# History of Japan

The first human inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago have been traced to prehistoric times around 30,000 BCE. The Jōmon period, named after its cord-marked pottery, was followed by the Yayoi period in the first millennium BCE when new inventions were introduced from Asia. During this period, the first known written reference to Japan was recorded in the Chinese Book of Han in the first century CE.

Around the 3rd century BCE, the Yayoi people from the continent immigrated to the Japanese archipelago and introduced iron technology and agricultural civilization.[1] Because they had an agricultural civilization, the population of the Yayoi began to grow rapidly and ultimately overwhelmed the Jōmon people, natives of the Japanese archipelago who were hunter-gatherers.[2] Between the fourth to ninth century, Japan's many kingdoms and tribes gradually came to be unified under a centralized government, nominally controlled by the Emperor of Japan. The imperial dynasty established at this time continues to this day, albeit in an almost entirely ceremonial role. In 794, a new imperial capital was established at Heian-kyō (modern Kyoto), marking the beginning of the Heian period, which lasted until 1185. The Heian period is considered a golden age of classical Japanese culture. Japanese religious life from this time and onwards was a mix of native Shinto practices and Buddhism.

Over the following centuries, the power of the imperial house decreased, passing first to great clans of civilian aristocrats – most notably the Fujiwara – and then to the military clans and their armies of samurai. The Minamoto clan under Minamoto no Yoritomo emerged victorious from the Genpei War of 1180–85, defeating their rival military clan, the Taira. After seizing power, Yoritomo set up his capital in Kamakura and took the title of shōgun. In 1274 and 1281, the Kamakura shogunate withstood two Mongol invasions, but in 1333 it was toppled by a rival claimant to the shogunate, ushering in the Muromachi period. During this period, regional warlords called daimyō grew in power at the expense of the shōgun. Eventually, Japan descended into a period of civil war. Over the course of the late 16th century, Japan was reunified under the leadership of the prominent daimyō Oda Nobunaga and his successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. After Toyotomi's death in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu came to power and was appointed shōgun by the emperor. The Tokugawa shogunate, which governed from Edo (modern Tokyo), presided over a prosperous and peaceful era known as the Edo period (1600–1868). The Tokugawa shogunate imposed a strict class system on Japanese society and cut off almost all contact with the outside world.

Portugal and Japan came into contact in 1543, when the Portuguese became the first Europeans to reach Japan by landing in the southern archipelago. They had a significant impact on Japan, even in this initial limited interaction, introducing firearms to Japanese warfare. The American Perry Expedition in 1853–54 more completely ended Japan's seclusion; this contributed to the fall of the shogunate and the return of power to the emperor during the Boshin War in 1868. The new national leadership of the following Meiji period transformed the isolated feudal island country into an empire that closely followed Western models and became a great power. Although democracy developed and modern civilian culture prospered during the Taishō period (1912–26), Japan's powerful military had great autonomy and overruled Japan's civilian leaders in the 1920s and 1930s. The Japanese military invaded Manchuria in 1931, and from 1937 the conflict escalated into a prolonged war with China. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 led to war with the United States and its allies. Japan's forces soon became overextended, but the military held out in spite of Allied air attacks that inflicted severe damage on population centers. Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945, following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria.

The Allies occupied Japan until 1952, during which a new constitution was enacted in 1947 that transformed Japan into a constitutional monarchy. After 1955, Japan enjoyed very high economic growth under the governance of the Liberal Democratic Party, and became a world economic powerhouse. Since the Lost Decade of the 1990s, economic growth has slowed. On 11 March 2011, Japan suffered from a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami, one of the most powerful earthquakes ever recorded, which killed almost 20,000 people and caused the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster.

# Tourist Locations

1. Meiji Shrine
2. Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden
3. Ueno Park and Zoo
4. Sensō-ji Temple
5. Ginza Shopping District
6. Tokyo Skytree

# Festivals and Events

1. Cherry Blossom Festival - During Spring season the cherry blossom trees become fully bloomed drawing tourists from all over the world to take part in Hanami(cherry blossom watching).
2. Firework Festival – During Summer season Japan hosts the Fireworks festivals known as the Hanabi festival. Food and games are enjoyed by locals and tourists as well as the watching of the magnificent fireworks.
3. Shrine Festivals / Matsuri - Matsuri means festival, most festivals include Mikoshi(portable shrines) being paraded up and down the streets accompanied by chanting and traditional garb.
4. New Year/ Shōgatsu (January 1-3) – People clean homes, pay debts and prepare Osechi(food in lacquered trays). Most Celebrated event and last over 3 days sometimes up to a week.
5. Winter Illumination (Midtown Illumination) - From November to March you can find amazing illuminations each one unique from the rest.

# Famous Inhabitants

1. Yoko Ono (peace activist ,amazing artist and ex-wife of John Lennon, born in 1933)
2. Hayao Miyazaki (Born 1941 he is a filmmaker and animator)
3. Hideo Kojima (Born 1963 he is a game designer, producer and director. Birthed a new genre of video gaming deeming him the most esteemed video game designer ever)
4. Keichi Tanaami (Multi genre artist born in 1936,due to atomic bombings his art depicts the contrast between life and death.)
5. Mount Fuji (富士山, Fujisan, Japanese: [ɸɯꜜ(d)ʑisaɴ] (listen)), or Fugaku, located on the island of Honshū, is the highest mountain in Japan, standing 3,776.24 m (12,389.2 ft). It is the second-highest volcano located on an island in Asia (after Mount Kerinci on the island of Sumatra), and seventh-highest peak of an island on Earth. Mount Fuji is an active stratovolcano that last erupted from 1707 to 1708. The mountain is located about 100 km (62 mi) southwest of Tokyo and is visible from there on clear days. Mount Fuji's exceptionally symmetrical cone, which is covered in snow for about five months of the year, is commonly used as a cultural icon of Japan and it is frequently depicted in art and photography, as well as visited by sightseers and climbers.

Itsukushima Shrine (厳島神社 (嚴島神社), Itsukushima-jinja) is a Shinto shrine on the island of Itsukushima (popularly known as Miyajima), best known for its "floating" torii gate. It is in the city of Hatsukaichi in Hiroshima Prefecture in Japan, accessible from the mainland by ferry at Miyajimaguchi Station. The shrine complex is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Japanese government has designated several buildings and possessions as National Treasures

The Itsukushima shrine is one of Japan's most popular tourist attractions. It is most famous for its dramatic gate, or torii on the outskirts of the shrine, the sacred peaks of Mount Misen, extensive forests, and its ocean view. The shrine complex itself consists of two main buildings: the Honsha shrine and the Sessha Marodo-jinja, as well as 17 other different buildings and structures that help to distinguish it.

Osaka Castle (大坂城 or 大阪城, Ōsaka-jō) is a Japanese castle in Chūō-ku, Osaka, Japan. The castle is one of Japan's most famous landmarks and it played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century of the Azuchi-Momoyama period.

The main tower of Osaka Castle is situated on a plot of land roughly one square kilometre. It is built on two raised platforms of landfill supported by sheer walls of cut rock, using a technique called Burdock piling, each overlooking a moat. The central castle building is five stories on the outside and eight stories on the inside, and built atop a tall stone foundation to protect its occupants from attackers.

The Main Tower is surrounded by a series of moats and defensive fortifications. The castle has 2 moats (an inner & outer). The inner castle moat lies within the castle grounds, and consists of 2 types: a wet (northern-easterly) and dry (south-westerly). Outer moat meanwhile surrounds the entire castle premise, denotes the castle's outer limits, and consists of 4 individual water-filled sections, each representing a cardinal direction (North, East, South, West).