Japan is an island extending in a curve along the eastern coast of the Asian continent. It consists of four big islands (Hokkaidō, Honshū, Shikoku, Kyūshū) and over 7,000 islands altogether. Its land area is about the same as that of Germany (357,000 km²).
There are four seasons in Japan: spring (March–May); summer (June–August); autumn (September–November); winter (December–February). The Japanese take pleasure in the transition of the seasons, and enjoy their duration.

Spring

After the first storm of spring, the temperature rises and beautiful flowers bloom. April is the beginning of the academic and business year.

Summer

The rainy season comes to a close, the hot weather arrives, and people flock to the mountains or the beaches. Summer in Japan is very humid and hot.

Winter

It is cold in winter, and snows in many regions in Japan. In areas without snow, a piercing cold wind blows.

Autumn

Typhoons come periodically, but fall is a beautiful season with autumnal-colored leaves. People enjoy local autumn festivals and embark on excursions.

Stretching from north to south, Japan has different climates from region to region. Also, due to seasonal winds, the Japan Sea coastal area and its Pacific Ocean side have different climates, respectively.

The climate in Hokkaido

- Severely cold in winter, cool in summer. Winter is cold, and summer is cool.

The climate on the Japan sea coastal area

- Heavy snow in winter. Winter is snowy.

The climate on the pacific ocean side

- Cold in winter but not much snow. Winter is cold, and summer is cool.

The climate in the southwest islands

- Warm winter, hot summer and much rain.

The climate in the northwest islands

- Warm in winter, cool in summer and much rain.

The climate in the central highlands

- Mild through the year without much rain.

The climate in the inland sea

- Not so cold in winter but cloudy.

The climate in the southcentral highlands

- Warm in winter, hot and rainy in summer.

Winter seasonal wind

Summer seasonal wind
The population of Japan is 126,686,324, the ninth largest in the world. Nearly half is concentrated around the Tōkyō, Nagoya and Osaka metropolitan areas. (Management and Coordination Agency, 1999)

日本の人口は126,686,324人で世界9位です。首都圏、名古屋圏、大阪圏の3大都市に日本の人口の半分近くが集中しています。（毎日新聞、1999）

Only 30% of the Japanese populace actually believe in a religious creed. However, religious observances, such as visiting shrines on New Year’s Day and visiting ancestors’ graves during bon holidays, have been incorporated into the ordinary customs and practices of their lives.

特定の信仰をもっている人は3割強ですが、正月に神社に初詣に出かけたり、盆には先祖の霊を（死者の霊を）いのいることのために参りをしたりと、宗教的行事が日常の生活の中に習慣として浸透しています。

The doctrines of Buddha was introduced to Japan via China and Korea. People pray at the foot of statues of the Buddha and Buddhist saints. Funerals are often Buddhist, and other Buddhist rituals have become a part of Japanese life.

中国、朝鮮を通じて日本に入ってきた仏陀の教えです。仏教や仏像をおみやがれます。葬儀など日本人の生活に浸透している宗教です。

Both nature deities (forest or mountain) and human deities (legendary figures, or outstanding people) are worshipped at shrines. People have kamidana, personal altars in their homes as well.

自然神（森や山の神）や人間神（えらい人、りっぱな人）を神社に祀ります。家庭では神様のある家も多くみかけます。
Green tea is made from steamed young tea leaves. Teas differ according to processing.

Sencha • せん茶
Steamed and dried tea leaves. The most common green tea is sencha.

Bancha • ばな茶
Made of hard leaves and stalks after the young, soft leaves have been picked for sencha.

Semmaicha • 絆米茶
Bancha mixed with roasted brown rice.

Matcha • 抹茶
New green tea leaves are pounded into powder. Used in the tea ceremony.

Mugicha • まぐち茶
Made not from tea leaves but from roasted barley or rye. Served cold in summer.

Hōjicha • ほうじ茶
Roasted bancha. The roasting gives the tea a smoky flavor.

HOW TO SERVE FRAGRANT TEA
おいしくお茶をいれよう！

After warming the pot, put well-rounded spoonfuls of sencha (2tsp/person) into the pot and pour hot water in. Let steep for a while.

Warm the tea cups and pour the tea, alternating evenly from cup to cup. Drain the pot completely.

In Japan, land area with a suitable living environment and convenient transportation is limited, so housing density is high. It is difficult for Japanese to own a house with a yard, consequently, many people live in high-rise apartment buildings.

Housing Complexes • 集合住宅
There are many rental apartments, and public and private housing complexes in certain areas. Condominiums are a more upscale kind of housing that is very expensive, particularly in the central part of the city.

Single-Family Houses • 一戸建て
Most houses are made of wood or concrete, and there are both Japanese and Western styles. Houses have ceramic tile roofs of different designs and shapes. There are many rental apartments, and public and private housing complexes in certain areas. Condominiums are a more upscale kind of housing that is very expensive, particularly in the central part of the city. There are many rental apartments, and public and private housing complexes in certain areas. Condominiums are a more upscale kind of housing that is very expensive, particularly in the central part of the city.
Most houses contain a mix of Japanese-style rooms with *tatami* mats and Western-style rooms with hard-wood floors.

In traditional Japanese houses, entrance ways are usually sliding doors; contemporary Western-style houses have Western-style doors.

In Japan, you should take your shoes off at the *genkan*. Usually, slippers are provided.

日本では屋外で履いている靴はすべて玄関ホールで脱ぐ習慣があります。そこで室内用スリッパに替えかえることもあります。

The family's shoes are placed inside the cabinet.

Getabako げた箱

The family's shoes are placed inside the cabinet.
The size of a Japanese-style room with a tatami mat floor is measured according to how many mats there are. A four-and-a-half mat room is a square room with its origins in the tea ceremony.

The wood-floored alcove in a Japanese room, about a display there, too.

A sliding door made of a wooden frame on which Japanese paper is pasted, used as a partition between rooms or as a window shade. Soft sunlight comes through it.

A family Buddhist altar used to pay respect to family ancestors. Buddhist statues, pictures and mortuary tablets are set inside. Prayers are made with candles and food offerings.

At night, bed is made on the tatami by laying a sleeping mattress covered with a sheet on it. On top, a comforter is used. In the morning all the bedding is stored in the oshiire and the room is used as a living room by day. Because it is humid in Japan, futon are frequently aired in the sun.

Bedding or cushions are stored inside the oshiire.

Talisman from shrines are placed on top of the oshiire and prayers for the safety of the family and prosperity in business are made. Sake and rice are offered to this.
Some houses have Western-style kitchens with modern appliances, but most kitchens are very uniquely Japanese.

Gas stoves are preferred to electric ones, as they provide higher temperatures for frying and stir-frying. The stove includes a broiler beneath the burners, for fish only.

There are two types of toilets: Western and Japanese. Toilets are usually separate from bathrooms.

Some prefer Japanese-style toilets since they do not have to sit directly on the seat. Men stand; women squat to use them.

Some toilets have warm-water bidets which spray warm water from under the seat and dry with air. Some have seat warmers, too.

There are many public toilets. Not all of the toilets, however, have toilet paper or paper towels.

A rice-storage container that has a measuring device.

Each family has an electric or gas rice cooker, which also keeps the cooked rice warm.
Next to the bathroom, there is an area for changing clothes. The bathtub holds a lot of hot water for soaking, getting warm and relaxing. Washing should be done outside the tub.

Small apartments and hotels usually have module-style bathrooms which contain tubs, washstands and toilets in a small space.

For those who have no bathtub at home or who want to try special baths like Jacuzzis, or a sauna, the sentō is ideal. Men and women bathe separately.

Changing room

Gas heater (re-heats bathtub water)

Duckboards

Bathtub cover boards

Shower

Drain

Changing room

Ladle

Wash bowl

Bathub cover boards

Men's

Women's

Jacuzzi

Towel & soap (not supplied)

Scale

Clothes lockers

Sauna

Wash bowl

Bandai (pay cashier first)

Men's

Women's

Towel & soap (not supplied)

Scale

Clothes lockers

Sauna

Wash bowl

Bandai (pay cashier first)
Japan is a volcanic land with more than 2,000 hot spring resorts all over the country. Generally, the temperature of the hot spring water is higher than 25°C (77°F). Hot spring water is said to be good for the treatment of chronic diseases (rheumatism, neuralgia, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory disorders, etc.) and the promotion of health. Japanese people enjoy spas, particularly open-air baths set in natural surroundings.

Japanese hot springs are located in various regions across the country, including Hokkaido, Tohoku,中部, Kanto, Chubu, Kansai, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Each region has its own unique hot springs with different characteristics and effects.

**Key Points**
- Hot springs are divided into two categories: public and private. Public hot springs are open to everyone, while private hot springs require a reservation and may have additional fees.
- Hot spring water is known for its healing properties and is often recommended for various health conditions, including rheumatism, neuralgia, gastrointestinal disorders, and respiratory disorders.
- Some popular hot spring names include Kusatsu Hot Spring, Beppu Hot Spring, and Yubatake Hot Spring.
- Hot spring water temperatures can range from 25°C to 57°C, and the water composition varies, affecting the treatment effects.

**Illustration**
- The diagram includes a map of Japan highlighting the locations of various hot spring resorts.
- Each hot spring is marked with different colors and symbols, indicating their unique characteristics and treatment effects.
Universally, good human relations begin with pleasant greetings. When meeting for the first time on a particular day, Japanese exchange different greetings in accordance with three time periods.

Instead of shaking hands, the Japanese bow. They also express gratitude, apologies, and requests by bowing. There are different ways of bowing depending on the situation, shown by how deeply you bend forward.

日本人は握手の代わりにお辞儀をします。また、感謝、おわり、お願いなどの気持ちをお辞儀で表します。場合に応じてその深さも変わります。

In a tatami room, you move to the side of the cushion to show respect to the others present, and then bow with your hands placed in front of you.

座敷では、座布団からおり、手前に両手をついてお辞儀をします。

It is customary to bring a gift, such as a box of sweets with you, when you visit your acquaintances or those to whom you feel some obligation. When offering a gift, Japanese will usually say, "This is a trifle," which simply expresses a self-effacing attitude.

知人やお世話になった人の家に訪問する時には菓子折りなどの手土産を持って挨拶習慣があります。手土産を渡す時に「つまらないものですが…」ということもありますが、これはひかえめな気持ちを表している自覚にすぎません。
GESTURES

The Japanese often use unique hand gestures.

Three-Banzai Cheer • 万歳三唱
On happy occasions, people call out banzai three times with both hands raised in the air, expressing their wish for a blessing.

Hand Clapping • 掌拍
On completion of some special project or event, etc., participants rhythmically clap their hands together.

To Beckon Someone • 人を呼ぶ
The hand is extended palm down and fingers moved in a beckoning motion from front to back.

Saying “No” • 断る/否定する
The hand is held vertically in front and moved from left to right.

To Drive Something Away • 退け
The hand is moved from back to front in a sweeping motion.

Saying Good-bye • 別れる
The hand is waved from left to right with the palm facing the other person.

Promise • 約束
Children, particularly, make a pact by hooking each other’s pinky fingers.

Rubbing or Touching One’s Own Head With a Hand • 頭をかく/頭に手をやる
One attempts to hide embarrassment when scolded or even praised.

TRANSPORTATION

Japan's transportation system is so well developed that it is very easy, and safe, to travel in the country.

Many people take commuter trains and subways to their offices and to school.

Big cities have particularly well developed railroad networks and the trains run punctually, which makes city life very convenient.

Children, particularly, make a pact by hooking each other’s pinky fingers.

Rubber or touching one’s own head with a hand • 額をかく/額に手をやる
One attempts to hide embarrassment when scolded or even praised.

Yellow raised line (the raised surface insures that sight-impaired people stay away from the edge of the platform)

White broken line (passengers should stand behind this line)
In the process of westernization, some foreign words in Japan were modified and adopted into a hybrid language called Japanese-English. Some Japanese assume these words are real English.

In 2002 Hayao Miyazaki's 'Spirited Away' won the Golden Bear award at the 52nd Berlin international film festival. This was the first time an animated feature had taken the prize since 'Cinderella' won the first time the festival was held. In 2003 Miyazaki won acclaim for receiving an Oscar at the 75th Annual Academy Awards for the Best Animated Feature Film.

With successes like this, manga and anime can be put forward as something of which Japan can be justifiably proud before the world.