



# Japan

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### Accommodation

Hotels on our tours are generally of a 3 to 4-star international standard. Each property has private bathrooms and air conditioning, plus tea and coffee facilities in each room.

At each hotel your National Escort/Local Guide will try to organise the rooming arrangements to suit everyone's requirements. If you are travelling as a couple, please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds.

Some programmes include a stay in a 'Shukubo' Buddhist lodge in Koya-San. Staying in a Shukubo is a wonderful way in which to experience another facet of traditional Japanese life. The rooms are modest; bedding is usually a futon style on a soft tatami mat floor and bathroom facilities are shared.

### Transport

**Road** – Vehicles are left hand drive with modern roads throughout the country. Please note that seatbelts are compulsory by law in Japan.

**Rail** – Japan has one of the most efficient rail networks in the world. Delays are a rare occurrence and there is a high level of safety and service. Carriages are fully air-conditioned and all seats face forward, usually with 2 or 3 seats on each side of a central aisle. There are Western bathroom facilities on board.

### Electricity

Throughout Japan the electricity is 100 Volts and the plugs are of the flat two-pin plug variety.

**Japanese-style plug**



There are two different electrical currents in the country: 50 hertz in eastern Japan (Tokyo) and 60 hertz in the west (Nagoya, Kyoto, and Osaka). Most major hotels will have outlets for both 110 and 220 Volts for any small appliances you may bring, such as hair dryers, cameras or razors.

### Money

Japanese currency is called Yen and is symbolised by '¥'. The exchange rate at the time of printing is 1000 yen = AUD10.45, NZD11.45 and ZAR0.1.

Coins come in 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 denominations while notes are issued as 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000 yen.

**Credit cards** – Japan is very much a 'cash society'. Credit cards are gradually becoming more common, however cash is much more widely used. Do not expect that you will be able to pay for items on your credit card as you may be disappointed. You must therefore ensure that you have sufficient cash in your possession for the duration of the tour. Credit cards are mostly used in large department stores and high end/large hotels.

**ATMs** – most ATMs in Japan are only for use by local bank accounts however you will find ATMs in the airports, 7Eleven stores and in post offices that will accept foreign bank cards. Look for a window display 'International ATM Service' and the symbol of a green clover.

### Meals

Our fully inclusive packages include all meals. Breakfast will be buffet-style at your hotel. Lunches and dinners are pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes. All beverages will be at your own expense.

Japan is not just a land of sushi! While fish is in abundance, Japan has a huge variety of food types to cater for even the fussiest eater.

Rice is the main staple dish, and noodles such as ramen, soba and udon with various toppings are common. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get

practicing! For those tour members who may crave some Western comforts from home, you may like to take some favourites with you such as Vegemite, Peanut Butter and muesli bars.

### Special Dietary Requirements

**Vegetarians and Food Allergies** – In order to ensure that you are properly catered for at each meal, please make sure that you have alerted Wendy Wu Tours of any medical dietary requirements so that we can endeavor to make arrangements for you in advance. Unfortunately we can give no guarantee that special requirements can always be met. Anyone who is on a restricted diet, should reiterate this with their guide upon arrival.

We recommend you bring snacks/supplements you can eat to ensure you will always have something on hand if your diet, allergy or preference cannot be catered for. Patience, understanding and personal involvement with your National Escort/Local Guide will go a long way to ensuring that your dietary requirements are met.

### Facilities

In Japan you will encounter both Western-style and Asian-style toilets. Your accommodation will always have western facilities; however public toilets may have a combination of both or one or the other. Please carry tissues with you while sightseeing as public facilities may not always supply toilet paper.

### Insurance and Health

Comprehensive travel insurance is highly recommended. If you have chosen to decline the insurance offered by your Travel Agent or Wendy Wu Tours, please ensure you have arranged the appropriate cover for your holiday, as overseas medical costs are expensive and Medicare and Australian private health insurance will not cover you outside of Australia.

If you are taking travel insurance with your credit card company, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a copy of the Product Disclosure Statement.

A health certificate is not required for travel to Japan, however we strongly advise you to consult your doctor or contact the Travellers Medical and Vaccination Centre in your capital city for advice on appropriate inoculations.

### Pharmaceutical Goods

Consider taking a 'personal medical kit' containing any medication or medical equipment you may need during your time in Japan. Suggestions include: All prescribed medication (with a prescription, or cover note for any medical equipment you will carry, from your doctor), headache tablets, anti-diarrhoeal tablets, cold and flu tablets, travel sickness tablets, lozenges, insect repellent, sunscreen and anti-bacterial hand wipes or gel.

### Weather

Japan's temperature range can fluctuate greatly from summer to winter, more characteristic of a continental climate rather than an island nation. There are four distinct seasons, with the rainy season lasting from mid-May to June, and the Typhoon season generally from August to October.

Due to Japan's position in the Pacific Ring of Fire, the country has the most volcanoes of any nation and experiences earthquakes often.

### What to Wear

The dress code throughout Japan is casual and comfortable. Smart casual clothes are recommended for evening banquets and shows. Japanese people take great pride in their appearance and how you are treated may be reflected in how you present yourself.

When visiting temples or other places of worship, it is suggested that all members wear long trousers and a collared shirt/blouse with sleeves as a sign of respect, your footwear will also need to be removed. We suggest you do not bring socks with holes. Shoes that slip on and off are highly recommended as you will need to remove your shoes often throughout your tour.

**Please refer to the 'Suggested Packing List' available on our website for further details.**

## Etiquette

Social etiquette is very important in Japanese culture. While as a Westerner you will not be expected to strictly adhere to the customs; you will find that by acknowledging some of the traditions you will gain a better cultural understanding of this unique way of life.

- When you are entering a home or restaurant you will need to remove your shoes. Usually slippers will be provided, however if they are not, you may enter with your socks on. There are separate slippers to be used for the bathroom. This is also an indication for others to show the bathroom is occupied!
- The gesture for 'no' is by fanning your hand sideways a few times in front of your face.
- Tipping is not understood in Japanese culture and by doing so you will find it causes confusion.
- Sniffing rather than blowing your nose is considered more appropriate in front of other people.
- Chopsticks should never be stuck upright in rice. Food should also never be passed from one set of chopsticks to another. Both of these are traditional funeral customs and it is thought to be bad luck if practiced otherwise.
- If you need to sit on the floor, men usually cross their legs while women sit with their feet to one side.

## Entrance Fees and Optional Extras

All of your entrance fees for attractions listed in the itinerary are included in the price of your tour. However, you may be offered extra sightseeing that is not included on the itinerary. Participation in this is at the discretion of the passenger and is not part of your tour; therefore any additional costs will need to be paid directly to the guide.

## Photography

You should always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph and respect their decision if they say no. Be aware that it is forbidden to take photos of government buildings. Your guide will indicate when you cannot take photographs. Some attractions and sites may require you to pay a photography fee.

## Visas and Immigration

Visas are not required for Australian or New Zealand passport holders. Passengers from South Africa will require a visa. If you hold a passport of another nationality we recommend you check with your Travel Agent or our Visa Department. Your passport must have a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to Australia.

Upon arrival in Japan you will need to complete a customs declaration form along with an entry/exit form. You will be required to keep a copy of these forms with you during your stay in Japan as you will need to present them again upon your departure.

## Luggage and Incidental Items

Passengers are limited to one suitcase weighing no more than 20kg. You may also carry a cabin bag of approximately 7kg. Please ensure your luggage is properly locked at all times.

## Shopping

Japan is a haven for all shopping enthusiasts! In addition to every electronic device you could imagine, there is also a wide range of traditional handicrafts such as bamboo ware, kimono, silk goods, pottery, wood-block prints and lacquer ware. Most shops will be open from 10am to 7 or 8pm. Please note that haggling is not common or appreciated in Japan.

Wendy Wu Tours, our staff, National Escorts/Local Guides are not qualified nor permitted to guarantee the quality or value of any goods purchased during your holiday. All passengers who make purchases must accept responsibility for their decision regarding the good's value, as well as the risk and process of credit card purchase and/or shipping.

There have been many instances in the past where passengers have purchased large items that were shipped only to be disappointed at the exorbitant fees

imposed by customs upon arrival home. The local retailer may not be aware of the enormity of such fees so we urge all passengers to carefully consider such purchases. If you sign a sales contract with a local retailer you are therefore bound by those conditions of sale. We recommend that you very carefully read and understand all the terms listed. Wendy Wu Tours cannot take any responsibility for any expenses incurred. Unfortunately, we cannot assist in returning or refunding goods once you have left Japan.

## Safety and Security

Japan is recognised as one of the most crime free countries in the world. In saying this, please still be aware of your personal items and ensure you keep belongings on you at all times. This is especially recommended in crowded areas like marketplaces and train stations.

Do not leave any valuables unattended in your hotel room. We advise you to lock away any cash, credit cards, passports, etc. in the safe (either in your room or at reception). Wearing a money-belt under your clothing is strongly recommended.

It is also recommended that you do not bring valuable jewellery, etc. with you to Japan. We suggest that each passenger takes photocopies of their passport and that the copies are kept in various sections of your luggage – i.e. not where the original documents are kept!

Likewise, while travelling each day, do not leave any valuables unattended on the coach. It is your own responsibility to ensure that you carry your money and valuables on you at all times.

## Time Difference

While on holidays, most people like to contact their family members or friends, but it is often difficult to work out the time back home. Japan's time zone is +9 GMT meaning they are 1 hour behind Australian Eastern Standard Time, 3 hours behind New Zealand, and 7 hours ahead of South Africa.

## Keeping in Touch

**Phone calls** – To call overseas the international access code is 0011, followed by the country code, then the local area code (omitting the first 0) then the number. For example to call Wendy Wu Tours Australia you would dial 0011 61 2 9224 8888.

**Mobile phones** – If you have a 3G or 4G smart mobile phone you should have no issues in continuing contact with your loved ones at home with roaming. Make sure you activate global roaming on your phone and check costs with your provider prior to your departure to avoid any hassles while you are travelling. If you do not have a compatible smart phone you are able to hire mobiles from the airport. This will cost approximately JPY 500-1000 per day plus call charges.

**Post** – It costs 70 yen to send a postcard anywhere in the world. The service is efficient and reliable. Postcards and stamps can be purchased from post offices, convenience store and kiosks at train stations.

**Internet** – Internet cafés can be found in most areas and are usually open around the clock. Wifi connectivity is becoming increasingly available in public areas such as train stations, restaurants and convenience stores. Internet access is also available in hotels in the major cities.

## Our Ground Operator

If you have any concerns prior to your departure please do not hesitate to contact our office on 1300 727 998 or your local travel agent during office hours. If it is outside of office hours and your query is urgent please email:

**afterhrsassistance@wendywutours.com.au**

Wendy Wu Tours wish to ensure that your holiday runs as smoothly as possible and so if, during your trip you are dissatisfied with any element of your arrangements please notify your National Escort/Local Guide who will endeavour to resolve the issue at the time. Should the outcome not be satisfactory, please contact our ground operator partner, Inside Japan Tours by telephone.

Their contact details are:

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*The content of this fact sheet was correct at the time of printing and may be subject to change.*