

Who needs a visa to Japan?

Japan is one of the most popular tourist hotspots in the world, attracting millions of tourists every year. This island nation has a lot to offer, from culture to modern cities, to history and nature. This is why Japan has waived visas for citizens of several countries. They also intend to make the visa application process easier for citizens of the countries who do need a visa by implementing an online application system.

This article will answer the question of who needs a visa to enter Japan and detail the rules of Japan visa exemptions.

Do I Need a Visa for Japan?

You need a visa for Japan unless you are from one of the countries which are exempt from visa requirements for short-term stays (listed on the table below).

This means that if you are from one of the following countries, you can visit Japan without a visa for up to 90 days, unless otherwise stated:

Argentina

Australia

Bahamas

Brunei (visa exemption for up to 15 days)

Canada

Chile

Costa Rica

Dominican Republic

El Salvador

Guatemala

Honduras

Hong Kong*

Iceland

Israel

Macao**

Mauritius

Mexico

New Zealand

North Macedonia

Norway

South Korea

Singapore

Slovakia

Suriname

Switzerland

Taiwan***

Tunisia

United Kingdom

Uruguay

*Only for holders of Special Administrative Region (SAR) passports issued by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

**Only for holders of Special Administrative Region (SAR) passports issued by the Macao Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

***Only for holders of passports containing an identification number.

Additionally, nationals of the following countries are exempt from Japan Visas for up to 90 days, only if they have a Machine-Readable Passport (MRP) or an ePassport in line with ICAO standards.

Barbados

Indonesia (visa exemption for up to 15 days)

Lesotho

Malaysia

Serbia

Thailand (visa exemption for up to 15 days)

Turkey

United Arab Emirates (visa exemption for up to 30 days)

Japan Visa Exemptions for Non-Ordinary Passport Holders

Holders of Diplomatic or Service passports from the following countries are also exempt from Japan Visas:

Albania

Austria

Azerbaijan

Bangladesh

Belgium

Bolivia

Brazil

Bulgaria

Cambodia

Colombia

Czechia

Ecuador

Georgia

Germany

Greece

Hungary

India

Indonesia

Ireland

Italy

Kazakhstan

Laos

Liechtenstein

Luxembourg

Moldova

Mongolia

Morocco

Myanmar

Nauru

Netherlands

Oman

Palau

Panama

Papua New Guinea

Paraguay

Peru

Poland

Qatar

Romania

Samoa

Slovakia

Solomon Islands

South Korea

Spain

Switzerland

Thailand

Turkey

Turkmenistan

United Kingdom

Ukraine

United Arab Emirates

Vatican City

Vietnam

Do I Need a Japan Visa for Long-term Stays?

Yes, you do. Even if you are from a visa-exempt country, if you want to study, work, join a family member in Japan, or travel for any other long-term purpose, you have to apply for the respective Japan Visa from your home country before you travel.

Do I Need a Japan Transit Visa?

You can transit in Japan without a visa if:

You have a confirmed onward ticket within the same calendar day

You stay within the international transit area of the airport

You have the necessary documents needed for the next country of destination

If you are traveling through Tokyo International Airport (Haneda Airport) or Kansai International Airport in Osaka, you can transit without a visa if:

You have a confirmed onward ticket within the next 72 hours

You stay within the international transit area of the airport

You have the necessary documents needed for the next country of destination

How to Travel to Japan if I Don't Need a Visa?

If you are from one of the visa-exempt countries listed above, and you are traveling for short-term purposes, you can travel to Japan with just:

- Your passport, which must be valid for at least another six months and have at least two blank pages for the entry/exit stamps
- A confirmed return ticket

However, if you are traveling under a visa exemption, you cannot work or engage in any remunerated activities in Japan. Additionally, you cannot apply to extend your stay or get another type of visa in Japan.

You have to apply for the respective long-term visa from your country before you travel.

How to Get a Japan Visa if I Need One?

If you need a visa for Japan, you can apply at one of the Embassies or Consulates of Japan abroad. The application process for a Japan Visa is outlined here.

If you are applying for a long-term visa, you have to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from an Immigration Office in Japan. You have to get the COE through a proxy before you submit the visa application.

Japan Visa Application

Most foreigners who want to visit Japan will have to apply for a Japan Visa before they travel.

Millions of people visit Japan every year – in fact, only in 2018, Japan received over 30 million tourists. And there is a lot to see in this exciting island nation, which is a perfect blend of modernism, tradition, history, and nature. Additionally, it is one of the safest countries in the world to visit and is expected to become even easier to obtain a Japan visa in 2020.

This article will detail the application process for obtaining a Japan visa, the types of Japanese visas, and answer other frequently asked questions.

Who Needs a Visa for Japan?

Whether you have to apply for a visa before you travel to Japan, depends on two things:

Your nationality: Citizens of several countries are exempt from holding a visa when they travel to Japan for short-stay purposes (tourism, social visits, business, etc). The policy allows them a visa-free stay of up to 90 days.

The length and purpose of your stay: Even citizens of visa-exempt countries have to apply for a Japanese Visa if they want to enter the country for employment, studying, marriage, or any other long-term purpose, or a purpose which requires them to work.

Types of Japan Visas

The Japanese government issues the following main categories of visas to foreign visitors:

- Short-Term Stay / Temporary Visa, which is issued to foreigners who want to enter Japan for tourism, visits, business or other recreational or short-term purposes. Temporary Visas for Japan do not allow the holder to engage in employment and can be divided based on the purpose of travel into:
 - [Japan Tourist Visa](#), which is issued to foreigners who want to travel to Japan for tourism or visits to family or friends.
 - [Japan Business Visa](#), which is issued to foreigners who are traveling to Japan to attend a meeting, conference, negotiate, or for any other business-related purposes.
 - [Japan Transit Visa](#), which is issued to foreigners who are transiting through the territory of Japan on their way to a third country of destination.
- Long-Term Stay Visas, which are issued to foreigners who want to enter Japan for purposes not related to tourism, such as working, studying, or joining a family member. As such, they can be divided into:
 - [Japan Digital Nomad visa](#), issued to foreigners who want to reside in Japan while working remotely.
 - [Japan Work Visa](#), issued to foreigners who wish to take up paid employment in Japan.
 - [Japan Student Visa](#), issued to international students who have been accepted into a Japanese educational institution.
 - [Japan Marriage Visa](#), issued to foreigners who are married to a Japanese citizen and want to join them there.
 - [Japan Highly Skilled Professional Visa](#), which, as the name suggests, is issued to highly-skilled professionals who want to work in Japan. It is issued through a point-based system and offers a longer period of stay and more benefits than a regular Work Visa.

- [Japan Working Holiday Visa](#), which is issued to citizens of countries with which Japan has a Working Holiday Scheme agreement. It allows young people from those countries to visit Japan and work there for up to a year.
- [Japan Permanent Residency](#). Applicants for Japan Permanent Residency usually need to have lived in Japan for ten consecutive years, though this can be reduced to one year for those with notable achievements. The process requires proof of stable income, good conduct, and tax compliance, as well as a recommendation from the regional immigration bureau.

How to submit a Japan Visa application?

For the time being, the Japanese government only issues visas through its Embassies or Consulates abroad. As such, the process for a Japan visa application is as follows:

1. Find and contact a Japanese Embassy or Consulate near you.
2. Collect the required documents.
3. Submit the Japan visa application.
4. Collect the visa.

Note:

If you will request a Long-Term Visa, before you submit the visa application at the Embassy or Consulate, you have to get a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from an Immigration Office in Japan through an authorized representative.

After you receive your Japan visa and travel to Japan, you will receive a Landing Permit at the port of entry, which will invalidate your visa.

Contact the Japanese Embassy or Consulate

The first thing you should do when you have decided to apply for a visa to Japan is to find if there is a Japanese Embassy or Consulate in your country and contact them. Inquire about the required documents, opening and closing hours, and make an appointment.

If there is no Japanese Diplomatic Representation in your country, you have to:

- Find which Japanese representative office is responsible for your jurisdiction, such as one in a neighboring country, and apply there; *or*
- Find an accredited travel agency or visa application agency who will submit the application on your behalf.
 - As a matter of fact, some Japanese Embassies or Consulates only accept visa application submissions through third-party agencies, not in person.

Collect the required documents for a Japan Visa application

Once you know where to apply, you should start collecting the documents you need for your Japan Visa application. The documents differ based on the type of visa you apply for, but in all cases, you have to submit:

- Your passport, which should have at least two blank visa pages as well as be valid for at least another six months starting from the time you intend to enter Japan.
- Recent passport-size pictures taken in front of a white background
- A Japan Visa Application Form completed and signed.
- Booked flight ticket.
- Proof of sufficient financial requirements, such as bank statements or a letter from a guarantor.

If you have a sponsor/guarantor in Japan, they have to provide you with the required documents on their part before you can submit the application.

Submit the Japan Visa application

After you have all your required documents, you have to submit them at the Japan Embassy or Consulate so your application can start processing. If you are applying through a travel or visa application agency, you have to give them the documents, and they will submit them for you.

If the Consulate or Embassy considers it necessary, you may also have to go back for an interview or to submit additional documents.

Collect your Japan Visa

Once your visa application has been processed, you have to go back to the Embassy/Consulate and collect your passport.

If the application was approved, the Japan Visa will be affixed on your passport and you can use it to travel to Japan within three months.

The Japanese Landing Permission

Once you arrive in Japan, the Immigration officers at the point of entry will review your visa and the documents attesting to your purpose of stay, and (if they consider you worthy to enter Japan) they will give you a Landing Permit. The Landing Permit replaces your visa and allows you to legally stay in Japan.

If you have a single-entry visa, it will become invalid once you get the Landing Permit, whereas a multiple-entry visa with a longer validity remains valid even after you get the Landing Permit.

The Japanese Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

Everyone who enters Japan with the purpose of living there long-term, such as for employment, has to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from an Immigration Office in Japan.

You have to apply for the COE through a proxy before you can apply for your visa at the Japanese Embassy / Consulate in your country.

How Long Does it Take to Process a Japan Visa?

Normally, a Japan Visa is processed within five working days, starting from the time that the Embassy or Consulate receives your completed application. However, if they need further documentation from you, it will take longer. If they have to refer your visa for further examination to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, then the processing time for your Japan Visa could be extended to over a month.

As such, make sure to start the application well in advance of the time you intend to travel.

How Much is the Japan Visa Fee?

The visa fees for Japan are as follows:

- Single-entry visa: 3,000 Yen
- Double-entry or multiple-entry visa: 6,000 Yen
- Transit Visa: 700 Yen

The Japan visa cost may be slightly different based on your nationality, the type of visa you apply for and the local currency. You have to pay the fee for a Japan visa at the Embassy/Consulate only if your application is approved.

Keep in mind: If you apply through an approved travel/visa application agency, they will charge you an additional service fee before the visa is issued.

Can You Extend a Japan Visa?

Whether you can extend a Japan Visa or not depends on the type of visa you have (although, in actuality, what you would be extending is the Landing Permit, rather than the visa itself.)

If you have a Tourist Visa, you are not likely to receive a Japan Visa Extension. If you entered the country for tourism purposes, you may only get a visa extension if you have a valid purpose, such as a sudden illness or an accident.

If you entered using a long-stay visa, such as for employment, marriage, or studying purposes, then you can apply for a Japan Visa Extension at your local Immigration Office in Japan. You can submit a Visa Extension application starting from 90 days before your Visa expires.

Can You Apply for a Japan Visa Online?

Currently, there is no online service that handles Japan Visa applications.

The Japanese government intended to launch a Japan eVisa system ahead of the 2020 Olympics that were set to take place in Japan, but the Games were postponed to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has led to considerable travel disruptions, including the Japanese eVisa, which is unknown when it will now launch.

The online visa was also an effort to meet Japan's target of having 60 million people visit the country annually by the year 2030.

What are the Japan Visa Requirements for US Citizens?

If you are an American citizen, traveling to Japan for tourism, visit, or business, you do not need to apply for a Japan Visa. US citizens are exempt from visa requirements for stays of up to 90 days. You can enter with your passport, which must be valid for at least another six months and have blank pages for the entry and exit stamps.

However, you cannot work, study, or extend/change the category of your stay while you are in Japan on a visa-exempt entry. If you have found a job, been accepted into an educational institution, or want to join your spouse in Japan, then you have to apply for the adequate type of visa from a Japan Embassy or Consulate in the US before you travel