: may exceed USD 150—300

Problem:

- limited speed
- unstable quality
- high price per gigabyte

5. Hidden costs that are often not talked about

Here's where tourists most often make mistakes:

1. “Unlimited” with speed limitation

After 1—3 GB per day or a certain volume, the speed drops to a level where cards and video work slowly.

2. Activation and delivery

Some eSIM services include fees for:

- activation
- QR code
- SIM card delivery (if physical)

3. Loss of Pocket Wi-Fi

This can be the most expensive risk, with fines reaching several hundred dollars.

6. How to choose the most profitable option

To put it simply:

One person, short trip (up to 10 days)

→ eSIM (15—30 USD)

One person, 10—20 days

→ *eSIM or SIM (25—60 USD)*

Group of 2—5 people

→ *Pocket Wi-Fi (split the cost)*

Budget option

→ SIM with limited data (cheaper, but less convenient)

Internet in Japan is not expensive by global standards, but it is important to understand the structure:

- You pay for the format, not the operator.
- “unlimited” is often conditional
- The cheapest option is not always the most convenient

Internet

The internet in Japan is one of the strongest elements of the country's infrastructure. It's fast, stable, and accessible almost everywhere, but it's structured differently than many tourists expect. It's not just the availability of the network that matters, but also how it's used in everyday life.

1. The overall picture of the Internet

In Japan, there are three main connection methods:

- mobile Internet (SIM, eSIM, routers)
- free or public Wi-Fi
- home Wi-Fi in hotels and accommodations

In large cities, the internet is almost always stable, and mobile operator coverage (Docomo, au, SoftBank) is considered one of the best in the world.

2. Free Wi-Fi: Where is it really available?

Free Wi-Fi exists in Japan, but it often requires registration and doesn't always work perfectly.

Main locations:

Airports

Wi-Fi is available immediately upon arrival at all international airports. This is the standard connection point for tourists.

Railway stations

Many major stations in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and other cities have free Wi-Fi, especially in tourist areas and transportation hubs.

Cafes and restaurants

Chains like Starbucks, McDonald's, and some other establishments offer Wi-Fi, but often require registration via email or phone.

Shops and convenience stores

Some 24-hour stores offer Wi-Fi access, but usually with time or speed limitations.

Hotels

Most hotels offer free Wi-Fi, but quality can vary widely, from very fast in cities to weak in smaller inns or ryokans.

3. Wi-Fi systems and access operators

SoftBank Wi-Fi

One of the largest free access networks.

Peculiarities:

- works in many cafes, stations and tourist places
- requires registration
- may be congested during rush hour

Wi2 300

Paid Wi-Fi network covering many public spots.

Peculiarities:

- more stable than free networks
- inexpensive subscription
- used as an additional backup Internet connection

Universal Wi-Fi apps

There are services that combine multiple access points into one login system so you don't have to register separately for each network.

4. Limitations and problems of free Wi-Fi

Despite its availability, public Wi-Fi has its own peculiarities:

- registration required
- can automatically turn off after a while
- speed drops under high load
- Some networks only work for tourists with a foreign number.

Therefore, Wi-Fi in Japan is more of a supplementary option rather than a primary means of communication.

5. Internet speed

Mobile operators provide very high levels of speed:

- In cities, 4G and 5G work quickly and reliably.
- Brief interruptions are possible in the metro and tunnels
- Docomo has better coverage in rural areas.
- SoftBank is faster in the city center, but less stable outside it.
- au (KDDI) — a balance between speed and coverage

6. Limitations and features of the Internet

1. Confidentiality

In Japan, personal information is taken very seriously.

It is not recommended to publish:

- faces of people without permission
- children
- private houses
- situations where a person can be identified without consent

2. Public accusations and criticism

Legislation is sensitive to:

- public accusations
- insults
- dissemination of unverified information

Even posts on social media can have legal consequences.

3. Filming and publishing

Some places restrict photography:

- temples
- private territories
- individual restaurants

It is important to pay attention to the “no photography” signs.

4. Cultural norms on social media

Not accepted:

- publicly humiliate a service or people
- publish conflict situations with staff
- make people look awkward

5. Geolocation

Continuous use of geolocation may:

- reveal the route
- show place of residence
- create security issues

7. What's best not to publish

For proper internet behavior in Japan:

- people without consent
- interior spaces of temples without permission
- conflict situations
- negative public accusations
- the exact location of the hotel in real time

Money

Money in Japan is a topic many tourists underestimate. From the outside, it seems like a developed country with cards and ATMs, but in practice, there's a unique logic to using cash, cards, and digital payments that differs from Europe and the US.

Currency of Japan

The official currency is the Japanese yen.

is denoted as JPY or the symbol ¥

In practice, you will see prices like

¥100 ¥500 ¥1000 ¥10000

Approximate course (very important reference point)

The rate is constantly changing, but in recent years it has remained in the range

1 US dollar is approximately 140—160 yen

1 euro is approximately 150—170 yen

This is important because Japan has become significantly cheaper for many tourists in recent years due to the weakening of the yen.

What does money look like in real life?

Cash is still widely used in Japan.

especially in small towns, cafes, churches, markets and transport outside of large systems

Coins are very important here

1 5 10 50 100 500 yen

and tourists are often surprised at first that they are actually used constantly

Banknotes

1000 2000 5000 10000 yen

Cash or card

Japan has long been a cash country, but that's changing.
You can live comfortably in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto with a card.
but outside major cities cash is still required

Where the card works almost everywhere

- chain stores
- large hotels
- shopping centers
- transport machines in cities
- restaurants in city centers

Where cash is needed

- small restaurants
- temples and donations
- local markets
- buses in small towns
- taxi in some regions

Inflation and price changes

Japan has enjoyed a long period of near-zero inflation.
but the situation began to change after 2022

Currently, inflation is around 2—4 percent per year, depending on the period and goods.

This may seem small, but for Japan this is a significant change because the country had previously lived for decades with virtually no price increases.

How does this affect tourists?

hotel and food prices are gradually rising
especially in tourist areas

But at the same time, the yen weakened, so for foreigners, travel sometimes even became cheaper when converted into dollars or euros.

Approximate real prices

to understand the standard of living

coffee 300—600 yen

lunch at an inexpensive restaurant 800—1500 yen

subway train 150—300 yen

Shinkansen bullet train 10,000—20,000 yen for long-distance routes

Budget hotel 6,000—12,000 yen per night

average hotel 12,000—25,000 yen

What currency should a tourist take with him?

the most correct option

take US dollars or euros with you and exchange them in Japan

Why

Exchange in Japan is very convenient and transparent

the rate is often normal

many official exchange offices and banks

Everything works quickly at airports

What NOT to do

do not change money in random places

don't carry too much cash

don't rely on just one card

Do not use old or damaged banknotes for exchange.

Cards and payments

they work in Japan

Visa

Mastercard

partially American Express

but there is a nuance

Sometimes the card may not work in a small store

or the terminal may not support foreign cards

Digital payments

are actively developing in Japan

PayPay

Rakuten Pay

Suica and Pasmo as transport and payment cards

But it's not always convenient for tourists to set them up, so the basis is still a card plus cash

Japan's Main Reality About Money

Japan looks like a very digital country.

but in practice it is a hybrid

In big cities you live as if in a modern cashless world

but in small places you go back to cash as the main system

Japan is a country where money works in two modes at the same time.

modern digital and traditional cash

and the best approach for a tourist is simple

card for large purchases

cash for everyday expenses

How much money do you need for a trip to Japan (7, 10, and 14 days)

This is one of the most important questions before traveling, because Japan can be either quite affordable or very expensive, depending on how you travel. There's no set price, only scenarios.

I'll break this down into actual travel styles to make it clear without any illusions.

BASIC EXPENDITURE LOGIC

In Japan, you always spend money on 4 things.

housing

food

transport

entertainment

and it is their combination that forms the budget

1. ECONOMY OPTION

This is if you live in capsule hotels or hostels.
eat at inexpensive cafes and convenience stores
you travel by metro and buses
minimum of expensive entertainment

7 days economy

approximately \$600—\$900

or 90,000—135,000 yen

housing 250—400 dollars

food \$120—200

transport 80—150 dollars

entertainment \$100-\$150

10 days economy

*approximately \$850—\$1200
or 130,000—180,000 yen*

14 days economy

*approximately \$1,200—\$1,700
or 180,000—250,000 yen*

2. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

This is the most popular option among tourists.

3-star hotels

normal restaurants

comfortable transport, including sometimes the Shinkansen
excursions

7 days intermediate level

approximately \$1,200—\$1,800

or 180,000—270,000 yen

housing 500—800 dollars

food \$250-\$400

transport 150—250 dollars

entertainment \$200—300

10 days intermediate level

*approximately \$1,700—\$2,500
or 250,000—380,000 yen*

14 days average level

approximately \$2,300—\$3,500
or 350,000—500,000 yen

3. COMFORT LEVEL

these are 4—5 star hotels
taxis sometimes replace the metro
high-end restaurants
excursions with guides
domestic flights or multiple Shinkansen

7 days of comfort

*approximately \$2,500—\$4,000
or 380,000—600,000 yen*

10 days of comfort

approximately \$3,500—\$5,500
or 500,000—800,000 yen

14 days of comfort

*approximately \$5,000—\$8,000
or 750,000—1,200,000 yen*

HIDDEN COSTS THAT ARE FORGOTTEN ABOUT

These things are often not included in the plan, but they really affect the budget.

Shinkansen between cities

entrance tickets to temples and museums

SIM card or internet

souvenirs

nightlife

taxi at night

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE TOURISTS MAKE

People often think that Japan is only Tokyo and Kyoto.
and do not take into account transport between cities
but one trip on a high-speed train can cost as much as a whole day's accommodation

HOW DOES THE PRICE CHANGE FOR YOU NOW?

The weak yen has made Japan more accessible to many tourists.
approximately 10—25 percent cheaper in dollar or euro terms compared to previous years
but within the country, prices are gradually rising due to inflation at around 2—4 percent per
year

A SIMPLE RULE FOR PLANNING

if you don't want to count in detail

A minimum of 7 days of comfortable travel costs about \$1,500.

10 days about 2000—2500 dollars

14 days about \$3,000

This is the most realistic reference point for most tourists.

Cards

Bank cards are widely accepted in Japan, but the system isn't as universal as many people think. It's important to distinguish between three factors: international payment systems, sanctions restrictions, and the technical limitations of Japanese terminals.

1. Which cards work reliably in Japan?

In most cases, the following work without problems:

- Visa
- Mastercard

These are the main international systems that are accepted in hotels, large stores, shopping centers and most tourist spots.

Also partially operational:

- American Express (AmEx)
- Diners Club (less common)

But they may not be accepted in smaller establishments.

2. Which cards may not work or work with limitations

1. Russian maps (key block)

After 2022:

- Visa and Mastercard issued in Russia are not accepted outside the country.
- UnionPay from Russia is unstable: sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.
- Mir cards are not accepted at all in Japan.

This is not related to Japan as a country, but to the international financial system and the disconnection of Russian banks from global payment networks.

2. Cards under sanctions (in general)

In Japan and the international system, the following do not work or are limited:

- cards of banks under international sanctions (US/EU SDN lists)
- cards issued in jurisdictions with limited access to SWIFT/card networks
- prepaid cards from unknown issuers without an international license

3. Some UnionPay cards

UnionPay is officially accepted in Japan, but:

- not in all terminals
- more often in tourist areas or large chains
- sometimes requires manual selection of the payment network

3. Why a card might not work, even if it is “international”

This is an important point that tourists often don't understand.

Reasons:

1. The terminal does not support the network

Small stores may only accept Visa or only certain chains.

2. The issuing bank blocks the transaction

Sometimes banks automatically block transactions in Asia due to suspicious activity.

3. Incompatibility with Japanese payment systems

Some Japanese POS terminals require manual network selection (Visa/Mastercard), and the cashier may not know how to do this.

4. Online authorization restrictions

Some cards require SMS confirmation, which may not be available when roaming.

4. Cash vs. Cards (Japanese Reality)

Despite the high level of technology:

- Japan is still partly a cash-based country.
- Small restaurants, temples, and markets often accept only cash.
- Even in Tokyo, it's sometimes easier to pay in yen.

5. Which cards are best to take to Japan?

Optimal set:

- Visa (primary card)
- Mastercard (backup card)

Recommendations:

- have at least 2 cards from different banks
- enable international operations in advance
- remove limits on purchases abroad
- enable transaction notifications

6. Which cards should not be used for travel?

1. The only card from one bank

If it gets blocked, you'll be left without access to your money.

2. Cards without international support Visa/Mastercard

local or internal banking products

3. Cards under sanctioned banks

they either don't work or work unstable and can be blocked at any moment

7. Important Hidden Nuances of Japan

1. Pre-authorization in hotels

Many hotels block the deposit on the card (hold), sometimes for several days

2. Machines and transport

Some machines only accept cash or IC cards (Suica, Pasmo)

3. Small towns

the proportion of cash there is higher than in Tokyo

8. The main conclusion

Japan's financial logic for tourists is very simple:

- Visa and Mastercard are the main standard
- cash — required reserve
- Alternative cards (UnionPay, etc.) — only as an additional option

A short rule of thumb for experts

You can't travel to Japan with just a card and no cash.

Cash

Cash in Japan

In Japan, cash still plays a very important role, and this is something that many tourists underestimate before their trip.

The country is technologically modern, but at the same time, yen in paper form and coins are constantly used in everyday life.

How important is it to travel with cash?

Cash in Japan is not a backup option, but a full-fledged part of the payment system.

Even if you have a card, you will still encounter situations where it is simply inconvenient or impossible to pay without cash.

these are small family restaurants

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