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Japan

Official Name: Japan

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 19, 2015

Embassy Messages

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Quick Facts

- **PASSPORT VALIDITY:**
Passports must be valid for the intended period of stay in Japan
- **VACCINATIONS:**
None
- **BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:**
One page required for entry stamp
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:**
The import of local and foreign currency is unrestricted, subject to declaration of amounts equivalent to ¥1,000,000 or above.
- **TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:**
Not required for stays less than 90 days
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:**
The export of local and foreign currency is unrestricted.

[Collapse All](#)

Embassies and Consulates

U.S. Embassy Tokyo**1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku,****Tokyo 107-8420 Japan****Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** +(81) (3) 3224-5856Tokyoacs@state.gov

CONSULATES

U.S. Consulate General Osaka-Kobe**2-11-5, Nishitenma,****Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8543 Japan****Telephone:** +(81) (6) 6315-5900**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** +(81) (6) 6315-5914AOK@state.gov**U.S. Consulate General Naha****2-1-1 Toyama, Urasoe City, Okinawa****Japan****Telephone:** 81-98-876-4211**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** 81-98-876-4243NahaACS@state.gov**U.S. Consulate General Sapporo****Kita 1-jo Nishi 28-chome, Chuo-ku,****Sapporo 064-0821, Japan****Telephone:** +(81) (11) 641-1115**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** +(81) (11) 643-1283

All assistance at the Consulate General Sapporo is by appointment only.

Hours for appointments: 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (except U.S. and Japanese

holidays).

U.S. Consulate Fukuoka**5-26 Ohori 2-chome, Chuo-ku,****Fukuoka 810-0052****Japan****Telephone:** 81-92-751-9331**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** 81-92-713-9222FukuokaACS@state.gov

Routine services are provided by appointment only. During regular business

hours (Monday through Friday, 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. except Japanese and

American holidays).

U.S. Consulate Nagoya**Nagoya International Center Bldg. 6th floor,****1-47-1 Nagono, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 450-0001****Japan****Telephone:** +(81) (52) 581-4501**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(81) (3) 3224-5000**Fax:** +(81) (52) 581-3190

Limited consular services for American citizens are available at Consulate

Nagoya on an appointment basis.

AOK@state.gov

Destination Description

Japan is a stable, highly developed parliamentary democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available, except in coastal areas of Northeast Japan still recovering from the aftermath of the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami. Please read the Department of State's [Fact Sheet on Japan](#) for additional general information.

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

You must have a valid passport and an onward/return ticket for tourist/business "visa free" stays of up to 90 days. Your passports must be valid for the entire time you are staying in Japan. U.S. citizens cannot work on a 90-day "visa free" entry. As a general rule, "visa free" entry status may not be changed to another visa status without departing and then re-entering Japan with the appropriate visa, such as a spouse, work, or study visa. Japanese immigration officers may deny you entry if you appear to have no visible means of support.

For more information about the Japanese visa waiver program for tourists, Japan's rules on work visas, special visas for taking depositions, and other visa issues, you should consult the Consular Section of the Embassy of Japan at 2520 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 238-6800, or the nearest Japanese consulate. Please visit the [Japanese Embassy's website](#) for location details. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. consulates in Japan cannot assist in obtaining visas for Japan.

All foreign nationals entering Japan are required to provide fingerprint scans and to be photographed at the port of entry. This requirement is in addition to any existing visa or passport requirements. There are some exceptions for this requirement, including diplomatic and official visa holders, minors, and individuals covered under SOFA Article IX.2. For further information about landing procedures, please visit the [Immigration Bureau of Japan's website](#).

If you are a U.S. citizen entering or transiting Japan, you should ensure that your passport and visa are valid and up to date before you leave the United States. Occasionally, airlines mistakenly board U.S. citizens coming to Japan even though their passports have already expired. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. consulates cannot "vouch for" you without a valid passport, and passport services are not available at the airport. In some prior instances, travelers have been returned immediately to the United States, while in other cases, they have been issued limited "shore passes" and required to return the next day to Japanese Immigration for lengthy processing.

Many Asian countries require you to hold a passport valid for at least six months after you enter the country. Airlines in Japan will deny you boarding for transit if you don't have the required travel documents for an onward destination in Asia or if your passport is not valid for six months. For the entry requirements of the country you're traveling to, visit the [State Department's Country Specific Information](#) website.

Airlines in Japan will deny you boarding for onward flights to China if your passport does not have a valid Chinese visa. U.S. citizen travelers who are not legally resident in Japan have reported difficulties in obtaining a Chinese visa during a short stay in Japan. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. consulates in Japan cannot assist in obtaining Chinese visas. More information is available on the [Country Specific Information page for China](#). Entry requirements for Hong Kong are available on [this webpage](#) as well.

Military/SOFA Travelers: While active-duty U.S. military personnel may enter Japan under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with proper Department of Defense (DOD) identification and travel orders, all SOFA family members, civilian employees, and contractors must have valid passports to enter Japan. Military members with non-U.S. citizen family members seeking to have them accompany them to Japan should consult with their command and Japan Immigration for requirements, as entry to Japan may differ depending on nationality. The Embassy urges all U.S. citizens, including active duty military who are able to enter Japan on SOFA status, to obtain a regular "tourist" passport before leaving the United States

to accommodate off-duty travel outside of Japan, as obtaining a passport in Japan can take several weeks. If your duties will include official travel, you should also obtain an official passport before coming to Japan to avoid delays of up to two months, as overseas applications for these passports must be referred to a special office in Washington, D.C., which increases the processing time. Please consult the [DOD Foreign Clearance Guide](#) before leaving the United States.

Long-Term Residency Requirements: Japan amended its [Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act](#) in 2009, and the changes took effect on July 9, 2012. Under the new system, residents were required to replace the old alien registration card with a new residence card no later than July 8, 2015. In addition, under the 2006 revision of the same law, if you are a long-term resident who obtained residence through your Japanese ancestry, you may have to provide evidence that you do not have a criminal record in your home country before you can renew residency status in Japan. As Japanese Immigration regulations are complex and changing, the Embassy recommends that you consult directly with your local immigration office for specific guidance. You can obtain a Proof of no U.S. [criminal record](#) through the [FBI Identification Record Request](#) .

The current residency system, instituted by the Japanese government on July 9, 2012, impacts the following groups:

- Foreign nationals with Permanent Resident status;
- Foreign nationals who have mid- to long-term residence in Japan based on familial relationships with Japanese citizens;
- Foreign nationals with "College Student" status; and
- Foreign nationals issued a working visa in various professional classifications such as Engineer, Specialist in Humanities/International Services, Research, Business Management, Designated Activities, etc.

Please Note: "Long-Term Resident" (teijusha) and "Permanent Resident" (eijusha) are different and therefore are subject to different requirements. As the changes in Japanese immigration and resident registration procedures and the affected groups described above are not a comprehensive listing, please check directly with the Japan Immigration Bureau or the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). The Japanese government websites below have more information on these changes:

[Changes to the Basic Registration Law](#)

[New Residency Management System](#)

[Changes to Immigration Control Act](#)

For a renewal of visa status or a change in visa status, you should bring your Japanese health insurance card (social insurance or national health insurance) to immigration offices, in addition to your passport. Immigration officials will urge those applicants without a health insurance card to join the Japanese public health insurance system.

HIV/AIDS Restrictions: The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors or foreign residents of Japan.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the [prevention of international child abduction](#) can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information page](#).

Safety and Security

The Government of Japan maintains heightened security measures at key facilities and ports of entry as antiterrorism precautions. At times, these security measures may increase because of regional tensions. The Government of Japan is vigilant in tracking terrorist threat indicators and remains at a high state of alert. You can contact local police substations (koban) and police emergency dispatchers (tel. 110) to report any suspicious activity.

Our offices in Japan communicate threat information through the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), post current threat information on the [U.S. Embassy's American Citizens Services \(ACS\) webpage](#), and disseminate relevant information via Twitter ([@ACSTokyo](#)). If you reside in or visit Japan, we encourage you to enroll in [STEP](#), so that the Embassy can keep you up-to-date with important safety and security announcements.

To stay connected:

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) so we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements.
- Follow the Bureau of Consular Affairs on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .
- Bookmark the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#).
- Follow the U.S. Embassy ACS Unit in Tokyo on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and visit the [Embassy's website](#).
- In the event of an emergency, contact us at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States and Canada, or via a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries.
- Take some time before traveling to consider your personal security and checking for useful tips for [traveling safely abroad](#).

CRIME: The general crime rate in Japan is well below the U.S. national average. Crimes against U.S. citizens in Japan usually involve personal disputes, theft, or vandalism. Violent crime is rare, but it does exist. Robberies committed after a victim has been drugged from a spiked drink are increasing (see below). Sexual assaults are not often reported, but they do occur, and females may be randomly targeted. Hate-related violent crimes rarely occur, although some U.S. citizens have reported being the target of discrimination because of their nationality or their race. U.S. citizens have reported incidents of pick pocketing in crowded shopping areas, on trains, and at airports. Every year, a number of U.S. citizens report their passports lost or stolen at international airports, especially passports that were carried in their pockets.

Some U.S. citizens report that Japanese police procedures appear to be less sensitive and responsive to a victim's concerns compared to the procedures in the United States, particularly in cases of domestic violence or sexual assault, or when both the victim and the perpetrator are foreigners. Few victim's assistance resources or battered women's shelters exist in major urban areas, and they are generally unavailable in rural areas. Investigations of sexual assault crimes are often conducted without female police officers present, and police typically ask about the victim's sexual history and previous relationships. The quality of Japanese-English interpretation services can vary, and this has been a problem for some U.S. citizen victims.

Don't buy counterfeit or pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are such goods illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.

Concerns Regarding Roppongi, Kabuki-cho and other Entertainment and Nightlife Districts in Tokyo:

- Roppongi and Kabuki-cho are entertainment districts in Tokyo that cater to foreign clientele and are considered high-risk areas for crime, particularly misappropriation of credit card information in bars to make fraudulent credit card charges. Other high-risk areas for crime in the Tokyo area include Shibuya and Ikebukuro. However, you should use caution in all entertainment and nightlife districts throughout Japan. Incidents involving U.S. citizens in these areas include physical and sexual assaults, drug overdoses, theft of purses, wallets, cash and credit cards at bars or clubs, and drugs allegedly slipped into drinks.
- Drink spiking at bars and entertainment venues, especially in areas such as Roppongi and Kabuki-cho, near Shinjuku, has routinely led to robbery and has also resulted in physical and sexual assaults. In most drink-spiking reports, the victim unknowingly drinks a beverage that has been mixed with a drug that makes the victim unconscious or dazed for several hours, during which time the victim's credit card is stolen or used for large purchases. Some victims regain consciousness in the bar or club; other victims may awaken on the street or in other unknown locations. Several U.S. citizens have also reported being charged exorbitant bar tabs in some bars and clubs in Roppongi and Kabuki-cho and other entertainment and nightlife districts. Although firearms and brandishing knives in public are illegal in Japan, U.S. citizens have reported being threatened with gun or knife violence in such venues so that they will pay bar tabs or withdraw money. U.S. citizens have also reported of being beaten when they have refused to pay or hand over money.

There have been recent reports of U.S. citizens being forcibly taken to ATMs and robbed, or made to withdraw funds after being unable to pay exorbitant bar tabs. Please be aware that Roppongi, Kabuki-cho, and other entertainment and nightlife districts have also been the scenes of violence between criminal syndicates.

We urge you to keep these incidents in mind and use caution in all entertainment areas and nightlife districts. If you believe that you are a victim of crime, you must file a police report at the nearest police station before you leave Japan. The Japanese police do not provide you a copy of the police report, but they issue a report number. You can provide this report number to your credit card company in order to confirm the incident with the police. The Japanese police cannot accept reports filed from overseas.

VICTIMS OF CRIME: If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. We can:

- Replace a stolen passport.
- Help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of violent crimes such as assault or rape.
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities, and if you want us to, we can contact family members or friends.
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in Japan are 110 (police) or 119 (ambulance/fire).

Contacting Police, Fire and Ambulance Services: You can reach the police throughout Japan by dialing 110. Fire and ambulance services can be contacted by dialing 119. Note that English-speaking dispatchers may not be available. Please review advice on [how to call for help](#). If you need assistance, you should be able to describe your address/location in Japanese or find someone who can do so, since few police officers speak English.

Please see our [information for victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While you are traveling in another country, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. If you violate Japanese law, even unknowingly, you may be arrested, imprisoned, or deported. If you are arrested in Japan, even for a minor offense, you may be held in detention without bail for several months or more during the investigation and legal proceedings.

Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs, including marijuana and synthetic drugs, are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and fines. Japanese authorities aggressively pursue drug smugglers with sophisticated detection equipment, "sniffing" dogs, and other methods. When entering Japan, you and your luggage will be screened at ports of entry. Incoming and outgoing mail, as well as international packages sent via DHL or FedEx, is also checked carefully. In most drug cases, suspects are detained and barred from receiving visitors or corresponding with anyone other than a lawyer or a U.S. consular officer until after the first hearing, which at times has not taken place for a year.

In Japan, you may be taken in for questioning if you don't have your passport or Japanese residence card to show your identity and visa status. You must carry your U.S. passport or Japanese Residence Card (Zairyu Kado) with you at all times so that if questioned by local officials, you can prove your identity, citizenship, and immigration status. Under Japanese law, the police may stop any person on the street at any time and demand to see identification. If you do not have with you either a passport or valid Japanese Residence Card, you are subject to arrest.

It is illegal for you to work in Japan while in tourist or visa-waiver status. Overstaying your visa or working illegally may lead to fines of several thousands of dollars, and in some cases, re-entry bans can be as long as ten years, or indefinitely for drug offenders. Japanese work visas are not transferable and are issued outside of Japan for a specific job with a specific employer at a specific place of employment. Japanese authorities do not allow foreigners to change their immigration status from visa-waiver status to work status while in Japan. If you violate your visa status in Japan, you may be subject to arrest, which can involve several weeks or months of incarceration, followed by conviction and imprisonment or deportation. If you are deported, you will have to pay, in most cases, the cost of deportation, including legal expenses and airfare. For additional information please see [Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act](#) and contact the Japanese Embassy or nearest Japanese consulate in the United States for more information.

Laws governing rape, sexual commerce, and other activity involving sexual relations do not apply to same-sex sexual activity. This definition leads to lower penalties for perpetrators of male rape and greater legal ambiguity surrounding same-sex prostitution.

If you break local laws in Japan, your U.S. passport won't help you avoid arrest or prosecution.

There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States. You can be [prosecuted in the United States](#) for engaging in sexual conduct with children or for using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country regardless of the legality of these activities under that country's laws. Counterfeit and pirated goods are illegal in the United States, and if you purchase them in a foreign country, you may be breaking local law as well.

You must always carry identity documents with you while visiting Japan. In Japan, you may be taken in for questioning or arrested if you don't have your passport or Japanese residence card to show your identity and visa status. Driving under the influence of alcohol could also land you immediately in jail. The blood-alcohol limit in Japan is approximately 0.03%, less than the amount of alcohol in a single glass of beer. Punishments can be up to 10,000 USD in fines and up to five years in prison.

Possession of a gun or ammunition is a crime in Japan. Possession of a knife with a locking blade, or a folding blade that is longer than 5.5 cm (a little more than two inches), is illegal in Japan. U.S. citizens and U.S. military personnel have been arrested and detained for more than 10 days for carrying pocket knives that are legal in the United States but illegal in Japan. The possession of lock-picking tools is illegal in Japan.

[A list of English-speaking lawyers](#) located throughout Japan is available on our [website](#).

Arrest notifications in Japan: Generally, when you are arrested in Japan, the police will ask if you would like the U.S. Embassy or a consulate to be notified of your arrest. To ensure that the United States is aware of your circumstances, request that the police and prison officials notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate as soon as you are arrested or detained overseas.

In accordance with the U.S.-Japan Consular Convention, U.S. consular officers are generally notified within 24 hours of the arrest of a U.S. citizen if the U.S. citizen requests consular notification.

Conditions at Prisons and Detention Facilities: Japanese prisons and detention facilities maintain internal order through a regime of very strict discipline. U.S. citizen prisoners often complain of stark, austere living conditions and psychological isolation. No one arrested in Japan is allowed access to personal medication of any type, often causing health risks to those arrested with medical conditions, as substitute medication provided by prison medical officials is seldom the same in effect or strength as the personal medication. As a prisoner, you can become eligible for parole only after having served approximately 60-70% of your sentence. Early parole is not allowed for any reason -- humanitarian, medical, or otherwise. Access to interpreters is not always required under Japanese criminal law. Additional [information on arrests in Japan](#) is available on our embassy website. Japan acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons on June 1, 2003. Please see our information on [Prisoner Transfer Treaties](#).

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Customs Regulations: Japan has strict laws regarding the importation and possession of firearms and other weapons. Persons bringing a firearm or sword into Japan (including target and trophy pistols, air guns, some pocket knives, and even Japanese-origin swords) may have these items confiscated by Japanese customs authorities and may be arrested, prosecuted, and deported or jailed. Some prescription medications, as well as some over-the-counter medications, cannot be imported into Japan. (Please see the "Confiscation of Prescription Drugs and other Medication" section below.) Please contact the Japanese Embassy or nearest Japanese consulate in the United States, or [visit the Japanese Customs website](#) for specific information regarding import restrictions and customs requirements.

Japanese customs authorities encourage the use of an Admission

Temporaire/Temporary Admission (ATA) Carnet in order to temporarily import professional equipment, commercial samples and/or goods for exhibitions and trade fairs into Japan. The ATA Carnet Headquarters is located at the [U.S. Council for International Business](#) (U.S. CIB), 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036 issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, please call (212) 354-4480, or [email the U.S. CIB](#) for details.

Confiscation of Prescription Drugs and Other Medication: The Japanese government decides which medications may be imported legally into Japan. The Embassy and consulates of Japan in the United States have limited information available and do not have a comprehensive lists of specific medications or ingredients.

You can bring up to a two-month supply of allowable over-the-counter medications and up to a two-month supply of allowable vitamins into Japan duty-free. However, it is illegal to bring into Japan some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States, including inhalers and some allergy and sinus medications. Specifically, products that contain stimulants (medicines that contain pseudoephedrine, such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers) or codeine are prohibited. You can generally bring up to one month's supply of allowable prescription medicine into Japan. You must bring a copy of your doctor's prescription as well as a letter stating the purpose of the drug. However, some U.S. prescription medications, such as Adderall, cannot be imported into Japan, even when accompanied by a customs declaration and a copy of the prescription. You should not mail prescription medicines, including insulin and injectors, without obtaining an import certification called "Yakkan-Syoumei" from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. Please see more [information on importing medicines](#) into Japan.

Japanese physicians can often prescribe similar, but not identical, substitutes for medicines available in the United States. See the [list of English-speaking medical facilities](#) throughout Japan on our website. Some popular medications that are legal in the United States, such as Prozac and Viagra, are sold illegally in Japan on the black market. You risk arrest and imprisonment if you purchase such drugs illegally while in Japan.

If you plan to travel to Japan carrying prescription and non-prescription medications, you should consult the [Japanese Embassy or a Japanese consulate](#) in the United States before leaving the United States to confirm whether or not you will be allowed to bring the particular medication into Japan.

Pets: The Japanese [Animal Quarantine Service](#) (AQS) sets procedures for importing pets. At a minimum, the process will take seven to eight months, though the process can take up to a year before a pet may enter Japan. Advance planning is critical. You can find more information about [importing a pet into Japan](#) or information about [exporting a pet from Japan](#) on our embassy website.

Employment Issues: U.S. citizens should not come to Japan to work without having the proper employment visa arranged ahead of time. Teaching English, even privately, and serving as hosts/hostesses are both considered "work" in Japan and are illegal without the proper visa.

Some U.S.-based employment agencies and Japanese employers do not fully discuss or correctly represent the true nature of employment terms and conditions. U.S. consular officers in Japan receive numerous complaints from U.S. citizens who come to Japan to work as English teachers, carpenters,

models, actors, entertainers, exotic dancers, and bar hosts/hostesses. The complaints include contract violations, non-payment of salary for months at a time, sexual harassment, intimidation, and threats of arrest, deportation, and physical assault.

A minimum requirement for effectively seeking the protection of Japanese labor law is a written and signed work contract. If there is no signed contract, Japanese authorities do not get involved on behalf of foreign workers. If you're coming to Japan to work, carefully review your contracts and the history and reputation of your Japanese employer before traveling to Japan. If you are asked to do something you find troubling, you should think about terminating your employment and returning to the United States. Complaints against U.S.-based employment agencies or recruiters may be directed to the [Better Business Bureau](#) or the Office of the Attorney General in that particular state.

Living and Travel Expenses: Japan's cost of living is one of the highest in the world. The use of credit/debit cards is not widespread, particularly outside major cities. While there are ATMs in Japan, most are not open 24 hours a day, and only a very limited number accept U.S.-issued cards. ATMs at major airports, foreign bank branches, Japanese post offices, 7-11 stores, and some convenience stores are more likely to accept foreign cards than are those at other locations. You should make sure that you have access to sufficient funds through credit cards, debit cards, or cash to carry out your travel, and you should know how to contact your banking or credit card establishments in an emergency.

[Western Union](#) money transfer service is available at [Travelex](#) offices in major cities. Paypal is available for international money transfer. For more information on this service, please [click here](#) . Please see our website for [additional information on financial arrangements in Japan](#).

English Help and Information Lines: As a tourist or foreign resident in Japan, you can have access to valuable information, including professional counseling, through help and information telephone hotlines. [TELL](#) provides English-speaking counseling and referrals at 03-5774-0992. The [Japan Help Line](#) provides similar assistance nationwide at 0570-000-911 (domestic), 813-3435-8017 (international).

Disaster Preparedness: Japan is faced with the ever-present danger of deadly earthquakes, tsunamis, and typhoons. Japan is one of the most seismically active locations in the world; minor tremors are felt regularly throughout the islands. On March 11, 2011, an earthquake registering 9.0 on the Richter scale struck the northeastern coast of Japan and triggered tsunami waves that caused extensive damage to life and property and severely damaged the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Additional information on the aftermath of the March 11 earthquake is available on the [U.S. Embassy's American Citizens Services \(ACS\) webpage](#).

While responsibility for caring for disaster victims, including foreigners, rests with the Japanese authorities, one of the first things you should do upon arriving in Japan is to learn about earthquake and disaster preparedness from hotel or local government officials. Self-preparedness information is available on the [U.S. Embassy's American Citizens Services \(ACS\) webpage](#) and on the [U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) home page](#) .

Radiation: Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant: The Government of Japan continues to closely monitor the conditions at and around the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. In addition, in September 2012, Japan

established an independent organization to oversee the safety of its nuclear reactors, the [Nuclear Regulation Authority](#) .

We recommend that U.S. citizens observe the evacuation orders and travel restrictions put into place by the Government of Japan for areas surrounding Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, as described by the Japanese government on the following [map](#) (Japanese version [map](#)). For a more detailed description of the differences in travel restrictions between the various zones [click here](#) . Those considering travel to affected areas in Fukushima Prefecture should consult with local authorities to receive current guidance on expected levels of radiation and recommendations for reducing exposure to radiation in these areas.

Additional information about radiation and its effects on human health may be found at the following websites:

[Radiation, Health and Food Safety Information Post-Fukushima](#)

[CDC Radiation Emergency Japan 2011 Earthquake](#)

[EPA Understanding Radiation: Overview](#)

[Japan Secretariat: Great East Japan Earthquake](#)

[U.S. Department of Defense: Operation Tomodachi Registry](#)

Please note that many of the coastal areas in the Fukushima, Iwate, and Miyagi Prefectures affected by the earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster in 2011 are still undergoing significant reconstruction. If you wish to travel to these areas, you should exercise caution as you may experience disruption in travel or infrastructure. We recommend that you contact local authorities, or travel/accommodation service providers in advance.

WOMEN TRAVELER INFORMATION: If you are a woman traveling abroad, please review our travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

LGBT RIGHTS: There are no legal restrictions on same-sex sexual relations or the organization of LGBT events in Japan. While in recent years, open members of Japan's LGBT community have made social strides including winning elections to public office, LGBT activists warned that Japan remains an unwelcome place for sexual minorities. Japanese scholars have described Japan as being on the whole " more tolerant of sexual minorities than other countries in Asia," but they say that same-sex sexual behavior remains stigmatized in Japanese society. While overt violence against members of the LGBT community is rare, scholars note that many LGBT Japanese opt to remain anonymous to avoid bullying, harassment, or professional repercussions, resulting in social isolation. For more detailed information about LGBT rights in Japan, you may review the [State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#). For further information on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) travel, please read our [LGBT Travel Information](#) page.

ACCESSIBILITY: While in Japan, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what they are in the United States. Although Japan's accessibility laws mandate that new construction projects for public use include provisions for persons with disabilities, older buildings are not likely to have been retrofitted for accessibility. At major train stations, airports, and hotels, travelers with

disabilities should encounter few accessibility problems. Accessibility at other public facilities continues to improve through the installation of elevators and wheelchair ramps. However, travelers should note that many smaller stations are inaccessible to those who cannot climb stairs. Most major urban hotels have wheelchair accessible rooms, while smaller "business hotels" and traditional Japanese-style inns may not accommodate wheelchair users.

Information on travel in Japan for travelers with disabilities is available at Tesco Premium Search Co., Ltd. website "[the Travel Guide for Wheelchair Users](#) ." U.S. citizen travelers in wheelchairs should be aware that wheelchairs must be no more than 120 centimeters in length/height and no more than 70 centimeters in width in order to be allowed in trains. Accessibility information regarding the East Japan Railway Company is also available at [the company's website](#) . Reduced train fares for individuals with disabilities are not available for temporary visitors to Japan. If you do not speak Japanese, you may wish to ask your travel agent to make advance arrangements for your travel in Japan.

Health

While medical care in Japan is good, English-speaking physicians and medical facilities that cater to U.S. citizens' expectations are expensive and not widespread. Japan has a national health insurance system which is available only to those foreigners with long-term visas for Japan. National health insurance does not pay for medical evacuation. Medical caregivers in Japan require payment in full at the time of treatment or concrete proof of ability to pay before they will treat a foreigner who is not a member of the national health insurance plan.

U.S.-style and standard psychiatric care can be difficult to locate in major urban centers in Japan and generally is not available outside of Japan's major cities. Extended [psychiatric care for foreigners in Japan](#) is difficult to obtain at any price.

U.S. prescriptions are not honored in Japan, so if you need ongoing prescription medicine, you should arrive with a sufficient supply for your stay in Japan or enough until you are able to see a local care provider. Certain medications, including some commonly prescribed for depression and Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), are not widely available. Please see the section above entitled, "Confiscation of Prescription Drugs and Other Medication," regarding the importation of medicine into Japan. Also see [information on importing medicines into Japan](#) and a [list of medical facilities in Japan](#) with English-speaking staff.

You can find detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions, on the [Centers for Diseases Control \(CDC\) website](#) . For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) website](#) . The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#) .

Travel & Transportation

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Japan is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Japan is complicated and expensive. Traffic moves on the left side of the road. Those who cannot read the language will have trouble understanding road signs. Highway tolls can be very high . City traffic is often very congested. A 20-mile trip in the Tokyo area may take two hours. There is virtually no legal roadside or curbside parking; however, traffic is commonly blocked or partially blocked by those illegally parked curbside. In mountainous areas, roads are often closed during the winter, and cars should be equipped with tire chains. Roads in Japan are much narrower than those in the United States. Japanese compulsory insurance (JCI) is mandatory for all automobile owners and drivers in Japan. Most short-term visitors choose not to drive in Japan. Turning on red lights is generally not permitted.

Japanese law provides that all drivers in Japan are held liable in the event of an accident, and assesses fault in an accident on all parties. Japan has a national zero percent blood-alcohol-level standard for driving, and drivers stopped for driving under the influence of intoxicants will have their licenses confiscated. If you're found guilty of "drunken, speeding, or blatantly careless driving resulting in injury" you are subject to up to 15 years in prison.

All passengers are required to fasten their seat belts.

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information. The National Police Agency (NPA) oversees the administration and enforcement of traffic laws in Japan. You can find further information in English on the [NPA's website](#) .

Emergency Assistance: Within Japan, please dial 110 for police, and 119 for ambulance. For roadside assistance, please contact the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) at 03-5730-0111 in Tokyo, 072-645-0111 in Osaka, 011-857-8139 in Sapporo, 092-841-5000 in Fukuoka, or 098-877-9163 in Okinawa.

For specific information concerning Japanese driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please refer to the [Japan National Tourist Organization website](#) for locations in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco. In addition, information about roadside assistance, rules of the road, and obtaining a Japanese driver's license is available in English from the [Japan Automobile Federation \(JAF\) web site](#) .

International Driving Permits (IDPs): An international driving permit (IDP) issued in the United States by the American Automobile Association (AAA) or the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) is required of short-term visitors who drive in Japan. You must obtain an IDP issued in your country of residence prior to arriving in Japan. The U.S. Embassy or its consulates do not issue IDPs. IDPs issued via the Internet and/or by other organizations are not valid in Japan.

"Residents" – the exact definition is unclear - must convert to or obtain a Japanese driver's license. Residents in Japan who use an international driver's license may be fined or arrested. In practice, the term "resident" involves more than simply visa status or length of stay in Japan and is determined by the police. In short, an international license is not a substitute for a valid Japanese license. See our [website for more information on driving in Japan](#).

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Japan’s Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Japan’s air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#) .

Please see [Fact Sheet](#) for this country.

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