Japan 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 kilometres (145,937 sq mi). With a population of more than 125 million as of 2020, Japan is the 11th most populous country. Tokyo is its capital and largest city. 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. Greater Tokyo is the world's most populous metropolitan area, with more than 38 million inhabitants as of 2016. Part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, Japan's islands are prone to destructive earthquakes and tsunamis.

History

Culture

Contemporary Japanese culture combines influences from Asia, Europe, and North America. Traditional Japanese arts include crafts such as ceramics, textiles, lacquerware, swords and dolls; performances of bunraku, kabuki, noh, dance, and rakugo; and other practices, the tea ceremony, ikebana, martial arts, calligraphy, origami, onsen, Geisha and games. Japan has a developed system for the protection and promotion of both tangible and intangible Cultural Properties and National Treasures. Twenty-two sites have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, eighteen of which are of cultural significance. Japan is considered a cultural superpower.

Kyoto

Surrounded by rich natural beauty, Kyoto is a city with a unique repertoire of compelling culture that has been refined over the past 1,200 years. Many aspects of Japanese culture originate from Kyoto and are deeply rooted in the lives of residents to this day. Tradition lives on through “machiya,” traditional wooden townhouses where residents spend modern lives today, yearly events unique to Kyoto like the famous Gion Matsuri, the culture of Kyoto's Hanamachi district where geisha live and work, and through Jizo statues (statues made of clay, bronze or stone that represent the guardian deity of children and travelers) found throughout the city. Kyoto's tradition adds color to everyday life through Japanese food – which is generally healthy and has good nutritional balance – as well as an appreciation for tea, and flower arrangements placed tastefully in open spaces. By experiencing this kaleidoscopic culture firsthand, travelers can enjoy a deeper perspective on Kyoto and its history. <b><br>

To enjoy the charms that Kyoto has to offer, it's recommended to make use of less busy times to visit shrines – early in the morning, or late at night when they're lit up, for example. Additionally, you can divide Kyoto into a number of areas, complete with their own unique beauty and charm. In central Kyoto , there are a number of historic buildings and unforgettable pristine old townscapes for travelers to visit.