

Japan Travel Etiquette



Hanami (flower viewing)

If you are visiting Japan during spring to admire cherry blossoms, please make sure you do not touch or shake the delicate flowers or step on the tree roots.

Do not climb cherry trees.

Do not obscure views for others, stand too close or over other people enjoying their picnic.

Do not take up more space than needed.

Be respectful and keep the noise down.



Money

Tipping is not common practice in Japan – if you leave some extra on the table, a waiter will likely chase you out of the restaurant to give it back.

Cash is still king in Japan, with credit cards only really used in superstores or expensive restaurants. Place money in the tray on counters when paying in shops.



Visiting Shrines and Temples

When visiting shrines and temples be quiet and respectful and try to dress modestly.

There will be a water source in front of any shrine. Before entering, use the ladles provided to pour water over your hands to rinse them and pour water into your hand to use to rinse your mouth (spit on ground, not back into water source).



Eating

Don't be wasteful – don't pick things out of your meal to leave aside (bones excluded).

Wait for everyone to be seated before saying 'itadakimasu' (I humbly receive) together.

At the end of the meal, thank the cook by saying gochisō-sama deshita (that was a great feast).

Feel free to slurp your noodles – it's expected!

Say 'oi-shii' (delicious) throughout the meal as required.



Public Spaces

Do not walk around eating, drinking or smoking.

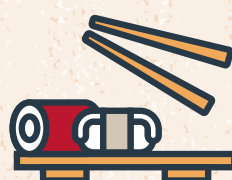
Do not litter, hold on to your rubbish until you find a bin.

Do not blow your nose in public, wipe it discreetly if you need to. Some people wear masks when ill, to avoid spreading germs.

Handkerchiefs are used for drying your hands and wiping off sweat. It is good to carry one with you as public toilets might not provide towels.

Walk, drive and ride on the left.

Always wait for the green light to cross the street, even if there is no traffic.



Chopsticks

Never leave your chopsticks sticking straight up in the rice bowl. Either lay your chopsticks flat across your bowl, or leaning on the chopstick rest.

Never pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks – use the back end of your chopsticks to place it in a dish for them.

Never stab food with chopsticks.

Don't play with your chopsticks or use them for anything else but eating.

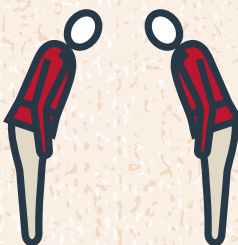


Drinking

Do not fill your own glass – implies hosts or dining partners are ungracious.

Try and raise your glass a little off the table while it's being filled (formal – if with friends, wait to see what they do).

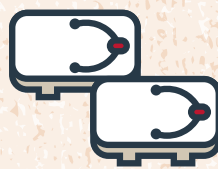
Say 'kampai' (cheers)!



Greeting

Bow politely when you meet someone, thank them or say goodbye. Depth, duration and number of bows is something non-Japanese aren't expected to understand. If a Japanese person bows to you, an incline of the head will usually suffice.

Japanese do sometimes shake hands, but best to wait to see if the opposite party offers their hand than assume they will.



Shoes

Take off your shoes when entering someone's home – there will be slippers offered to you. If you enter building and there's a sunken-foyer entrance (genkan) and rows or shelves of footwear, this is a clear sign you're expected to remove your shoes.

Remember to remove slippers too when in a tatami room. In some places, you may also need to swap to specific bathroom slippers when using the bathroom.



Public Transport

It's considered rude to speak on the phone on trains and buses and announcements encourage people to put their phones on silent

Don't eat and drink and avoid speaking loudly, to avoid disturbing fellow passengers.

Give up your seat to those who need it more than you.

