



Japan Information

Travel documents

U.S. citizens traveling to Japan must have a passport that is valid for six months after their expected return date. No entry visas are required for U.S. citizens. Please check travel.state.gov to confirm passport validity requirements prior to your tour. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassies to find out what specific documentation is required for them to travel. For a list of embassies, please visit embassy.org.

Vaccinations and health precautions

For the most up-to-date information on vaccinations and other health requirements, we recommend checking cdc.gov or consulting your physician.

Tour Director and bus drivers

You will have a bilingual Tour Director for the duration of your tour. Your Tour Director will inform you before departure if they will be picking you up at the airport or if a transfer Tour Director will meet you there. If you're traveling on the South Korea extension, you'll have another Tour Director, different than the one you had in Japan. You will have multiple bus drivers while on tour, so please consider tipping your bus driver on a daily basis.

Transportation

Travel within Japan will happen on modern, air-conditioned buses. Long transfers will be broken up with rest stops to relax or explore along the way. You might travel on a bullet train at least once during your tour in Japan. Travelers should bring a small backpack with overnight clothes that they can take on the train. One piece of checked luggage per traveler will be sent by courier ahead to the group's next hotel.

Tipping

It's customary to tip your Tour Directors and bus drivers as a token of appreciation. We recommend:

- \$6–8 per person per day for the Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for the bus driver
- \$2 per person per tour for each local guide

We encourage Group Leaders to collect all tip money from their travelers before departing for tour. To keep tips organized, we recommend using the envelopes from your Departure Kit. For larger groups, feel free to divvy up the money between chaperones. It is preferable for tips to be given in the local currency of your destination, especially for local guides. You can ask your travelers to convert their U.S. dollars before you collect tip money, or you can exchange the money yourself into local currency (either in the U.S. or when you arrive abroad). If you have any questions on tipping, please reach out to your Tour Consultant.

Currency

Japan's currency is called the Yen. Getting Yen in Japan can be difficult since many ATMs do not accept foreign cards and traveler's checks are not easy to exchange. We recommend you exchange money at your bank or at the airport before your departure to Japan. Once in Japan, ATMs located in convenience stores or post offices will accept major cards. These ATMs are available throughout the major cities you will visit, so ask your Tour Director to direct you to one that will work. Be sure to inform your local bank of your travel plans prior to your departure to ensure your debit or credit card and pin number will work in Japan. Visit xe.com for current exchange rates and more information.

Accommodations

Hotels are generally business-style with modern amenities like elevators, air-conditioning, and television, but the rooms are often small. Some groups may stay at a hotel that echoes the traditional inn called a *ryokan*. When staying in a *ryokan*, students under the age of 20 will share rooms with around five or six people of the same gender. Adults will not room with more than two people per room (unless requested). For other hotels, students under the age of 20 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender. These rooms will have either single or shared double beds (or a combination of the two). If your group is paired up with another EF group from a different school, students may share rooms with those travelers.

Adults will share twin rooms with other adults of the same gender, and may also share a room with adults from another EF group. Keep in mind that groups might not be roomed next to each other and could even be on different floors. The most common power outlets in Japan are type A and type B with a standard voltage of 100V.

Phones and internet

The mobile network in Japan works on a different system than the rest of the world. Only 4G or 5G handsets with roaming enabled will work. You can rent a SIM card in Japan to use with your phone, but your phone will need to be unlocked. Please note that the SIM has to be returned and is not pre-paid. International phone cards are also easy to buy and your Tour Director can help you find places to buy them. If you plan to use your personal cell phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur. Free Wi-Fi is available in most hotels, however you may have to go to the lobby for access if it's not available in your hotel room.

Local food

Water is chlorinated throughout the country and safe to drink, so travelers should bring a reusable water bottle to refill throughout the tour. Check with your Tour Director before purchasing food from street vendors. Breakfasts on tour will be a set menu, or, more commonly, a buffet with Asian-style offerings like noodles or soup, and Western-style options such as toast and eggs. Dinners will either be served family-style (in the middle of the table for all to share) or you will receive your own portion. A small dessert may be included, however, Japanese meals do not traditionally include starters or desserts. Options are available for vegetarians or travelers with allergies, but please be aware that the diversity of options might be limited based on availability, as these requests are not common in Japan.

Bathing etiquette

Students on tour may have the opportunity to visit a communal bath—often called an *onsen*—at their hotel or at a resort area (if arranged by the Tour Director). A relaxing dip in the public bath offers students a chance to experience a custom enjoyed by Japanese people of all ages, but travelers should know that Japan's bathhouses have strict rules and an important code of etiquette. Clothing and swimsuits are never allowed in the bathing area, and nearly all bathhouses deny access to individuals with tattoos. The small towel available at the bath entrance is for drying off only and should never touch the pools of water. Visitors must wash thoroughly and rinse away all soap before entering the communal bath. For further information regarding bath etiquette, please ask your local Tour Director.

Weather

The climate in Tokyo is warm, muggy, wet, and mostly cloudy in the summer, with temperatures ranging from 80–90°F. Western Japan (like Osaka, Kyoto, and Hiroshima) has very hot and humid summers (with temperatures sometimes reaching 95°F or above) and moderately cold winters. The Hakone region has a similar climate to that of Tokyo in the summer, but can often run much cooler as you get higher in altitude around Mt. Fuji. Please check weather.com for your destinations and travel periods.

Packing

Typical dress in Japan is similar to what one might expect in most European and American cities, although you might see a few women dressed in traditional *kimonos*. A good pair of walking shoes is highly recommended. Keep in mind that you have to remove your shoes to enter most Japanese homes, shrines, and temples, so clean socks are also recommended.

Luggage

Baggage is included on both international flights and internal flights within Japan. Packing lightly is highly recommended. Hotel rooms in Japan are much smaller than those in the U.S., and storage space is limited. Also keep in mind that only *one* piece of smaller carry-on luggage per traveler is allowed on the bullet train. One piece of larger cabin luggage per traveler will need to be shipped ahead. This will take two days, so you will need to pack for one overnight in your carry-on baggage. Please contact your airline for baggage restrictions and regulations.

Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you should need to break away from the group at any point. Store valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes and refrain from carrying large sums of money or wearing valuable jewelry. Please be sure to read EF's *Safety Handbook* before going on tour.