



Japan 2020

A guide to a trip to Japan in 2020

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1. Introduction

In 2020, we are planning a trip to the land of the rising sun - Japan - a bit of a taster trip really as Japan is too vast to cover it all in such a short time. Japan was on my personal bucket-list of places to go to so I am excited to be doing this!

As for the Mexico/Cuba ebook, this eBook is divided into 3 main sections, namely:

- Stuff to do before we go,
- The trip itself, and
- Coming home at the end

If I think of any other stuff I'll put it into appendices at the end. So, without further ado, let's crack on!

2. Before We Go

Well, before we start our trip, there are a few things to think about and do. I have split these up as follows:

- Background: why we are going at this time of year, weather, distances etc.
- Health: what we need to do before we go (in terms of inoculations, tablets etc.)
- Travel: what our outbound long-haul flight details are, any considerations about time left on passports etc.
- Money: what the local currency is, advice from journey planners re use of credit cards etc.
- Miscellaneous: duty free precautions, electrical supply etc.

I have also included as an Appendix what I envisage packing for the trip (excluding clothing - I am sure you can make up your own minds about clothing!).

Background

We are visiting Japan in late March/early April so we can catch the 'blossom season' - a very popular tourist

time of year for foreign tourists and for the Japanese themselves.

This is one of the best times to visit as it precedes the major foreign tourist season from May through September. We fly out of the UK on **Friday 22nd March** and return on **Sunday 6th April**.

The weather forecast when we are in Japan is likely to be

So, not hot and occasional nights when overnight temperatures are cold. Take decent overnight gear and a light waterproof for showers is my best advice. Layers will be the order of the day.

Japan is a country of approx. 121 million people and nearly four hundred thousand square kilometres in size made up from 6852 islands. 97% of the land area is taken up by the 5 main islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, and Okinawa); for comparison, the UK has a population of approaching 70 million people crammed into nearly 250,000 square kilometres of land mass (and we only have 136 permanently inhabited islands).



Our holiday will be almost exclusively on the main Honshu island:

- Kyoto - including Golden Pavilion, bamboo forest, geisha and cherry blossoms
- Hiroshima - including Hiroshima itself and Miyajima island (with floating Torii gate)
- Tokyo - including Kamakura (day trip - optional?) and Tokyo itself (with the SkyTree tower)

Health

Do check with your GP about what inoculations they advise for your personal circumstances for this trip. They will normally check for whether you are up to date with vaccines for cholera, typhoid, Hepatitis A and Tetanus.

Make sure and get them to bring your vaccination record card up to date and store it somewhere safe.

Hampton GP surgery also gave me two web sites to check:

- [National Travel Health Network and Centre](#), and
- [Fit For Travel](#)

From those web sites for Japan: travellers should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK. These vaccinations include for example measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and diphtheria-tetanus-polio vaccine. We are unlikely to need a vaccine for Japanese encephalitis as we are not spending protracted time in rice fields, swamps or marshes. Similarly, rabies risk is low in Japan and confined to bites from bats so we again will probably not have a course of rabies vaccine. We should not eat or drink unpasteurised milk products to avoid tick-

borne encephalitis, but again this is marked as very low risk and no vaccine recommended.

There is no mentioned risk of Yellow Fever in visiting Japan.

Travel

Japan is in a different time zone to the UK - they are 9 hours in front of us.

We are travelling a significant distance during this holiday, both by air and by road. The table below shows our two long-haul flights to and from Japan. The remainder of the holiday travel within Japan is by road and rail.

Air Journey	Distance (miles)
London (Gatwick)to Osaka via Dubai 22 nd March Flight 16 from London Gatwick to Dubai Depart: 1430, Arrive: 0035 on 23 rd March Flight 316 from Dubai to Osaka Depart: 0340, Arrive: 1750	5899
Tokyo to London via Dubai 6 th April Flight 319 from Tokyo to Dubai Depart: 2200, Arrive: 0415 Flight 15 from Dubai to London (Gatwick) Depart: 0800, Arrive: 1235	5954
TOTAL air miles	11853

N.B.

1. All departure and arrival times are local so don't forget about different time zones for Japan when calculating journey times.
2. As you can see, we have a layover in Dubai of 3 hours on the way to Japan and of 3.5 hours on the way back from Japan to the UK.

No information yet on which UK Gatwick terminal we will fly from nor return to; similarly with Japanese airports. Expect more detail when full tour itinerary is confirmed.

We will also have scheduled journeys by road/rail as part of the tour. excluding any we do ourselves when we have time at leisure:

Lesley and I will each have a "travel pack" with printed copies of our travel documentation in plus other stuff to do with the trip. We will also have our Japanese currency split up between us.

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Money

Japan has the yen as its unit of currency.

Although Japan is high-tech, we have been advised to take sufficient cash as many places e.g. some restaurants, shops etc. do not accept debit or credit card payments. Weird eh? As with any holiday abroad, you are recommended to let your bank know that you will be using your card(s) in Japan before you leave.

Current exchange rate (as at Saturday 14 September) is 135 Yen to the pound.

Credit cards (and pre-paid credit cards such as FairFX) are accepted for certain things in Japan e.g. trains tickets, hotels (maybe not ryokan, though?)

3. The Trip - Potentials

Tokyo

Lots to see here - so busy and yet nowhere near as noisy as UK and US cities (apparently)! For example, the Shinjuku area near Tokyo's station. Include Izakaya tour (An izakaya is a type of informal Japanese pub. They are casual places for after-work drinking. They have been compared to Irish pubs, tapas bars and early American saloons and taverns.) and Robot Restaurant (not a restaurant) - EDWARD

Kyoto

Here the Philosophers Walk (or Path) is a great place to enjoy the cherry blossoms. in northern Kyoto. Small coffee shops exist on this walk/path. 2km long and would take about 1.5 hours to walk both ways. We also have the Golden Pavilion, bamboo forest and Inari shrine and approach walk.

Mount Fuji

Iconic, must see place. Maybe combine with a Ryokan stay with views to Mt Fuji?

Walk Some of the Nakasendo Way

From Joanna Lumley programme, 5-mile stretch from Tsumago to Magome (or the other way - whichever is most convenient). Lovely scenery and distance is manageable - just over 2 hours (7.9km). Our tour itinerary is likely to only give us a one-hour stretch of this walk from either Tsumago or Magome, not the whole thing.

Shinkansen -

Bullet train ride. Several opportunities as several lines exist e.g. Tokyo to Kyoto.

Ryokan stay

Typical (stereotypical?) Japanese guest house stay. Also try hot spring bathing and banquet dinner EDWARD

Pontocho Alley

Another EDWARD recommendation - in Kyoto

Miyajima Island

Includes Floating torii gate, lots of deer EDWARD