



Japan



- Japan is a collection of islands in the Pacific Ocean, in the continent of Asia. The main islands are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu.
- The capital city of Japan is Tokyo, located on the largest island, Honshu. About 12 million people live in Central Tokyo, while over 35 million live in the Tokyo area.
- Japan is over 70% mountainous terrain, with 18% suitable for people to live. Over 127 million people live in Japan.
- The two major religions in Japan are Shinto and Buddhism. Religious ceremonies are usually held at births, weddings, and funerals. On New Year's Day visiting a temple or shrine is also a common custom. About 1% of the population follow Christianity.
- The currency of Japan is the Yen.
- The official language is Japanese, but English is commonly taught in schools. Japanese uses four forms of writing, Kanji (Chinese characters), Hiragana (phonetic alphabet for native words), Katakana (phonetic alphabet for foreign words), and Romaji (western alphabet used to write Japanese). Japanese is traditionally written from top to bottom, beginning at the right-hand side of the page.
- Major industries include consumer electronics, motor vehicles, machine tools, steel, and nonferrous metals.



Matsumoto Castle in Matsumoto, Japan

- The government of Japan is a parliamentary with constitutional monarchy. The prime minister currently is Shinzō Abe.
- Summer is usually very hot and humid, and during mid-June, there is a rainy season which lasts around one month. In the winter, the weather is usually mild with the northern areas of Japan

receiving more snow. Spring and autumn are usually sunny with mild temperatures.

- Earthquakes are common in Japan. Japan is very seismically active with over 1,500 earthquakes per year. Tsunamis and volcanic eruptions are other natural destructive forces in Japan. In 2011, the Tōhoku Earthquake was the most powerful earthquake that's known to have struck Japan.
- There are 160 types of wild mammals, 700 species of birds, and 32,000 species of insects that reside in Japan. This includes the Japanese serow, giant flying squirrel, Japanese bear, Japanese macaque, wild boar, and Sakhalin red fox.
- The total area of Japan is 145,883 sq mi. A major mountain range that is in Japan is called the Japanese Alps. The tallest mountain is Mount Fuji.
- Japan also has about 200 volcanoes, 60 of which are active.
- Japanese food is quite different than the food of western countries. There is a lot of rice, fish, and vegetables, but little meat. With little fat or dairy, this diet is very healthy, which helps Japanese people live, on average, longer than any other people in the world.
- Emperors controlled Japan until the 12th century A.D., when military rulers, called shoguns, took control and ruled by might.
- Baseball, tennis, golf, and skiing are all popular in Japan. One traditional Japanese sport is sumo, an ancient form of wrestling. Sumo wrestlers are generally very big and heavy. The match is lost by the wrestler who first steps outside the ring or touches the ground with anything but the soles of his feet.



These women are wearing the native dress called a kimono.