

Holidays in Japan

Japanese holidays give Japan a great amount of individuality. All of the government-recognized holidays do not have foreign influence. However, many Japanese people celebrate foreign holidays like Halloween and Christmas even though they are not official holidays. All 16 Japanese holidays, regardless of the day they fall on, give workers time off during the week. Holidays are often coupled with festivals, which are large communal gatherings.

National Holidays

正月 (shōgatsu) is what Japanese call the New Year. It's one of the biggest celebrations of the year. Typically, many will participate in 初詣 (hatsumōde) which means "first shrine visit." People will either go to a Shinto or Buddhist shrine to wish for a good year. Japan also celebrates a coming-of-age day called 成人の日 (Seijin no Hi). During this holiday, those who reached adulthood in the last year are



celebrated. Recently, Japan lowered its recognized age of adulthood from 20 to 18 which takes effect in 2022. Women who come of age will wear the traditional kimono dress. Another big

holiday is Golden Week. This week is actually celebrating a collection of holidays which are Showa Day, Constitutional Memorial Day, Greenery Day, and Children's Day. All Japanese workers get an entire week off, and this is considered the busiest of all the holidays in Japan. There are many festivals during this time.

Foreign Holidays in Japan

While not officially recognized, Japan celebrates some foreign holidays too. Some major foreign holidays are Halloween and Christmas. Japanese love dressing up in costumes called “cosplay,” so Halloween is a fun holiday for them. Usually, they won’t trick-or-treat, but instead they get together for big group photoshoots. Christmas is all about gift-giving in Japan. Most of Japan is not Christian (only 1%), so there isn’t much religion tied into the celebration. Rather, families and friends get together and exchange gifts and buy KFC Chicken as a traditional meal!



Festivals



Japanese have large communal festivals called 祭り (Matsuri) thrown during holidays. During these festivals, one can play games, participate in traditions, and watch beautiful fireworks displays. Food stands are also very popular at these events. Typically, Japanese wear the traditional kimono and men wear yukata. A large festival called 雪祭

り (Yukimatsuri) meaning Snow Festival is held in Hokkaido every year. Ice sculpture contests are held, and many people come to compete. Little kids can participate and build snowmen too!

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