

# Japanese Culture and Traditions

## 1. It's a safe country

Japan is one of the world's safest countries. But, like anywhere in the world, don't "flash" your cash, and don't provoke anyone.

## 2. Cash is king

Workers are usually paid in cash and many restaurants and shops accept only cash. Your hotel and some big stores will accept credit cards, but always check first. Always have a lot of yen in your wallet. If you need cash, look for a "**7-Eleven**" store – they always have ATMs. They accept all bank cards and are open 24/7.

## 3. The language

You should learn some basic phrases before you travel. Since etiquette is extremely important in Japan, it is important to know how to say "*thank you*", "*please*", and "*excuse me*". You could also learn the words for "*bathroom*" and "*exit*" – they are sometimes important!

Thank you	Arigatō
Please	Onegaishimasu
Excuse me	Sumimasen
Bathroom	Senmenjo
Exit	Deguchi

## 4. Take your shoes off

When you enter someone's house, it is extremely important to remove your shoes. It shows respect. This is also true for many restaurants.

## 5. Shaking hands/Bowing

When you meet someone, it's often polite to bow, but shaking hands is also accepted. It is best to copy what other people do.

## 6. Tips

You don't need to give tips in Japan. If you leave money on the table in a restaurant, the waiter will run after you, to give you the money back. Waiters receive a good salary in Japan, so they don't need tips (very different from the USA). This is also true for hotel staff.

## 7. No English

Often, menus and signs in shops and restaurants don't have English translations. However, in tourist areas, English menus are often available.

## 8. Don't call the waiter

In Japan, it's usually not necessary to call a waiter. Many restaurants have small black boxes on the tables for customers to "buzz" the waiter. Don't embarrass yourself by making loud noises! In some restaurants, customers can order their food using a touch-screen on their table. In general, keep your voice low when you are in public.

## 9. Underground shopping

Japan has utilized a lot of its underground space by building enormous shopping centers, with many stores, cafés and restaurants.

## 10. All you can drink!

You should try "*Nomihodai*" – you can drink as much as you want for one or two hours. There are some rules – you must finish one drink before you order the next, and when the time finishes, you must immediately stop drinking and leave.

## 11. Gifts

If you are invited to someone's home, you should take a small gift. You should say *"I'm sorry, this is only a small gift"*. Also, since you can't tip in Japan, if you want to thank someone for their help or service, you can give them a small gift. This could be a souvenir from your country (maybe a key-chain or a fridge magnet). When you give the gift, you must say *"thank you"* and bow. However, don't exaggerate the event, make it quick and simple.

## 12. Things you should not do in Japan

- Point at people or things with your finger
- Say "Hello" to strangers in the street
- Eat or drink in public
- Take photos of people without permission
- Speak in a loud voice
- Lose your temper

## 13. Japanese people worry

Japanese people are constantly worried about offending people, so think about this when you ask for a favor. Many times, they will say "Yes", when they really want to say "No". It's important for you to "read between the lines". If you feel that they aren't fully committed to the word "Yes", then assume it's a "No". In Japan, "No" is a rare word to hear. While visiting Japan, you should try to avoid the word "No".

## 14. Always be modest and respectful.

Japanese people are generally shy, modest and respectful. You should also try to be modest and respectful when visiting Japan.

## 15. Masks

People in Japan often wear surgical masks. They do this when they aren't feeling well, so they can help to stop the spread of germs. Sometimes it is to avoid pollen in the air.

## 16. Business cards:

When you exchange business cards in Japan, you should observe the following:

- The highest ranking people exchange cards first
- Give and receive cards using both hands
- Ensure the card is turned towards the receiver
- Keep received cards on display for as long as possible (for example on the table)
- If cards are exchanged simultaneously, then you must give your card with your right hand (holding it by a corner) and receive the other's card with your left.
- When you give your card, say:  
*"Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_\_"*.
- When you receive a card, say:  
*"Thank you for your card, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Nice to meet you."*

