

Japan

Welcome

The Japanese word for “customer” translates as “the invited” or “guest”, showing the special status they give to their own customers. Customer service in Japan is of a high standard, and so the same is expected abroad. Saying *Youkoso oide kudasai mashita o*, which means “welcome”, is a great way to make them feel more at home.

“Welcome!”
(*Youkoso oide kudasai mashita*)
ようこそおいでくださいました

When travelling, the usual greeting is a slight nod of the head or a handshake, which you should politely return. In Japan, people greet each other with a bow but they don’t expect foreigners to do this. However, if you are greeted with a bow, then do try to return it.

When addressing the Japanese, use a title followed by their surname. You can show more respect by simply adding the word *San* after their surname. So, for example, when addressing someone called Yoshi Nobu, say “(Mr) Nobu *San*” to show you understand a little about Japanese culture.

Many Japanese people prefer to travel in large groups for short excursions and organised events. Shopping expeditions for designer brands and bargains are particularly popular activities.

The Language

Hello
(*Konnichi wa*)
こんにちは

Goodbye
(*Zehi mata okoshi kudasai*)
是非またお越してください

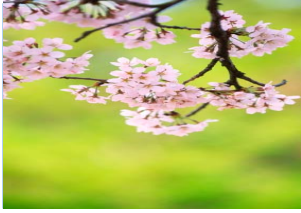
Please
(*Douzo*)
どうぞ

Thank you
(*Arigatou gozaimasu*)
ありがとうございます

Spoken by over 130 million people, Japanese is a unique language with its own script.

English is not widely spoken, so please be patient in conversation. English is studied at school, but the focus is on reading and writing rather than speaking.

Aim to provide translated information and include images wherever possible.



Japan

The Culture

To many westerners, the Japanese may appear quiet, discreet and reserved. In fact, once you get to know them, you will find that the Japanese are a very warm, open and accommodating group of people. Honour and etiquette are very important to them and this will be reflected in the way they behave and treat you. *Wa* and *kao* are two very important Japanese values that ensure that honour and etiquette are preserved.

Wa or “harmony” – This is such a valued concept that people in Japan will tend to avoid saying “no”. So don’t always take “yes” to really mean “yes” as they may just be afraid of causing offence.

Kao – To save face, the Japanese tend to avoid criticism and confrontation. When *kao* is threatened, they will often respond with laughter to hide their feelings of embarrassment or disagreement.

Customer Service Advice

The Japanese tend to like things in moderation. Order, organisation, cleanliness and good service are seen as more important than luxuries.

Complaints may not always be expressed very directly, so try asking more open questions to resolve any problems as quickly as possible.

Most Japanese appreciate being given options before making a decision. For example, when offering a drink or a meal, explain what is available before asking what they would like.

DO keep a reasonable personal distance and avoid touching. Personal space is important.

DO avoid confrontation or openly showing negative emotions.

DO smile and say “thank you” frequently.

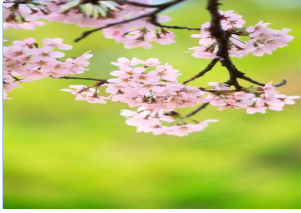
DO say “yes” if you are asked to be in a photo as they like to have a memory of people they meet abroad.

DO offer small souvenirs. For example, a pen with the name of the hotel or a card from the restaurant.

DO avoid using your hands when you speak or any other large gestures or facial expressions.

DO wrap any purchased items carefully in tissue paper before putting them in a bag.

DO avoid anything that uses the number four, as most Japanese associate this number with death.



Japan

The Land of the Rising Sun

Japan is known as the land of the rising sun. Although it is made up of over 3,000 islands, Japan has some of the most crowded urban areas in the world as the majority of the population lives on only a few of the islands.

Japan has the second-largest economy in the world after the USA and is known for its exports such as cars and electronics. Japan has its own particular customs and traditions: you may be familiar with geishas, bonsai trees and their very intricate tea ceremonies.

Today Japanese culture is a unique blend of East and West. Tradition and heritage are still very important but are increasingly combined with more modern customs.

Key Facts

- **Population** – 127,463,611
- **Capital city** – Tokyo
- **Official language** – Japanese
- **Religions** – Shinto & Buddhism
- **Currency** – Yen
- **Exchange Rate** – 100 Yen = £0.47
- **Dialling Code** – +81
- **Time Difference** – GMT+9



Where to go next

For more information about languages, culture and welcoming international visitors, go to:

www.talkingtotheworld.co.uk/welcoming.

Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. These guidelines can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.

'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. We have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of the programme co-ordinator.