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Japan

Japan^[a] is an island country in East Asia. Located in the Pacific Ocean off the northeast coast of the Asian mainland, it is bordered on the west by the Sea of Japan and extends from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea in the south. The Japanese archipelago consists of four major islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—and thousands of smaller islands, covering 377,975 square kilometers (145,937 sq mi). Japan has a population of over 123 million as of 2025, making it the eleventh-most populous country. The capital of Japan and its largest city is Tokyo; the Greater Tokyo Area is the largest metropolitan area in the world, with more than 37 million inhabitants as of 2024. Japan is divided into 47 administrative prefectures and eight traditional regions. About three-quarters of the country's terrain is mountainous and heavily forested, concentrating its agriculture and highly urbanized population along its eastern coastal plains. The country sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, making its islands prone to destructive earthquakes and tsunamis.


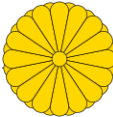




The first known habitation of the archipelago dates to the Upper Paleolithic, with the beginning of the Japanese Paleolithic dating to c. 36,000 BC. Between the fourth and sixth centuries, its kingdoms were united under an emperor in Nara, and later Heian-kyō. From the 12th century, actual power was held by military dictators (*shōgun*) and feudal lords (*daimyō*), and enforced by warrior nobility (*samurai*). After rule by the Kamakura and Ashikaga shogunates and a century of warring states, Japan was unified in 1600 by the Tokugawa shogunate, which implemented an isolationist foreign policy. In 1853, a United States fleet forced Japan to open trade to the West, which led to the end of the shogunate and the restoration of imperial power in 1868. In the Meiji period, Japan pursued rapid industrialization and modernization, as well as militarism and overseas colonization. In 1937, Japan invaded China, and in 1941 attacked the United States and European colonial powers, entering World War II as an Axis power. After suffering defeat in the Pacific War and two atomic bombings, Japan surrendered in 1945 and came under Allied occupation. Afterwards, the country underwent rapid economic growth and became one of the five earliest major non-NATO allies of the United States. Since the collapse of the asset price bubble in the early 1990s, Japan has experienced a prolonged period of economic stagnation, commonly known as the Lost Decades.

Japan is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature, the National Diet. A great power and the only Asian member of the G7, Japan has constitutionally renounced its right to declare war, but maintains one of the world's strongest militaries. A developed country with one of the world's largest economies by nominal GDP, Japan is a global leader in the automotive, robotics, and electronics industries, and has made significant contributions to science and technology. It has one of the world's highest life expectancies, though it is undergoing a population decline. Japan's culture is well known around the world, including its art, cuisine, film, music, and popular culture, which includes prominent animation, comics, and video game industries.

Etymology

The name for Japan in Japanese is written using the kanji 日本 and is pronounced *Nihon* or *Nippon*.^[11] Before 日本 was adopted in the early 8th century, the country was known in China as *Wa* (倭, changed in Japan around 757 to 和) and in Japan by the endonym *Yamato*.^[12] *Nippon*, the original Sino-Japanese reading of the characters, is favored for official uses, including on Japanese banknotes and postage stamps.^[11] *Nihon* is typically used in everyday speech and reflects shifts in Japanese phonology during the Edo period.^[12] The characters 日本 mean "sun origin",^[11] which is the source of the popular Western epithet "Land of the Rising Sun".^[13]

The name "Japan" is based on Min or Wu Chinese pronunciations of 日本 and was introduced to European languages through early trade.^[14] In the 13th century, Marco Polo recorded the Early Mandarin Chinese pronunciation of the characters 日本國 as *Cipangu*.^[15] The old Malay name for Japan, *Japang* or *Japun*, was borrowed from a southern coastal Chinese dialect and encountered by Portuguese traders in Southeast Asia, who brought the word to Europe in the early 16th century.^[16] The first version of the name in English appears in a book published in 1577, which spelled the name as *Giapan* in a translation of a 1565 Portuguese letter.^{[17][14]}

<div>Japan</div> <div>日本国 (Japanese) <i>Nihon-koku</i> or <i>Nippon-koku</i></div>	
<div></div> <div>Flag</div>	<div></div> <div>Imperial Seal</div>
<div>Anthem: 君が代 ("Kimigayo") "His Imperial Majesty's Reign"</div> <div>0:59</div>	
<div>State seal: 大日本國璽 (<i>Dai Nihon Kokuji</i>) "National Seal of Greater Japan"</div> <div></div>	
<div></div> <div><div> Location of Japan</div><div> Territory claimed but not controlled</div></div>	
<div>Capital and largest city</div>	<div>Tokyo</div> <div>35°41′N 139°46′E</div>
<div>Official languages</div> <div>Recognized regional languages</div> <div>Unrecognized regional languages</div>	<div>Japanese (<i>de facto</i>)</div> <div>Ainu^{[1][2]}</div> <div>Ryukyuan languages</div> <div>Hachijō</div>
<div>Demonym(s)</div>	<div>Japanese</div>
<div>Government</div>	<div>Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy</div>
<div>• Emperor</div> <div>• Prime Minister</div>	<div>Naruhito</div> <div>Shigeru Ishiba</div>
<div>Legislature</div> <div>• Upper house</div> <div>• Lower house</div>	<div>National Diet</div> <div>House of Councillors</div> <div>House of Representatives</div>
<div>Formation</div> <div>• Meiji Constitution</div> <div>• Current constitution</div>	<div>November 29, 1890</div> <div>May 3, 1947</div>
<div>Area</div> <div>• Total</div>	<div>377,975 km²</div> <div>(145,937 sq mi)^{[4]}</div> <div>(62nd)</div>