

Unofficial Survival Guide To Japan



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Currency

The types of currency in circulation are: 10,000 yen, 5,000 yen and 1,000 yen. Bank of Japan has started issuing 2,000 yen bill in Year 2000; however, those are very difficult to find. The coins are: 500 yen, 100 yen, 50 yen, 10 yen, 5 yen and 1 yen.

Sample of Japanese currency

<http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~KX5N-KGYM/yokohama/currency.htm>

Exchange rate

Here is a good site for calculating how much your dollar worth in Yen.

<http://www.oanda.com/>

ATM/Bank

The easiest way to obtain local currency is via ATMs. The Citibank ATM is located in the Narita Airport. Before heading to Tokyo, you may want to stop by and get some cash there.

Most Japanese banks are open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm from Monday to Friday; they are closed on Saturdays and National Holidays.

Hours

Most of Japanese ATMs are open for limited schedule. However, the Citibank ATMs are open for 24 hours.

Post office ATMs

Japanese Post office also offers ATM service. Look for these signs:



(Sign for Post office)

Consumption Tax

The current tax rate is 5% for all general purchases and services.

Etiquette

Addressing people in Japan

It is common practice and courtesy to address all Japanese by a last name followed by *san*. i.e., “Urano *san*.” If you are a close friend, you can call him/her in a first name basis, a nickname or a first name plus “*san*.” For Western names, most Japanese will call the person in a first name and “*san*”. (i.e., Stan *san*)

Bathroom

Most Public bathrooms may not be equipped with toilet paper, paper towels or hand dryer. Thus, both men and women usually carry a handkerchief and a pack of Kleenex with them all the time. Otherwise, you will be wiping your wet hands on your pants! In the street, you can find people handing out free Kleenex with Ads. So you should have plenty of supplies if you forget to bring some with you.

There are two types of bathrooms: Western and Japanese (of course!). My recommendation is to go with Western style if you have a choice.

Here is a site describing how to use a Japanese toilet:

<http://www.choshinet.or.jp/~d2790iye/Toilet.html>

Tips

No tipping is necessary in Japan.

Food

You will find a variety of cuisines from McDonald to Iron chef Sakai’s French Restaurant. Some of them are, of course, expensive; however, you can still enjoy Japanese cuisines without breaking the bank. Some of popular cuisines are: *Sushi*, *Tempura*, *Soba*, *Udon*, *Ramen* and *Okonomiyaki* (Japanese Pizza). In Tokyo, you can also enjoy non-Japanese food such as Italian, French, Chinese and Indian.

Gourmet Navigator – comprehensive listing of restaurants in Japan

<http://gnavi.joy.ne.jp/index-e.htm>

Starbucks

Well, I will have to mention this topic. Where can you find Starbucks in Tokyo? They are EVERYWHERE! In *Shinjuku* area alone (near hotel and station), I have counted at least eight Starbucks. You don’t have a problem spotting one. However, the size ranges from Short (US Kid’s size) to Grande. I think the price of Short is comparable to Tall in the US. So it is not that expensive. If you are brave, you should try “Mach Frapuccino” (Green Tea Frapuccino), only available in Japan.

Shopping and Sight Seeing

Hato Bus

If you are cramped for time, I will recommend taking HatoBus tour (half day, full day and night tours). With the tour, you will have a chance to see the highlights of Tokyo. They also have a pick-up service from and to your hotel. Here is a site that lists all of English (!) tours.

<http://www.hatobus.co.jp/english/index.html>

Sight seeing/Shopping on your own!

If you would like to see traditional and history side of Tokyo, I will recommend following places:

Asakusa still has some charm of old downtown Tokyo, and is perhaps best known for its *Kaminarimon Gate*. It is a huge red paper lantern, weighing about 45 lbs., and suspended above the passageway to the Temple.

After going through the gate, you will walk through *Nakamise Shopping Street*, which is packed with small shops. You can find several unique Japanese crafts and souvenirs in many of stores.

Imperial Palace (*Kokyo*)

The Imperial Palace is located right in the heart of Tokyo. You cannot enter inside; however, you can still admire the outside view of palace, gardens and cross the famous bridge, *Meganebashi* (translation: Eyeglass bridge). Some Japanese also jog around the Palace, which is about 3.1 miles.

If you are in mood for shopping or wants to see how “younger” generation spends time, you may want to visit *Harajuku* and *Shibuya* area.

In *Harajuku*, there is well known street called *Takeshita dori* where small boutiques and shops are crammed in both sides.

Some of interesting stores in Harajuku are: Oriental Bazaar and Kiddy Land.

If you need to buy some toys, Kiddy Land is a place to be. The store is 4 or 5 levels; each floor offers different toys (Boy, Girl, Barbie, etc.) Almost next to Kiddy Land is Oriental Bazaar. As you can tell from the name, the store carries Japanese crafts, prints and ceramics.

You can also find quiet spots, Meiji Shrine, in *Harajuku*. The shrine is to consecrate Emperor Meiji and his Empress. The vast compound consists with plants, ponds and numerous trees; the road to the shrine is sheeted with small rocks. This is also the most

visited shrine in Japan for New Year's celebration. To enter the Shrine, you will have to cross the stone bridge. There you may see multi-colored hair student hanging around.

Shibuya probably has more department stores. *Shibuya* is known for a Dog Statue, *Hachiko*, which is erected in front of station.

Story of *Hachiko* (faithful dog)

Hachiko was a pet for a professor of University living in *Shibuya*. Every morning and night, the dog would come to *Shibuya* station and greet his master. Even after the professor past away, the dog kept coming back to the station every day for next 11 years.

Therefore, the statue has been a very popular meeting/waiting spot. Because of its popularity and so many people waiting there, it has become "harder" to spot your friend. So when meeting at *Hachiko*, you will have to specify the place as "a tail of *Hachiko*" or "right foot of *Hachiko*."

Ginza is the very first western style shopping district to be built in Japan and is well known as an exclusive shopping area, similar to Fifth Avenue in NY.

If you are looking for latest and greatest electronic gadgets, only one word for you:
AKIHABARA!

Akihabara is known as a electronic product district of Tokyo; there are about 600 shops in the area (ranging from very small to five stories department stores filled with electronics products).

Shinjuku

Since the build team will be staying at *Shinjuku* Hilton, I will include some information about this area. *Shinjuku* station is the busiest station in Japan and handles the largest numbers of Train passengers (over 1 millions per day).

Shinjuku is also known for its Camera district; *Yodobashi* Camera, one of three major camera shops, is located near the station. There are lot of restaurants and Japanese pubs in the area, so you do not have any problems finding a place to eat or drink.

Tokyu Hands At Shinuku Station South Exit

A Tokyu hands is a very popular store (usually five to six levels) in Japan; there is located near *Shinjuku* station. Each floor offers different products ranging from stationary, post cards, travel goods, gardening products, etc. It is a fun place to just browse around; I am sure that you will find something interesting in the store.

Telephone

Public Telephone

The public telephone is colored Green, red or gray (with ISDN sign). The cost is 10 yen per 3 min (approx). You can also insert 100 yen but will not return your change even for unused portions. The one way to avoid this is to purchase telephone card; it is available in two denominations: 500 yen and 1000 yen.

Outside line (from hotel and office)

To reach outside line, you will need to use “0” instead of “9” in the US.

Transportation

From Airport to Hotel

If you have heavy or big luggage, my recommendation is to take Airport Limousine Bus; you cannot miss the Orange counter with “Airport Limousine” sign after clearing and exiting the custom. The Narita airport is about 40 miles from Tokyo; however, because of heavy traffic, the trip to your hotel can take anywhere from 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

The cost is 3000 yen per person. And they will take major credit cards.

<http://www.limousinebus.co.jp/e/>

Getting around (Tokyo)

Signage

Most of metro/subway stops are indicated in both Japanese and English.

Public transportation

Tokyo is known for its highly developed metro/subway system. And it is convenient, safe and efficient. Trains do come on time! However, I would recommend avoiding rush hours both morning and night, unless you are planning to lose some weight or would like to feel like sardines in a can. You can get a map of metro system in the hotel concierge.

There are two metro systems: JR and Tokyo metro such as *Keio* and *Odakyu*. JR (Japan Railways) used to be a government owned railways and privatized during late 1980s. Therefore, the fare structure is different from JR and other private lines. One note about public transportation in Japan is that you do not get your ticket back. So you have to keep good records of your daily expenses or buy prepaid cards.

JR IO Card

IO Card is a JR’s prepaid railway card. You can purchase tickets with it (like currency) or use it as “ticket” itself by placing in automatic ticket validation system (*jido kaisatsu*).

(Sample IO Card)



JR Orange card

The orange card is similar to IO card; however, the major difference is that you can use it for purchasing tickets only.

(Sample Orange Card)



You can buy IO or Orange card at any JR stations; the most popular denomination is 1,000 yen (but also available in higher denominations). After you use up the amount, you can keep the card; now you have a record for the expense report!

SF Metro card

The metro card is a Tokyo metro system version of IO Card. So you can purchase tickets or use as a ticket with Metro card with denominations of 1,000 yen, 3000 yen and/or 5,000 yen. It is also called as Pass net.

(Sample SF Metro Card)



Map of Tokyo metro system

<http://www.tokyometro.jp/e/index.html>

Taxi

You can easily pick up a taxi in Tokyo. When you get in, you should not open a door except for a front passenger side. The door will open automatically. The base fare is 660 yen for up to 1.4 miles. Then, the rate will increase 80 yen per 0.17 miles. From 11 pm to 5 am in the morning, additional 30% late night fee will apply to the charge. The smaller sized cab is slightly cheaper (650 yen, only 10 yen difference) but is difficult to find. The 90 % of cabs are regular size.

Side note: The front passenger seat is usually reserved for most “junior” employee, who is responsible for giving a direction to the driver and pay the fare at the end ☺

Conversational Japanese

It's never too late to learn Japanese! Here are some basic:

Hello

Konnichiwa

I am (your name).

Watashi wa ~ desu.

Good morning

Ohayou or Ohayou gozaimasu (polite term)

Good afternoon

Konnichiwa

Good evening

Konbanwa

Thank you	<i>Arigato or Arigatou gozaimasu (Polite term)</i>
I am sorry	<i>Gomennasai</i>
Excuse me	<i>Sumimasen</i>
Nice to meet you (for the first time)	<i>Hajimemachite.</i>
Where is a bathroom?	<i>Toire wa doko desuka?</i>
How much is this?	<i>Kore wa Ikura desuka? Or Ikura desuka?</i>
Can I have a receipt?	<i>Receipt wo kudasai.</i>

Enjoy your trip!