

Country Profile: Japan

General Information:

- Japan is an island nation located in East Asia in the Pacific Ocean.
- People's Republic of China, North Korea, South Korea, and Russia lies to the east of the Sea of Japan.
- Japan is comprised of 3,000 islands. The largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku.
- The climate in Japan varies by region. In the south it is tropical and the north is temperate.
- The capital of Japan is Tokyo, which is the largest metropolitan area with 30 million residents.
- The national language is Japanese.
- The currency of Japan is the yen.
- The type of government is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government.

Economy:

Japan has the second largest economy in the world after the United States. Some of the largest enterprises are located in Japan, including Toyota Motor, Honda, Canon, Sony and Nintendo. The major industries include banking, insurance, real estate, retailing, construction, and telecommunications. Japan is also the leader of the most technologically advanced producer of electronic equipment, motor vehicles, processed foods, textiles, chemicals, ships, machine tools, steel and nonferrous metals. The service sector accounts for three quarters of the domestic product.

The main export products are transport equipment, chemicals, semiconductors, motor vehicles and electrical machinery. The export markets include the United States, European Union, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The main import markets include China, the United States, European Union, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Australia, South Korea, and Indonesia. The products include fossil fuels, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, textiles, chemicals, and raw materials for its industries.

Culture Etiquette:

Greetings:

The Japanese bow is the greeting used for arriving and departing. The length and depth of the bow will change depending on seniority and status. When a foreigner greets a Japanese person, a light handshake and a small bow will suffice. For the first meeting, when a man greets a woman, a bow will suffice, but in a business environment a light handshake is appropriate.

Communication Style:

Indirect style of communication is appreciated over direct style. It is best to imply what you are saying than actually saying it.

Personal Space and Touching:

A comfortable distance of 2.5 - 3 feet or arms length is appropriate when meeting one another. When meeting strangers the distance between one another might be further. In public places, personal space is unavoidable, so you should expect to be in very close proximity to each other. During conversation there is no touching unless it is in a social environment like having drinks.

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Eye Contact:

Indirect eye contact is favored over direct eye contact. Direct eye contact is viewed as intimidating and hostile, whereas indirect eye contact is viewed as a sign of respect and reverence when speaking to elders or superiors.

Views of Time:

Punctuality is expected and valued. There is a great deal of importance on adhering to schedules and deadlines. It is best to show up on time for appointments and social functions.

Gender Issues:

Women in the work force are still expected to go home and take care of the household and children. Women are expected to cease working once they are married.

Gestures:

Waving your hand back and forth in front of your face means "no" or "I do not know." When visiting a home, restaurant, or hotel you should take your shoes off. The motion of extending an arm and making a scratching gesture with fingers towards the floor is used to ask someone to come over. The OK gesture signifies money. Using the palm or hand to beckon someone is more appropriate than pointing at the person. If your thumb is towards your face and your pinky away from you, it means that something smells bad.

Taboos:

It is rude to place your feet on furniture. Avoid sneezing, spitting, burping, eating and drinking in public. Avoid placing chopsticks in the upright position because that is usually reserved for funerals. You should also avoid sucking and biting on the chopsticks. Placing the thumb between the middle and index finger is an obscene gesture.

Business Etiquette:

Dress:

For men and women business attire is formal. Men wear conservative dark suits with a white shirt and a traditional tie. Shoes should be easy to put on and take off. Women wear conservative suits or dress. Form fitting attire should be avoided.

Titles and Business Cards:

Titles are very important. Address people directly by their professional title or by Mister, Miss, or Mrs. followed by their last name. Names begin with the family name, then the given name. Business cards should be translated into Japanese. Present the card with both hands; the Japanese side should be facing the recipient. When receiving a card both hands should be used to accept it. Examine the card with interest, and place the card in a holder. It should never be folded or written on.

Meetings:

Arrive on time for meetings. Hierarchy is important, so address the most senior person when beginning and leading the conversation. Small talk is at the beginning which establishes the relationship, and then the business conversation will ensue. It is best if the host begins the business conversation. Silence during the conversation is accepted and expected. Do not talk over someone or interrupt the conversations.

Negotiations:

Japanese are non confrontational and value building relationships, so avoid confrontations, conflicts, and pressure tactics. Decisions are made by the senior person, and it takes time. Japanese value indirect communication. They avoid using the word "no"; instead they use, "maybe" or "it might be difficult".

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Gift Giving:

Gifts are not expected at the first meeting. If you're invited over to someone's house bring flowers (no white), cakes, expensive fruit or chocolates. Gifts are not opened upon arrival, but in private.

Travel information:

Visitors from the following countries do not have to obtain a visa because of the "Reciprocal Visa Exemption Arrangements" with Japan. If the stay is 6 months or less: Austria, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (UK citizens only). If the stay is for 3 months or less: Argentina, Bahamas, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal (except if the passport was originally issued in present or former Portuguese colonies), San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Surinam, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey and Uruguay. If the stay is for 90 days or less: Andorra, Australia, Barbados, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Monaco, New Zealand, Poland, Slovakia and the U.S.A. If the stay is for 14 days or less: Brunei. Nationals who wish to extend their stay must apply at their nearest immigration authority in Japan.

Visitors from countries that are not a part of the "Reciprocal Visa Exemption Arrangements" must obtain a visa to visit Japan. A temporary visitor's visa is required to stay in Japan for up to 90 days. The temporary visitor's visa is granted for the purpose of sightseeing, participating in amateur sports, visiting relatives, taking inspection tours, participating in lectures or research, attending conferences, making business contacts or other similar activities. A temporary visitor's visa cannot be used for any remunerative purpose, which involves profit making or payment acceptance within Japan.

The person must apply for a visa in their home country at either a Japanese Embassy or consulate. The following documents are required to apply for a visa: a valid passport, two passport photos taken within 6 months, previous to the date of the application, 2 official visa application forms, and documents certifying the purpose of the visit.

Sources:

http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student.php?id=104

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1148.html

<http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/index.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

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