



Japan 2020

A guide to a trip to Japan in 2020

Introduction	2
Preparation	3
Potential Places to See and Things to Do	14

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 whe 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 plus other stuff to do with the trip. We will also have our Japanese currency split up between us.

-->

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?)

Tipping is not customary in Japan. In fact, it can be considered rude and insulting in many situations. Most Japanese restaurants require customers to pay for their meals at the front register, rather than leave money with the waiter or waitress. Tipping also isn't required for cab or bus rides and many hotel services. You will probably receive some of the best service in the world here ... but this is about people doing their job with pride rather than hoping for a tip.

Miscellaneous

Duty Free Precautions

Nothing special here except it says there is a 60ml max on perfume being brought into Japan (?)

On the return to the UK, these are selected allowances:

- 4 litres of wine (not sparkling)
- 1 litre of spirits over 22% alcohol

- 2 litres of fortified wine, sparkling wine and other alcoholic drinks up to 22% alcohol. It is worth noting that Japanese sake falls into this category - it is approx. 15% alcohol, although undiluted sake can go as high as 20%

Wifi and Phones

In Japan, free wifi has been very rare in the past. Most hotels nowadays in Japan offer free internet in their guest rooms. Access is usually provided as a wireless network or wired internet via LAN cable. Internet in the room is somewhat less common at ryokan. Instead, some ryokan provide wireless internet or a public computer in their lobby.

Thanks to efforts by businesses and governments, public Wi-Fi networks for free use by foreign tourists have become quite numerous. Tourists will encounter these networks at international airports, major railway stations (including all Yamanote Line stations and many shinkansen stations), inside an increasing number of trains and buses, selected coffee, fast food and convenience store chains and many tourist information desks.

If we need to pay for internet access, we should try and get one pass that will work for us all for the whole trip. *I am consulting Edward and researching options.*

We may or may not be able to print our boarding cards for our return flight to the UK when we are away. As for Mexico/Cuba we may be able to download the airline app and just have a downloadable boarding pass.

If we think we will need to use our phones in Japan, we may have to purchase some Japanese SIMs (Edward and Mike did and said they were fantastic). Prices for data-only SIM cards look to be about £40 with those allowing voice calling and texts starting at £50.

Electricity

The voltage in Japan is 100 Volt, which is different from North America (120V), Central Europe (230V) and most other regions of the world. Japanese electrical plugs and outlets resemble North American ones. Plugs come in various versions, but most commonly they are non-polarized and ungrounded with two pins. Our current blue travel adaptors MAY be OK for use with Japanese voltage - this will need checking.



Type A Socket



Type B Socket



Type C Socket



Type L Socket

So we will need travel adapters and (maybe) voltage adapters as well so we can have our 4-way blocks plugged in at our various accommodations. As mentioned above, the existing blue travel adapters MAY be OK.

-->

3. The Trip - Preliminary Information

This section is preliminary information and a more ordered trip itinerary will be provided here when we are sent it.

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

4. Appendix 1 Personal Packing Checklist

For what it's worth, my personal holiday essentials list is included below. Adapt for your own needs, of course!

Holiday Essentials

Passport Details

Name on Passport	Passport No.	Expiry Date
John Brinley Cable	534663386	1 May 2026
Lesley Anne Cable	464103862	19 June 2019
Sophie Vinetta Cable	465469170	22 August 2020
Emily Beatrice Cable	527280869	6 September 2025

Preparation

- Clear out travel backpack
- Charge up camera batteries
- Charge up juice-block
- Unload current camera memory cards
- Download any programmes to watch to iPad
- Sort out device charging leads - iPhone, iPad, FitBit, juice block
- USB charging plug
- Multi-way charging block
- Sunglasses and spare pair of ordinary glasses
- Cap (optional)
- Sort out documents: passport, travel documents, immunisation certificates
- Travel adapter
- Check and buy if necessary:
 - travel sickness tablets
 - insect repellent
 - travel-size toiletries

Packing

- Put USB and charging leads in protective Tupperware
- Put charging block in base of case
- Tablets for the trip - hip etc.
- Backpack:

- throw-away fiction book
- iPad + headphones
- Travel sickness tablets
- Small pack tissues / cleansing wipes
- Pack into carrier bags:
 - Underwear
 - Socks - incl. sports socks
 - Swim stuff*
 - Shirts + trousers / shorts
- Shoes + sandals (+ flip-flops*)
- Pyjamas - in outside case pocket.
- Pack toiletry bag:
 - Razor + blades
 - Shaving foam
 - Toothbrush head*?
 - Spray**
 - After bite + Savlon
 - Headache tablets
 - Hairbrush

Don't forget to weigh case - safe maximum is 20KG.

Camera (in backpack) is hand luggage

Note for neighbours

N.B.

* optional - depends on the holiday

** may purchase in Duty Free at airport

*? may be packed with family toiletry bag