



Japan Travel Checklist

A printable pre-trip checklist for first-time visitors

Created for AskTourGuide.com | Updated June 2026

How to use this: print it, save it to your phone, or use it as a pre-trip planning sheet. Some rules change by nationality, medication type and airport, so always verify official sources before departure.

Quick must-do list

- Passport is valid for the full trip, with extra buffer after your return date.
- Visa or visa-exemption rules checked for your passport and trip purpose.
- Flights, hotels and activity confirmations saved offline.
- Visit Japan Web account created and arrival details prepared.
- Medication rules checked before packing prescriptions or over-the-counter medicine.
- Cash plan ready: yen, debit card, credit card and ATM backup.
- Transport plan ready: IC card, mobile wallet, rail passes or individual tickets.
- Offline maps, translation app, transit app and hotel addresses saved.

Tip: keep one digital folder named JAPAN TRIP with your passport scan, bookings, insurance, emergency numbers and itinerary.

6 to 8 weeks before departure

Route and bookings

- Choose your main route: Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima, Hokkaido, Okinawa or another region.
- Decide if your trip is city-focused, food-focused, anime/gaming-focused, nature-focused or temple/culture-focused.
- Book flights and hotels near train/subway access, especially for first-time travel.
- Check seasonal timing: cherry blossoms, autumn leaves, rainy season, summer heat or winter snow.
- Compare rail pass options against individual train tickets before buying anything.
- Reserve popular experiences early: teamLab, Ghibli-related tickets, theme parks, fine dining and seasonal tours.
- Make a daily itinerary with one main area per day to avoid wasting time on long transfers.

Documents and money

- Check official visa information for your nationality and trip purpose.
- Confirm your passport condition: no major damage, blank pages available and correct personal data.
- Buy travel insurance that covers medical care, delays, baggage and cancellations.
- Save copies of passport, insurance, flight tickets, hotels and emergency contacts.
- Tell your bank you will travel, or confirm international card usage in the banking app.
- Set card PINs and test your debit card before departure.

Entry reminder: Japan lists visa-exempt countries and stay periods through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For many visa-exempt passports, landing permission is commonly granted for 90 days, but your nationality and purpose of travel matter.

3 to 4 weeks before departure

Medication and health

- Check every medication by active ingredient, not just brand name.
- Keep medication in original packaging with your name when possible.
- Carry prescriptions and a doctor letter for important medication.
- Apply for required import confirmation or permission if your medication type or quantity requires it.
- Do not pack controlled or prohibited substances, including products that may be legal in your country but restricted in Japan.
- Pack medication in your carry-on, plus a small delay buffer if allowed by rules.

Phone, internet and apps

- Install a map app and download offline maps for your main cities.
- Install a translation app with offline Japanese downloaded.
- Install a transit app for train/subway routes.
- Decide between eSIM, pocket Wi-Fi or roaming before arrival.
- Save hotel names and addresses in English and Japanese.
- Add a mobile IC card if your phone supports it, or plan where to buy a physical card.
- Create a shared itinerary with your travel partner or emergency contact.

Medication reminder: Japan may require advance approval for certain pharmaceuticals, controlled substances or quantities. Some medicines cannot be imported even with a prescription from your country.

1 week before departure

Final planning

- Complete or prepare Visit Japan Web information for immigration and customs procedures.
- Confirm airport transfer from arrival airport to hotel.
- Confirm hotel check-in time and luggage storage options.
- Book any remaining restaurants, museums, day trips or theme park tickets.
- Exchange or prepare initial cash in yen for arrival day.
- Download all bookings to your phone and cloud storage.
- Screenshot your first hotel address and nearest station.
- Check baggage rules for your airline and domestic Japan transfers.

24 hours before departure

- Charge power bank, phone, camera and headphones.
- Put passport, wallet, cards, medicine and documents in your personal item.
- Pack a pen for forms, even if you use digital arrival procedures.
- Check flight status and airport terminal.
- Set roaming/eSIM instructions where you can access them offline.
- Share your itinerary and hotel address with someone at home.

Arrival tip: Visit Japan Web is an official online service for arrival procedures such as immigration and customs. Keep your QR codes/screenshots accessible in case airport Wi-Fi is slow.

Packing checklist

Essentials to pack

- Passport and copy of passport
- Flight and hotel confirmations
- Travel insurance details
- Debit card and credit card
- Yen cash for arrival day
- Medication and prescriptions
- Phone and charger
- Universal adapter
- Power bank
- Portable Wi-Fi or eSIM details
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Weather-appropriate layers
- Compact umbrella or rain jacket
- Reusable water bottle
- Small day bag
- Coin purse or small pouch
- Hand sanitizer and tissues
- Basic toiletries
- Laundry bag
- Luggage tag
- Compression cubes
- Camera or memory cards
- Skincare and sunscreen
- Small trash bag for daily use

Optional but useful

- Restaurant reservation screenshots.
- Printed hotel address for taxi or emergencies.
- Small towel or handkerchief.
- Extra socks for temple/restaurant visits where shoes are removed.
- Foldable tote for convenience stores, snacks or souvenirs.
- Luggage forwarding plan if moving between cities.

Arrival and daily travel checklist

First day in Japan

- Connect to internet before leaving the airport.
- Withdraw or confirm enough yen cash for the first 24 hours.
- Buy or activate an IC card if needed.
- Save your hotel as a favorite in your map app.
- Check last train time if arriving late.
- Keep passport with you if required by local rules and hotel check-ins.
- Use luggage storage or forwarding if your check-in is late.

Daily travel scan

- Check weather before leaving the hotel.
- Carry cash, card, IC card and phone battery backup.
- Confirm train route before entering the station.
- Save the return route to your hotel.
- Book same-day restaurants early when possible.
- Keep trash with you until you find the correct bin.
- Respect lines, quiet train behavior and local signage.

Money and transit tip: IC cards such as Suica or PASMO can be used on many trains, buses, vending machines and convenience stores. Still keep some cash because not every place or payment method works everywhere.

Emergency and trip notes

Important information to fill in

Traveler name: _____

Passport number: _____

Blood type / allergies: _____

Main hotel address: _____

Emergency contact: _____

Travel insurance policy: _____

Embassy or consulate contact: _____

Medication notes: _____

Notes

Official references to verify before travel: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan visa exemption list; Visit Japan Web by Japan Digital Agency; Japan Customs prohibited and restricted goods; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare medication import guidance; Japan National Tourism Organization IC card and cashless payment guides.

This checklist is general travel planning information, not legal, immigration or medical advice.