



Japan Textiles Arts and Crafts Tour

Destination Guide and FAQs



First time in Japan?

Whether you're marvelling at the geisha's fluid grace, pausing to inhale a perfectly brewed cup of sencha, or thrumming to the pulsating rhythm of Ginza, Japan has the power to captivate the most jaded traveller. On this 14-day tour timed to take in the autumn splendour, we will explore the best of Japan's culture, textiles, arts, crafts, and cuisine.

I came away from this trip to Japan with a greater knowledge of Japanese culture, history, and beauty. I am grateful for the vision to achieve such a comprehensive trip, and particularly to you who made all the arrangements. Thank you! – Mary P., Calif.

If you have been lucky enough to visit Japan, you're already in love. But do read on because a few things have changed.

From navigating dietary restrictions and food allergies, to money matters, what to pack, tipping, manners and customs, staying in touch with (envious) folks back home, we're covering everything.



First off, is Japan safe for travellers?

Your perception of safety is important, and we urge you to visit your country's travel advisory consular site. These days, only a few countries do not carry an advisory. Happily, Japan is one of them. It is one of the safest countries in the world for both men and women. Petty theft and violent crime are extremely rare. Stories of people leaving wallets, passports and bags on trains and being reunited with them are the norm. However, you should still be sensible and follow the usual travel precautions.

A bonus of group travel is you can always be with a travel companion. Additionally, our local office in Canada is on hand to address any concerns.

Do I need a visa for Japan?

Visa requirements for Japan are straightforward for U.S. and Canadian nationals. Visa-free and can stay for 90 days.

U.S. nationals please visit https://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/travel_and_visa.html

Canadian nationals, please visit https://www.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/visa.html

Other nationals, please search for "Embassy of Japan in xyz (your country)" and click on Visa services.

Please bear in mind that processing can take 3-4 weeks. Please understand that it is your sole responsibility to possess a valid passport and visa prior to embarking on this tour.

What is the Time Zone in Japan?

Japan observes [Japan Standard Time](#) all year.

There are no Daylight-Saving changes. Japan Standard Time is 13 hrs ahead of Eastern time zone.

What is the weather like in November?

November is a pleasant month with warm to cool temperatures throughout Japan. Days are clear and crisp. Nights are cool, ideal for sleeping. BONUS** Mid November onwards is peak Autumn foliage season. While this natural phenomenon cannot be guaranteed, our tour is well-timed to experience the season.

Amami Island will be warmer with an almost tropical feel.

How strenuous is this tour?

You must be able to walk comfortably and without assistance at a moderate pace for one-hour stretches. Moderate pace is defined as around 100 steps per minute.

We take public transport almost everywhere except when we travel with private coaches. Ability to navigate stairs is essential. While we arrange luggage transfers between cities, you should be able to comfortably handle your overnight case/bag on short walks and through train stations. A major effort has been made in Japanese cities to ensure that every train, metro, tram, or bus is accessible, but this cannot be guaranteed. Hikes and strenuous activities are optional. On one night we stay in traditional ryokan with tatami mats and futons





on the ground. Additional mattresses can be requested to raise the height, but please ensure you are able to raise yourself up, perhaps with the help of a nearby piece of furniture.

Secondly, our tours are group events. The presence of even one person who is not fit enough to cope can spoil the experience for everyone else, in addition to placing stress on group leaders and guides.

Please assess your fitness level as objectively as possible. Should you decide to join the tour and later develop immobility, please let us know immediately.

What types of accommodations will we stay in?

One of the best ways to experience Japan is to stay in atmospheric ryokans (traditional inns) for architecture, cultural relevance, and personalised service. While ryokans are not widely available or conveniently located in urban areas, we include **eight nights in traditional (or updated for Western tastes) ryokan style accommodations** with natural hot springs onsen or public hot bath onsen. The rest is in comfortable western style 3-3.5* hotels.

All accommodation is clean and well-appointed with private bathrooms and western-style toilets. All include breakfast.



What should I pack?

A comprehensive packing list will be supplied. Consider layering clothes. Pack a light windbreaker and fleece hoodie, as well as warm socks, toque, and mitts. Comfortable closed-toed walking shoes are recommended. Bear in mind we will take public transport within cities, and the bullet train in between. Luggage on bullet train days will be transferred by coach. You should be comfortable carrying your daily needs in a backpack or bag.

It's best to leave expensive jewelry and valuables at home.

Will hotel rooms have safety deposit boxes?

Most will but not all. Lock your valuables in suitcase or leave for safekeeping with front office. Depending on your level of concern, you may consider a locking small zippered bag (often used for petty cash or bank deposits) to gather your stuff that you give to the hotel to put in their safe. It is pilfer proof. Around \$18 on Amazon. It has a place for your name or business card.



What is the voltage in Japan?

Voltage in Japan is 100V. Your items or adaptor will need to fit into this type of outlet. (ie: 3 prongs won't fit)





Where to fly in and out of? What are the best international flight options?

Our tour starts in Tokyo and ends in Kyoto. Or Osaka KIX/ITM for Amami Island participants. Shared airport shuttle will be provided for all arrivals if you are arriving either later or earlier, as long as you book the extra nights' accommodation through us. Do give yourself ample time to settle in after your long flight. Please see website tour page for arrival and departure details.

How do I stay electronically connected?

First off, we strongly recommend being connected through wifi or SIM card during your group travel in Japan, particularly in train stations, crowded sightseeing, and markets. Wifi on the go also helps you navigate and translate during your free time.

Although free WiFi is available in all our hotels, we strongly recommend one of the following:

- Your local phone company plan
- [E-sim](#) if your phone supports it
- [Japanese SIM card](#) at around \$50. For plans, see [here](#).
- [rent a pocket WiFi](#) to bring a hotspot with you to search for directions, get train schedules, or look up restaurants in the area. However, these sell out early during busy periods.
- Buy SIM cards upon arrival at the airport. Do apply in advance through the link above as SIM card shops at airports are likely to be crowded and the airport-shared shuttle leaves within 2 hours of actual arrival time.
- Buy SIM cards at convenience stores such as SEVEN ELEVEN, FAMILY MART, and LAWSONS

Note: applies to data only, no voice.

Travelling in Japan with dietary restrictions or food allergies

Traveling with dietary restrictions can be challenging, but it's not impossible. Vegetarian and vegan restaurants are becoming increasingly popular in cosmopolitan parts of Japan, but it can still be difficult to navigate menus if you don't read Japanese. Some tips for vegetarians traveling in Japan:

- [Happy Cow](#) is a great website that lists vegetarian/vegan restaurants all around the world!
- Dashi is a fish stock base that is in many dishes, even if they don't contain meat. Be careful when ordering soups or ask waitstaff if the dish contains dashi. Miso soup, however, is typically suitable for vegans.
- Conveyor belt sushi restaurants are a good place to find vegetarian food as they often have veggie rolls, avocado rolls and cucumber rolls, as well as a variety of desserts.
- Okonomiyaki is a good dish to try, as it is made to order, and you can customize the ingredients to your liking.

For gluten-free diets, Japanese cuisine don't appear to be heavy on wheat, so it might surprise you to learn that gluten is found in lots of Japanese dishes. Many of the staple sauces (including soy sauce and miso) have wheat in them. Read [this](#) for gluten or celiac diets.

In the interests of pre-booking restaurants during a busy travel time, we will collate your dietary restrictions three months prior.

If you have any dietary restrictions, it might be a good idea to print out these cards and carry them with you during your trip in Japan.



アレルギーの為
乳製品が一切食べられません。
ご了承下さい。

Due to allergies, I cannot
eat any dairy products.
Thank you for your understanding.

アレルギーの為
小麦、小麦粉が一切食べられません。
ご了承下さい。

Due to allergies, I cannot
eat any wheat or wheat flour.
Thank you for your understanding.

申し訳ありませんが、私はベジタリアンです。
肉、鶏肉、魚(出汁を含めて)が食べられません。
卵、乳製品は大丈夫です。

I'm a vegetarian. I can't eat meat, poultry
or fish including dashi. Eggs and dairy are ok.
Thank you for your understanding.

Is it safe to drink tap water in Japan?

The answer is yes, you can drink tap water in Japan. All throughout Japan, tap water is safe to drink and that includes the water found in parks, gardens, and public bathrooms. Bottled water is also available and can be found in convenience stores or vending machines inexpensively. Bring a refillable water bottle to save the planet!

What about the currency?

In Japan, the currency is yen (¥). The current exchange rate (Nov 2023): USD: \$1 = ¥145 and CAD: \$1 = ¥108.

Major credit cards are accepted at big hotel chains, larger restaurants, or shops in large cities, but you'll want to have cash on hand to use in small restaurants, markets or in more rural towns.

There's no need to bring yen from home either.

ATMs offer the best exchange rate possible. Easy to find in train stations as well as convenience stores. Before heading to a rural town though, be sure to withdraw cash.



What about tipping?

Tipping is not customary in Japan. In fact, it can be considered offensive 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.

However, there are three exceptions. When staying at a ryokan with personal attendants, it's customary to hand in an envelope with \$10 in equivalent yen at check in. (Our ryokans do not offer personal attendants) If you're lucky enough to arrange a private dinner with a geisha, hand her an envelope (around \$25) with both hands and a slight bow of respect. And lastly, guides in Japan greatly appreciate gratuities. Generally USD 5 pppd but it's up to you how much to tip them. They also appreciate a snack from your hometown or being bought coffees or small refreshment.

And shopping . . . ?

Japan is a shopper's paradise. Excellent textiles, a plethora of handicrafts, dolls, glassware and cutting-edge youngsters' fashion items and accessories. Not to forget quirky 100-Yen shops, selling just about everything for the



same price.

Given our tour focus on textiles, arts and crafts, some shopping is unavoidable. Since each group is different, it's difficult striking a balance between too much and too little shopping. We will provide information on shopping in your free time, as well keep non-shoppers in mind by scheduling shopping stops at day's end wherever possible.

Manners and Customs in Japan

- Eating while you walk is considered sloppy. Instead, find an unobtrusive place to sit and enjoy your snack.
- Pointing is considered rude. Instead, use an open hand to make gestures.
- Blowing your nose in public can be considered rude. Japanese people often go into the bathroom to blow a stuffy nose.
- On a crowded subway or train, it is polite to take off your backpack and hold it in your arms.
- Slurping noodles not only cools them down as you eat, but it indicates that the meal is delicious. So, slurp away, it's the polite thing to do!
- Taking off your shoes is common courtesy before entering many places. If the floor is raised at the doorway, it is an indicator that you should remove your shoes.
- Public baths or onsens do not allow tattooed guests or swimsuits.

Do I need any vaccinations?

Make sure your routine vaccinations are up to date. Japan does not require any mandatory vaccinations.

Great! How do I sign up?

We'd be delighted to welcome you on board! Please [contact](#) us.

Please note that E.Y.H.O. Tours is not responsible for covering the cost of any curtailment to the tour, missed transport arrangements, accommodation required, all expenses for testing and treatment or any other costs incurred by the traveller/s. Travellers MUST ensure that their travel insurance covers these costs.

Please refer to [Terms and Conditions](#) for travel insurance suggestions.

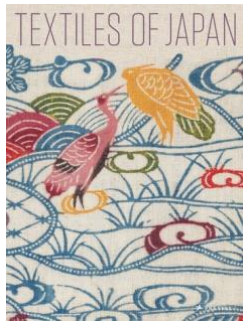
Reading list follows.



Suggested Reading List

In addition to [regular titles](#), the following relate specifically to our tour focus.

A Textiles of Japan (engl.)

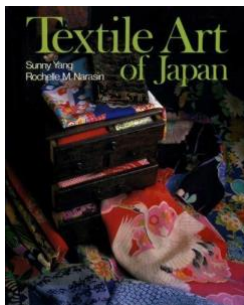


By Thomas Murray and Virginia Soenkensen

From rugged Japanese firemen's ceremonial robes and austere rural workwear to colorful, delicately patterned cotton kimonos, this lavishly illustrated volume

explores Japan's rich tradition of textiles.

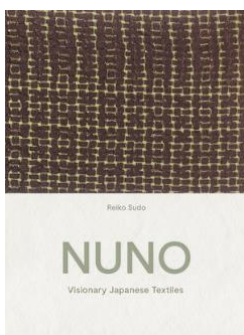
Textile Art of Japan



By Sunny Yang and Rochelle M. Narasin

This richly illustrated volume, with over 200 color illustrations, is the perfect introduction to the subject of Japanese textiles. It includes

examples of modern Japanese fabrics made according to or by adapting traditional methods and shows them used in innovative ways: in quilts, screens, cushions, and hats.



Nuno – Visionary Japanese Textiles

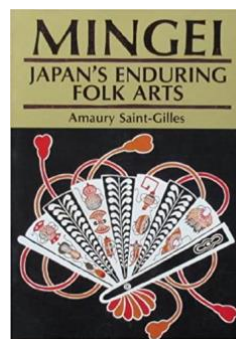
By Reiko Sudo, Naomi Pollock

A career-spanning monograph of the work of NUNO, one of Japan's most

innovative and respected textile design studios. Featuring the most outstanding, influential, and experimental

fabrics, the book is organized into thematic chapters, each based on a family of textiles. Interspersed are illuminating essays from a wide range of contributors, from writer Haruki Murakami and architect Toyo Ito to designer Kenya Hara.

Mingei – Japan's Enduring Folk Arts

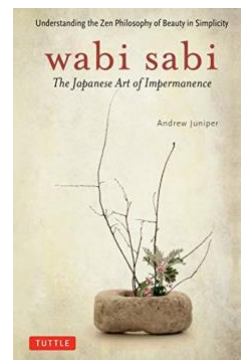


By Amaury Saint-Gilles

Explore Japanese folk art--called *mingei*. Introduces 116 exquisite and interesting Japanese pieces, describing their origins, showing how they are made and used, and relating the

background of myth and folklore associated with each.

Wabi Sabi – The Japanese Art of Impermanence



By Andrew Juniper

Developed out of the aesthetic philosophy of *cha-no-yu* (the tea ceremony) in fifteenth-century Japan, wabi sabi is an aesthetic that finds beauty in things imperfect, impermanent, and

incomplete. In addition to presenting the philosophy of wabi-sabi, this book includes how-to design advice--so that a transformation of body, mind, and home can emerge.

We hope you enjoy these titles! Let us know your opinions or your favourites.