

Japan

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| Capital: | Tokyo |
| Population: | 127 million (approx) |
| Religion: | Buddhism and Shintoism are the principal religions of Japan. Less than 1% of the population is Christian. Other minority religious groups include a small community of Muslims in Tokyo, and a number of new religions of predominantly Buddhist doctrinal foundations, eg. Rissito Kosei-Kai and Soka Gakkai. |
| Government: | A constitutional monarchy, Japan has an emperor as its head of state, while the prime minister is head of government and is responsible to the parliament. |
| Ethnic Groups: | Japanese - 99% (including the indigenous Ainu peoples on Hokkaido Island); Korean. |
| Language: | Japanese is the national language, composed of two chief dialects, Hondo and Nanto, and a range of sub-idioms (eastern and western Hondo, Kyuishi, Kinki, Izumo, and Nansei). It is also spoken in Korea and Taiwan as a second language. There is an emphasis on English as a second language. |
| Currency: | The unit of currency in Japan is the yen (JPY). |

- Located off the east Asian coast in the North Pacific, Japan comprises four main islands - Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu and Hokkaido, and about 3,000 small ones. Two thirds of the land area is mountainous and thickly forested with only the coastal plains cultivable. Industrial and urban development is concentrated in a strip along Honshu's south coast. Urbanisation is now changing traditional Japanese life style with over 75% of the population now living in cities.
- The origins of Japanese society are obscured by uncertain archaeological evidence and a veil of political and religious myth, which strove to legitimise the Yamato dynasty by linking it with the creation of the world itself, through the person of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, alleged ancestor of the Japanese imperial line.
- Paleolithic tool finds suggest human settlement stretching back at least 30,000 years, and there are pottery remains from 10,000 BC.
- Japanese tradition, still taught as historical fact as recently as 1945, regarded the accession of a reputed first emperor, Jimmu, in 660 BC as marking the beginning of the Japanese state and inaugurating an unbroken line of 125 emperors. This dynastic continuity has imparted a strong sense of distinctiveness and homogeneity to Japanese society.

- Following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 by the US, Japan has quickly set about developing its industrial and technological strength, so that it is now recognised as the world's leading industrialised economy.
- Society is structured on the hierarchical lines promoted through Confucianism. Consensus is favoured and confrontation frowned upon. The group has greater importance than the individual. There is enormous pressure to excel at school and once workers join an organisation, they often stay for life showing amazing allegiance. However today's generation are more individualistic and less loyal. They travel more and expect more from a career.

Business and Social Etiquette

- Be punctual at all times. First meetings are very important and will set the tone of future relationships.
- It is customary for male-male, and male-female contacts to effect a bow on greeting and departure, sometimes with a weak handshake. Female-female greetings and departure involve a slight bow only. If someone bows to greet you, observe carefully. Bow to the same depth as you have been bowed to, because the depth of the bow indicates the status relationship between you. As you bow, lower your eyes. Keep your palms flat against your thighs.
- Business cards should be formally presented at every new introduction after the bow or handshake. It is best to have one side in English, and the reverse side in Japanese. Business cards should be presented with both hands, with the Japanese details facing the person to whom the card is presented. Do not put business cards in your pocket, or in your wallet if you plan to put it in your back pocket. Never write on a person's business card.
- Show respect for age, status and/or seniority. Introduce a person of lower rank to someone of higher rank and indicate their relationship to yourself, or position within their company.
- Males usually wear suits and ties for business. Females also wear suits or equally smart wear.
- Business is conducted formally and it may require 2-3 meetings to reach commercial outcomes.
- Do not show impatience with the Japanese method of reaching a decision through consensus. Negotiations may take longer than are common in the West, but once a decision is reached, implementation is swift and cooperative.
- The word 'yes' may have several meanings. A Japanese response 'I'll consider it' may actually mean 'no'.
- Laughter is sometimes used to disguise embarrassment, however on the job, the Japanese are very serious and do not usually try to 'lighten things up' with humour.

- Maintain an active correspondence with your Japanese contacts. Acknowledge receipt of their communications. Send interim status reports and other information that might interest them. Let them know about your activities. If a personal relationship develops, send holiday greetings.
- In communications, follow the lead of your Japanese contacts. Conformity is a form of sincere flattery for the Japanese. If they prefer to correspond by letter, do the same.
- Where possible, without being boastful, do not hesitate to identify yourself with prominent people, organisations, and products. The Japanese like to be associated with success.
- If you are a woman dealing with Japanese, be clear about your title and responsibilities at the outset. Do not hide your gender (for example, by using only your first initials); confusion could do harm later.
- Business entertaining usually occurs after business hours, and very rarely in the home. However always remove shoes prior to entering a Japanese house; slippers will be provided. These slippers must never be worn in the toilet, but should be left outside the door.
- Gift giving is very common Japan. If invited to a Japanese home, take a small gift like sweets or flowers (but not white flowers as these are associated with death). For the Japanese, the ceremony of gift giving is more important than the objects exchanged. The Japanese do not usually open gifts directly upon receiving them.
- While business entertaining is primarily for building friendships rather than for doing deals, you may discuss business during the evening.
- Pointing or beckoning is not polite, especially to elder, senior or superior people. Instead, wave your hand, palm up, toward the object being indicated, as the Japanese do.
- Touching parts of the body, blowing one's nose, sniffing, and snorting in public are also impolite.

Language

- Family names are mentioned first. To distinguish male and female names, many women's first names end in 'ko' and some male first names in 'ro' or 'ji'. Many Koreans in Japan have taken on Japanese names. Some men have taken on Japanese names. Some men take on a western first name when living overseas - eg. Shoji 'Sam' Tanaka.
- Always use Mr, Mrs or Miss unless otherwise invited. Given names are normally reserved for the family.
- Japanese women must take on their husband's family name once married, although this may change.

| English | Japanese | Phonetics |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Hello | Hajimemashite | Hah-jeh-meh-mahsh-tay |
| Good morning | Ohayo gozaimasu | O-hah-yo go-zye-mahs |
| Good evening | Konban wa | Kon-bahn wah |
| Good bye | Sayonara | Sigh-oh-na-ra |
| Yes | Hai | Hi |
| No | lie | Ee-yeh |
| Please | Dozo | Doh-zo |
| Thank you | Arigato gozaimasu | Ah-ree-gah-tohgo-zye-mahs |
| You're welcome | Do itashimashite | Doh ee-tahsh-ee-mahsh-tay |
| I don't understand | Wakarimasen | Wah-kah-ree-mahs-sen |

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