

JAPAN

Location

Far East.

Area

377,864 sq km (145,894 sq miles).

Population

127.7 million (2008).

Population Density

338 per sq km (20,420 per sq km in Tokyo).

Capital

Tokyo.

Population: 12.8 million (2008).

Government

Constitutional monarchy.

Language

Japanese is the official language. Some English is spoken in Tokyo and other large cities but is less usual in rural areas.

Religion

Shintoism and Buddhism (most Japanese follow both religions, although religion does not play a major everyday role in most Japanese lives, with frequent temple visits being more usually attributed to tourism). There is a Christian minority.

Time

GMT + 9.

Electricity

100 volts AC, 60Hz in the west (Osaka); 100 volts AC, 50Hz in eastern Japan and Tokyo. Plugs are flat two-pin plugs.

Head of Government

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama since 2009.

Head of State

Emperor Akihito since 1989.

Telephone

Country code: 81. Four companies provide international communications services: KDDI (001), Cable & Wireless IDC (0061) Japan Telecom (0041) and NTT (0033). To call the UK, for example, you would use 001-44. Credit cards can also be used directly in some phone boxes. Phone boxes are found virtually everywhere in Japan. They are green and grey, and accept coins and magnetic prepaid cards. IC phone boxes accept IC cards only.

Mobile Telephone

The Japanese mobile network uses PDC (Personal Digital Cellular System) technology, which is not compatible with GSM or other mobile services. Visitors can hire handsets from companies such as DoCoMo (www.nttdocomo.com), Softbank (www.softbank-rental.jp) or Go Mobile (www.gomobile.co.jp). In the UK, phones can be rented in advance of travel from Adam Phones (www.adamphones.com). Coverage is good.

Internet

Internet is available; there are many internet cafés in Tokyo and in the main cities in Japan. Most hotels have Wi-Fi internet access. The new grey telephones have modular sockets for computer network access.

Media

Japan's national public broadcaster NHK (www.nhk.or.jp) operates several TV and radio channels, including Radio Japan and the global English language news channel NHK World. The press in Japan is free to criticize the government, although freelance journalists find access to information difficult. The English-language daily newspapers in Tokyo include Daily Yomiuri (www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy), the Japan Times (www.japantimes.co.jp) and the International Herald Tribune (www.asahi.com/english/index.html).

Post

Letters can be taken to the International Post Office, near exit A-2 Otemachi subway station, which provide English-speaking personnel. Airmail to Europe takes four to six days. (www.japanpost.jp).

Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1700 (1900 at bigger branches). Some main post offices are 0900-1500 on Saturdays; 0900-1230 on Sundays.

Note

(a) With the exception of New Year Bank Holidays, if a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following day is treated as a holiday instead. (b) When there is a single day between two national holidays, it is also taken as a holiday. (c) Between 29 December and 3 January government offices and many shops and offices are closed.

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2010-December 2011 period.

- 1 Jan *New Year's Day.*
- 11 Jan *Coming of Age Day.*
- 11 Feb *National Foundation Day.*
- 20 Mar *Vernal Equinox.*
- 29 Apr *Showa Day.*
- 3 May *Constitution Memorial Day.*
- 4 May *Greenery Day.*
- 5 May *Children's Day.*
- 19 Jul *Marine Day.*
- 20 Sep *Respect for the Aged Day.*
- 23 Sep *Autumnal Equinox.*
- 11 Oct *Sports Day.*
- 3 Nov *Culture Day.*
- 23 Nov *Labor Thanksgiving Day.*
- 23 Dec *Birthday of the Emperor.*
- 1 Jan *New Year's Day.*
- 10 Jan *Coming of Age Day.*
- 11 Feb *National Foundation Day.*
- 20 Mar *Vernal Equinox.*
- 29 Apr *Showa Day.*
- 3 May *Constitution Memorial Day.*
- 4 May *Greenery Day.*
- 5 May *Children's Day.*
- 18 Jul *Marine Day.*
- 19 Sep *Respect for the Aged Day.*
- 23 Sep *Autumnal Equinox.*
- 10 Oct *Sports Day.*
- 3 Nov *Culture Day.*
- 23 Nov *Labor Thanksgiving Day.*
- 23 Dec *Birthday of the Emperor.*