

For Travelers Planning a Trip to Japan

Japanese

Etiquette

&

Culture

~A Guide to a Pleasant Stay~



author

 La La Love
Nippon

Junichi Matsubara

Table of Contents

- [Chapter 1](#) [Public Manner](#)
- [Chapter 2](#) [Dining Etiquette](#)
- [Chapter 3](#) [Visiting Etiquette](#)
- [Chapter 4](#) [Accommodation Etiquette](#)
- [Chapter 5](#) [Japanese Customs and Taboos](#)
- [Chapter 6](#) [Communication Manners](#)
- [Chapter 7](#) [Troubleshooting Tips](#)

Welcome to Japan!

Known for its rich history, vibrant culture, and stunning natural beauty, Japan is a country that offers a unique and unforgettable travel experience. Whether you're exploring ancient temples, indulging in delicious cuisine, or immersing yourself in modern city life, Japan has something for everyone.

However, like any country, Japan has its own set of customs and etiquette that may differ from what you're used to. This guidebook is designed to help you navigate Japanese culture and manners, ensuring a pleasant and respectful stay.

In this guidebook, you'll find essential information on:

1. **Public manners:** How to dispose of trash, follow queues, and use public transportation.
2. **Dining etiquette:** How to use chopsticks, appreciate Japanese cuisine, and behave in restaurants.

3. **Visiting etiquette:** How to take photos respectfully, handle cultural artifacts, and behave at tourist sites.
4. **Accommodation etiquette:** How to use Japanese-style toilets and rooms, and be considerate of other guests.
5. **Japanese customs and taboos:** How to remove your shoes, behave in hot springs, and give gifts appropriately.
6. **Communication tips:** How to greet people, express gratitude, and show respect.
7. **Troubleshooting tips:** What to do if you encounter language barriers, fall ill, or lose belongings.

By understanding and respecting Japanese culture, you'll not only avoid misunderstandings but also deepen your appreciation for this fascinating country. We hope this guidebook will be your

companion on a memorable and enjoyable journey through Japan.

Let's embark on this cultural adventure together!

■ Author

Junichi Matsubara, Operator of La La Love Nippon



I was born and raised in Japan, and it's now been 40 years. While I haven't traveled to every corner of the country yet, I've had the chance to visit many different prefectures. Through these travels, I've come to realize once again just how amazing Japan truly is.

No matter where you go, the food is delicious, and the streets are impeccably clean, thanks to thorough care. The people are incredibly kind and polite, and there are countless cultural heritage sites and natural wonders to explore. Additionally, Japan is home to numerous anime and games that I deeply love.

I run the website La La Love Nippon to share the beauty of Japan with the world.

I'm truly grateful that you've picked up this guidebook, "*Japanese Etiquette and Culture: A Guide to a Pleasant Stay.*" I'm delighted that you've chosen such a wonderful country as your travel destination.

Japan is an incredible place, but it does have its own unique manners and cultural norms. Without understanding them, you might find yourself in difficult or uncomfortable situations during your trip.

Since you've come all the way to visit Japan, I want you to have the best possible experience. That's why I've put together this guidebook, which outlines the manners that Japanese people hope visitors will follow.

I hope your journey through Japan becomes one of your most cherished memories.

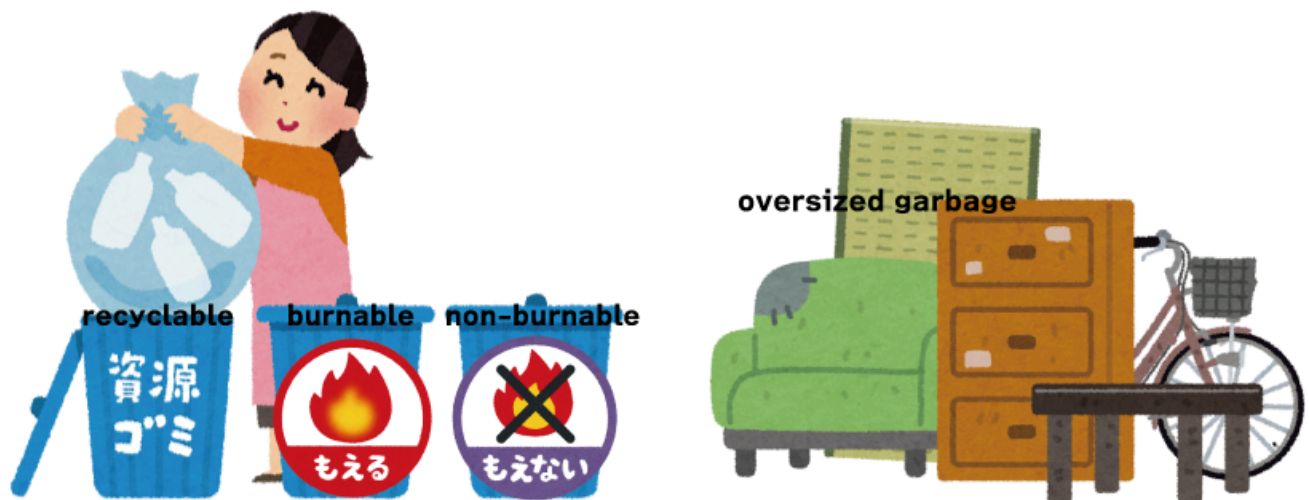
Junichi

Chapter 1

Public Manner

In Japan, public manners are highly valued and play a crucial role in maintaining a harmonious society. By following these guidelines, you can ensure a pleasant experience for both yourself and those around you.

■ Garbage Disposal



Proper garbage disposal is essential in Japan. Always look for designated trash bins and separate your waste according to the instructions provided. In general, trash is divided into

- burnable
- non-burnable
- recyclable (plastic bottles, cans, glass)
- oversized garbage.

One aspect that often confuses visitors to Japan is the distinction between burnable, non-burnable, and recyclable waste.

●Burnable

Burnable waste typically includes food scraps, paper, and other organic materials.

●Non-burnable

Non-burnable waste includes metals, and ceramics.

●Recyclable

Recyclable waste includes plastics, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and glass bottles.

Plastic Waste: Recyclable or Burnable?

Plastic waste can be quite confusing, but we appreciate your cooperation in sorting it properly!

Plastic waste can be broadly divided into three categories:

1. Recyclable plastic
2. Burnable plastic
3. PET bottles

To recycle these items, please rinse them thoroughly to remove any food residue or contamination. Also, caps and labels are often made of different materials and need to be disposed of separately.

1. Recyclable Plastic Waste



Items with the "プラ" mark and a resin identification code (a number from 1 to 7 inside the triangle) are generally recyclable.

However, PET bottles should be separated and disposed of in designated PET bottle bins.

Examples include:

- Bento boxes and other food containers from supermarkets and convenience stores
- Plastic bags and wraps

2. Burnable Plastic Waste

This category includes plastic items without the "プラ" mark or those that are heavily contaminated and cannot be recycled.

Examples include:

- Plastic toys and stationery
- Plastic containers with food residue that cannot be cleaned
- Plastic wraps and bags that are too dirty to recycle
- Plastic products with multiple materials that cannot be easily separated

These items should be placed in the burnable waste bin.

3. PET Bottles



Please remove caps and labels from PET bottles. PET bottles are recyclable and should be placed in designated PET bottle bins.

Please note that the specific rules for plastic waste disposal may vary slightly depending on the municipality. If you're unsure about

how to dispose of a particular item, check with your accommodation or the local authorities for guidance.

■ Queueing



Queueing is a common practice in Japan, whether it's waiting for a train, entering a tourist attraction, or paying at a store. Always wait patiently in line and avoid cutting in front of others. Respect the order and show consideration for those around you.

■ Public Transportation Etiquette



When using public transportation like trains and buses, be mindful of the following:

- **Keep conversations quiet:** Avoid loud conversations or phone calls that may disturb other passengers.
- **Offer your seat to those in need:** Priority seats are designated for elderly people, pregnant women, people with

disabilities, and those with small children. Offer your seat to those who may need it more than you.

- **Don't block aisles or doors:** Keep your belongings close to you and avoid obstructing passageways.
- **Avoid eating and drinking:** While it's generally acceptable to have a small snack or drink on long-distance trains, avoid eating and drinking on local trains and buses.

By following these public manners, you'll be contributing to a positive and respectful environment for everyone.

Chapter 2

Dining Etiquette

Japanese cuisine is a delightful experience, and understanding dining etiquette will enhance your enjoyment and show respect for the culture.

■ Using Chopsticks



Chopsticks are the primary utensils in Japan. While using them may seem challenging at first, with a little practice, you'll soon master this essential skill. Here are some basic tips:

- Hold chopsticks towards the back, not the front.
- Use them to pick up food, not to spear or poke it.
- Avoid pointing with chopsticks or using them to gesture.

- Don't pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks; place it on the other person's plate.
- When not using chopsticks, rest them on the chopstick rest or the edge of your plate.
- Avoid sticking chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice, as this resembles a funeral ritual.

Here is a YouTube video that explains the correct way to use chopsticks and the proper etiquette. It's very informative, so please check it out!

↓ ↓

① <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMPsPmAGXUY>

② https://youtu.be/p3zum_2uKe0

■ Eating Quietly



In Japan, it's considered polite to eat quietly and avoid making loud noises while chewing or slurping. However, enjoying conversation with your dining companions is perfectly acceptable and encouraged! Just be mindful of keeping your voice at a moderate level and avoid talking with your mouth full. If you're having a hot dish, gently blow on it to cool it down before eating.

■ Finishing Your Meal

It's customary to finish all the food on your plate in Japan. This shows appreciation for the effort put into preparing the meal. If you're unable to finish everything, try your best to eat as much as you can.

■ Restaurant Etiquette

When dining out in Japan, keep the following in mind:

- Wait to be seated by staff.
- Say "itadakimasu" (I humbly receive) before starting your meal and "gochisousama deshita" (thank you for the meal) after finishing.
- Avoid talking loudly or causing a disturbance to other diners.

- If you're unsure about how to eat a particular dish, don't hesitate to ask the staff for guidance.

By following these dining etiquette tips, you'll be able to fully enjoy the delicious flavors of Japanese cuisine while showing respect for the culture.

※This video explains Japanese table manners in an easy-to-understand way. Please take a look and use it as a reference!

↓↓

<https://youtu.be/GKaJ0RxMzUQ>

Chapter 3

Visiting Etiquette

Japan boasts a rich cultural heritage and stunning natural landscapes. To ensure a respectful and enjoyable visit, please observe the following etiquette guidelines.

■ Photography Rules



While capturing memories through photos is natural, be mindful of the following:

- **Ask for permission before taking photos of people:** It's considered rude to photograph people without their consent.
- **Respect "No Photography" signs:** Some places, such as temples, shrines, or museums, may prohibit photography altogether or in certain areas.
- **Avoid using flash in sensitive areas:** Flash photography can be disruptive and damage delicate artifacts.
- **Be mindful of your surroundings:** Don't block pathways or disturb others while taking photos.

■ Handling Cultural Artifacts

Japan's cultural artifacts are precious and often fragile. Please treat them with care and respect:

- **Don't touch artifacts unless permitted:** Many artifacts are off-limits for touching. Look for signs or ask staff for guidance.



- **Don't climb on or lean against structures:** This can cause damage and is disrespectful.
- **Don't leave any markings or graffiti:** Vandalism is strictly prohibited and punishable by law.



■ Behavior at Tourist Sites

When visiting tourist attractions, please be considerate of others:

- **Keep your voice down:** Avoid loud conversations or shouting, especially in sacred places like temples and shrines.
- **Don't litter:** Dispose of your trash properly in designated bins.
- **Follow designated paths:** Stay on marked trails and avoid venturing into restricted areas.
- **Be patient and respectful in crowded areas:** Wait your turn and avoid pushing or shoving.

Chapter 4

Accommodation Etiquette

Japanese accommodations, whether traditional ryokan (Japanese inns) or modern hotels, have specific etiquette guidelines to ensure a comfortable stay for all guests.

■ Toilet Etiquette



Japanese toilets often have unique features like bidets (washlets) and heated seats. Familiarize yourself with the controls and use them appropriately. When using a Japanese-style squat toilet, face the hood and flush after use. Always dispose of toilet paper in the toilet bowl, not the trash bin.

This video provides a clear explanation of how to use Japanese toilets. Please take a look and use it as a reference!

↓ ↓ ↓

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sUKY AoUaG4>

■ Room Etiquette

- **Remove your shoes:** It's customary to remove your shoes when entering a Japanese home or ryokan. Slippers are usually provided for indoor use.



- **Use futons correctly:** Futons are traditional Japanese bedding laid out on the floor. Learn how to fold and store them properly.



- **Keep noise levels down:** Be mindful of other guests, especially during late hours.

■ General Etiquette

- **Avoid loud conversations or activities in common areas:**
Respect the peace and quiet of other guests.

- **Be mindful of shared spaces:** Keep bathrooms and other shared facilities clean and tidy.
- **Follow any specific rules set by the accommodation:** These may include check-in/check-out times, smoking restrictions, or dress codes for certain areas.

Chapter 5

Japanese Customs and Taboos

Understanding Japanese customs and taboos will help you avoid cultural misunderstandings and show respect for local traditions.

■ Removing Shoes

Removing shoes before entering a home, ryokan, temple, shrine, or some restaurants is customary in Japan. Slippers are usually provided for indoor use. Pay attention to signs or follow the lead of others.



■ Hot Spring Etiquette



Onsen (hot springs) are an integral part of Japanese culture.

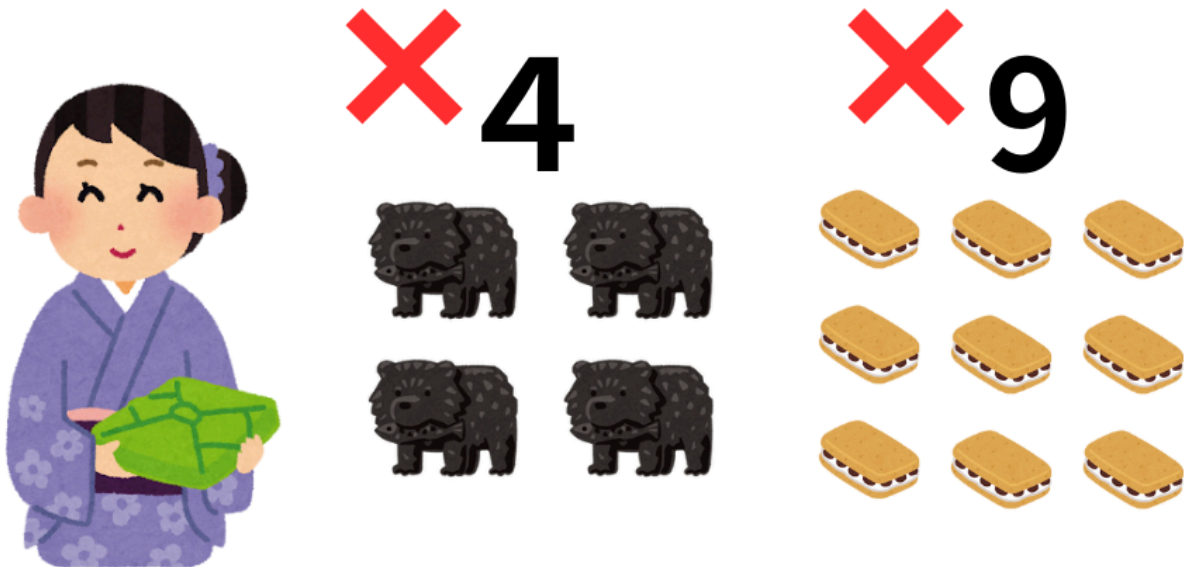
Before entering the bath, thoroughly wash your body and hair at the provided washing area. Don't bring towels into the bath, and avoid splashing or making loud noises. Tattoos are often prohibited in onsen, so check the rules beforehand or cover them up if possible.

This video provides a clear explanation of how to use Japanese hot springs (onsen). Please take a look and use it as a reference!

↓ ↓ ↓

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-LmXoHnKPk>

■ Gift-Giving Etiquette



Gift-giving is a common practice in Japan, often used to express gratitude or celebrate special occasions. When giving a gift, wrap it neatly and present it with both hands. Avoid giving gifts in sets of **four** or **nine**, as these numbers are associated with death. If you receive a gift, open it later in private, not in front of the giver.

Chapter 6

Communication Manners

Effective communication is key to a positive experience in Japan. By understanding basic greetings, expressions of gratitude, and respectful behavior, you can build rapport with locals and navigate social interactions smoothly.

■ Basic Greetings



- **Ohayo Gozaimasu (おはようございます):** Good morning
- **Konnichiwa (こんにちは):** Good afternoon/Hello
- **Konbanwa (こんばんは):** Good evening
- **Oyasumi Nasai (おやすみなさい):** Good night
- **Sayonara (さようなら):** Goodbye (when you won't see the person again soon)

■ Expressing Gratitude

- **Arigato Gozaimasu (ありがとうございます):** Thank you (formal)
- **Arigato (ありがとう):** Thank you (informal)
- **Sumimasen (すみません):** Excuse me/Sorry/Thank you (for small favors)
- **Gomen Nasai (ごめんなさい):** I'm sorry (for mistakes or apologies)

■ Respectful Behavior

- **Bowing:** Bowing is a common way to greet, thank, or apologize in Japan. The depth and duration of the bow depend on the situation and the relationship between the people involved.



- **Using Keigo (敬語):** Keigo is a polite form of Japanese used to show respect to others. It's especially important when interacting with elders, superiors, or strangers.
- **Avoiding Directness:** Japanese communication often values indirectness and subtlety. Avoid being overly direct or confrontational, and try to express your thoughts and feelings in a considerate manner.

Chapter 7

Troubleshooting Tips

Traveling in a foreign country can sometimes present unexpected challenges. Here are some tips to help you navigate common travel troubles in Japan.

■ Language Barriers

If you encounter difficulties communicating in Japanese, don't worry! Here are some helpful tools and strategies:

Translation apps

Download a reliable translation app on your smartphone. Many apps offer offline translation, which can be a lifesaver when you don't have internet access.

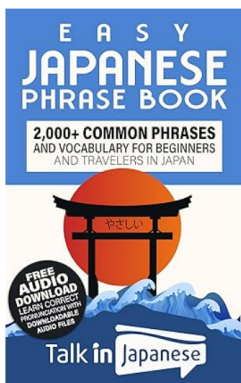


My recommended translation app is the '**Google Translate**' app. It's very convenient because it can play the translations out loud as well!

Phrasebooks

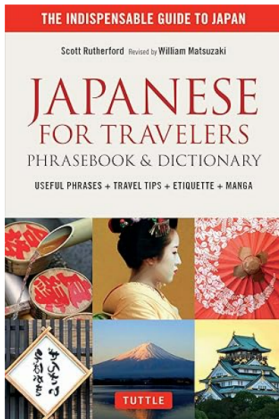
Carry a pocket-sized phrasebook with essential Japanese phrases for greetings, directions, and common requests.

Here are some recommended phrasebooks. It's a good idea to learn a few basic Japanese phrases from these before your trip!



Easy Japanese Phrase Book: 2,000+ Common Phrases and Vocabulary for Beginners and Travelers in Japan

[⇒Check it out on Amazon](#)



Japanese for Travelers Phrasebook & Dictionary: Useful Phrases + Travel Tips + Etiquette + Manga

[⇒Check it out on Amazon](#)

Gestures and body language

Sometimes, simple gestures and body language can be more effective than words. Don't hesitate to use them to get your message across.

Ask for help

Most Japanese people are friendly and willing to help. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance from locals or staff at tourist information centers.

■ Falling Ill

If you feel unwell during your trip, there are resources available to help you:

- **Pharmacies (薬局 - yakkyoku):** Pharmacies in Japan offer a wide range of over-the-counter medications for common ailments like headaches, colds, and stomach problems.
- **Hospitals (病院 - byouin):** If your condition is more serious, seek medical attention at a hospital. Many hospitals have English-speaking staff or interpreters.
- **Travel insurance:** Make sure you have comprehensive travel insurance that covers medical expenses in case of illness or injury.

■ Lost Belongings

Losing your belongings can be stressful, but there are steps you can take to recover them:

- **Police stations (交番 - koban):** If you lose your passport, wallet, or other valuables, report it to the nearest police station.
- **Lost and Found centers (落とし物センター - otoshimono center):** If you lose something on public transportation or at a tourist attraction, check with the Lost and Found center.
- **Contact your embassy or consulate:** They can assist you in obtaining a replacement passport or other travel documents.

■ Emergency Contacts

In case of emergency, dial 110 for police or 119 for ambulance/fire department. For non-emergency situations, you can also call the Japan Visitor Hotline at **050-3816-2787** for multilingual assistance.

In Conclusion

We hope this guidebook has provided you with valuable insights into Japanese culture and etiquette, empowering you to navigate your journey with confidence and respect. By embracing local customs and traditions, you'll not only enrich your travel experience but also foster meaningful connections with the people you meet.

Remember, Japan is a country of diverse landscapes, captivating history, and warm hospitality. Embrace the unexpected, be open to new experiences, and savor every moment of your adventure.

As you embark on your journey, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for choosing Japan as your destination. We wish you a safe, enjoyable, and unforgettable trip filled with wonderful memories.

■ Emergency Contact Information

In case of emergencies, please refer to the following contact numbers:

- Police: **110**
- Ambulance/Fire: **119**
- Japan Visitor Hotline : **050-3816-2787**
- AMDA International Medical Information Center: 03-5285-8088
(English, Chinese, Korean)

For further assistance, please contact your embassy or consulate in Japan.