

# *Japan Basics*

A Handbook for Study Abroad in Japan



日本オマーンクラブ  
النادي الياباني العماني

2015

# *Japan Basics*

A Handbook for Study Abroad in Japan



日本オマーンクラブ  
النادي الياباني العماني

© 2015 JAPAN OMAN CLUB

# Introduction

*Japan Basics*: A Handbook for Study Abroad in Japan

It is the adventure of a lifetime to leave your own country and study abroad, particularly if the country you are going to has a different language and unique culture. Japan is one of those countries for international students.

*Japan Basics* was written for any and all international students but especially with students from Oman in mind. As Japanese anime and other pop culture have become widely popular around the world, the number of international students has increased. As a result, more Japanese universities have become exposed to students from Islamic cultures and their needs. So they began improving campus environments for them. Each university provides various services to international students, so you should read materials from your universities very carefully.

*Japan Basics* is written to supplement your school's information in order to help you adjust to and settle in life in Japan as soon and smoothly as possible. It is not a comprehensive information booklet by any means, so we welcome your input and comments, both positive and negative, to further improve the content for future readers. Please send your comments to [japan.oman.club@gmail.com](mailto:japan.oman.club@gmail.com).

We received input and support from many people. We thank Omani students currently studying in Japan, Japan GCC Association of Students, the Japan Middle East Student Conference, Waseda University, Yokohama YMCA and members of the Japan Oman Club for their valuable input and contribution in writing this booklet. We also thank the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman for their support.

*Japan Basics* is made possible by support from the Kozasa-Kai Joganji Temple's Foundation for Research Grants and Scholarships, the Mitsubishi Corporation and Incquared, Inc.

*Kyoko T. Jones*  
Executive Director  
Japan Oman Club

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>I. Preparing for Departure .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Passport and Visa.....	1
2. Money and Credit Cards .....	2
3. Restaurants and Food .....	4
4. Medicines, Prescriptions, Health Concerns .....	4
5. Weather and Clothing .....	5
6. Japanese Language.....	6
<b>II. Arrival in Japan.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Arrival at Narita/Haneda/Chubu/Kansai Airports .....	7
2. Transportation out of Airport .....	7
3. Hotels/Temporary Accommodations .....	9
4. Sales Tax & Tips.....	9
<b>III. Starting Life in Japan.....</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Reporting to School.....	10
2. Residence Card .....	11
3. National Health Insurance Plan.....	12
4. Housing.....	12
5. Business/School Hours .....	15
6. Transportation – Travel within Japan .....	16
7. Student Discount – Gakuwari .....	20
8. Crowdedness.....	20
9. Banking.....	21
10. Grocery Shopping and Halal Food .....	22
11. Washing – Coin-operated Laundry.....	23
12. Trash and Recycling .....	24
13. Paying Bills and “Konbini” (convenience stores).....	24
14. Computers, Cell phones, and Internet .....	25
15. Telephones and Other Methods of Communication .....	26
16. Electricity in Japan.....	27
17. Mosques and Prayer Rooms at Universities .....	28
18. Safety, Security and Natural Disasters .....	28

<b>IV. Japanese Customs and Society .....</b>	<b>31</b>
1. Greetings .....	31
2. Punctuality .....	31
3. Japanese Diet .....	32
4. Religion .....	32
<b>V. Advice from Omani Students in Japan .....</b>	<b>34</b>
What to Consider in Studying Abroad .....	34
Study Abroad is More than Just Studying Abroad.....	35
Life in Japan .....	36
I Didn't Imagine Being in Japan .....	36
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Embassy of Sultanate of Oman in Japan .....	39
Japan Fact Sheet.....	39
Useful Telephone Numbers .....	39
Useful Japanese Words .....	40
Useful Kanji (Chinese characters) for Visual Recognition .....	40
Japanese Calendar.....	42
Books on Japan: A Partial List .....	42
Useful Websites.....	43
Questions & Answers on Japan.....	45

# I. Preparing for Departure

## 1. Passport and Visa

As soon as you receive admission to a university in Japan, you should immediately apply for a passport, if you have not gotten one already. You will need a student visa to come into Japan. You can get one by applying to the Visa section of the Japanese Embassy in Muscat. You should call them and find out what you need to apply for a student visa and how long it will take to receive one.

Embassy of Japan in Oman Visa Section:  
Office hours : 08:00-12:00, 13:00-15:00 / Tel: 24601028  
Location: Villa No. 760, Way No. 3011, Jamiat Al-Duwal Al-Arabiya  
Street, Shati Al-Qurum

If you submit a “Certificate of Eligibility for Status of Residence” together with other required documents, it will take a much shorter time to get a student visa than not submitting it. However, the application for it must be made within Japan. So, as soon as your admission to a university is confirmed and has become official, you should ask the international office of your university if they can apply for it on your behalf and mail it to you. Other than your school, you, your blood relatives (with a proof of relationship) or a Japanese notary public are the only people eligible to apply.

Once you get your visa, you should make a photocopy of the inside cover of your passport (the page with your photo and passport number) and the visa. These will help should you lose your passport. It is also a good idea to bring some passport-size photos of yourself, proof of your identity (government-issued photo ID), and proof of your citizenship when you travel. Photos may prove useful for other purposes at your university or city hall.

### **Spouse and Children’s Visas**

You must have the status of “residence of foreign students studying in Japan” for your spouse and children to be eligible to apply for a visa to live with you in Japan.

There are two ways of acquiring the visa: one way is to apply for it directly at the Japanese Embassy in your home country, the other is for you to make an application for a Certificate of Eligibility at an immigration office in Japan on their behalf. Depending on the type of school you attend, application documents differ, so you should always check with an international student advisor at your school before you submit an application. For necessary documents and other details, go to: <http://www.studyjapan.go.jp/en/toj/toj04e.html#no10>

Once the Certificate of Eligibility is granted, you can send it to your family, who then take it to the Japanese Embassy to apply for a visa.

If your family includes school-age children (ages 6 to 15), they may enroll in a public elementary or a junior high school tuition free, although the language of instruction in public schools is Japanese only. For details of enrollment procedures, go to: [http://www.mext.go.jp/component/english/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/03/17/1303764\\_001.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/english/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/03/17/1303764_001.pdf)

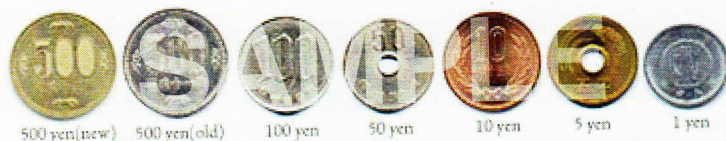
## **2. Money and Credit Cards**

Japan is very much a cash economy. While major credit cards (VISA, Master Card, American Express, and Diners Club) are accepted in large stores, it is safe to assume that credit cards will be of much less use outside major cities. Personal checks are not used at all in Japan. Therefore, you will need to obtain cash and travelers' cheques before your arrival in Japan.

Unfortunately there is no Japanese bank in Oman, nor is it possible to convert Omani currency into Yen in Japan. However, you can purchase Japanese Yen at a reasonable rate at currency exchange companies such as Global Money Exchange Company, LLC at Abraj al Sahwa, or a company at City-Center Almawaleh in Muscat. If you want to use a bank or a currency exchange company, it is strongly recommended that you make an advance arrangement by notifying them that you intend to buy some Yen. Japanese residing in Oman often stop over in Dubai or Abu Dhabi where they make currency exchanges from Omani Rial to Yen and vice versa. Another way to carry funds is to buy U.S. dollars. U.S. dollars can be readily converted into Yen in Japan. Exchange rates of

yen to U.S. dollars fluctuate daily with the money market, so be sure to check with your bank, local newspaper or on the Internet for the current rate in planning your budget.

Japanese currency includes bills and coins denominated in Yen. The denominations are distinguished by different sizes, colors and designs. The bills in standard use are for 1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 yen. There are 2,000 yen bills but they are seldom used. Coins are worth 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 yen. 5 and 50 yen coins have holes in the middle.



For setting up a bank account in Japan, see the Banking section (page 21).



### **3. Restaurants and Food**

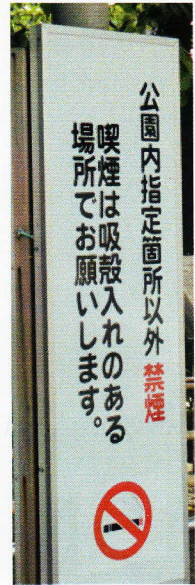
Japanese cuisine has become increasingly internationalized but Halal foods are not well understood outside a limited number of restaurants in larger cities. Most menus are naturally written in Japanese, but restaurants commonly display samples of dishes they serve, so it is possible to identify what they are offering. Once you are settled in a dormitory or an apartment, you will be able to choose the types of food you can cook and/or eat. The process of grocery shopping is described on page 22.

### **4. Medicines, Prescriptions, Health Concerns**

Bring sufficient amounts of any medication you are taking, along with copies of your prescription written in English if not in Japanese. Carry all medications in their original containers. Over-the-counter remedies are available in Japan, but pharmacies often keep limited hours. You may not have time to search for an open pharmacy and the particular medicine you seek may not be available. So a supply of aspirin, decongestants, antihistamines, vitamins, cold, antidiarrheal and upset stomach medication for immediate needs is recommended. If you have asthma, make sure to bring your inhalers, since the chemical compositions of Japanese inhalers may be different from what you use in your country. A second pair of eyeglasses is also advisable. If you wear contact lenses, be sure to bring along your glasses as well in case of emergency.

Tap water is safe to drink in Japan, although the taste in some areas may be different from what you are used to drinking. In urban areas, the water may contain a high concentration of chlorine. Japanese in these areas often filter their water before drinking. This can be done with a filter put on the tap or with a special filter jug. Rural areas may have less chlorine in their water. The water in Japan does not contain fluoride. Mineral water including major imported brands can be easily obtained from supermarkets and convenience stores.

Awareness of the negative effects of smoking has spread widely in Japan. Offices and other enclosed places generally ban smoking. Still you will encounter situations where people are allowed to smoke, such as in public spaces and special sections of restaurants. However, some public areas prohibit smoking except in designated smoking areas. In such places, there should be readily visible signs such as these.



## 5. Weather and Clothing

There are distinct seasons in Japan: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Spring tends to be mild in temperature with many flowers in bloom. June brings a rainy season to Japan. After 4-5 weeks of wet and humid weather comes summer which gets quite warm. Temperature can go up as high as 35C. Fall brings cool air which brings foliage changes. Depending on where you are in Japan, it can get quite cold and you may encounter snow in winter, particularly on the Japan Sea side and in the mountains.

You should be prepared to purchase appropriate clothing particularly for cold weather if you do not already have warm coats and sweaters. It is also advisable to get a pair of lined or insulated gloves, a hat and a scarf if your school is located in northern and/or mountainous regions of Japan. Insulated coats, warm shirts and underwear for cold weather such as those made of “heat-tech” materials are available at a reasonable price at stores such as UNIQLO or Seiyu throughout Japan.

It is generally acceptable for students to wear casual clothes such as jeans and T-shirts on campus. However, Japanese schools have some formal

occasions such as entrance ceremonies. At those times, you are expected to be in more formal clothes such as suits. It is quite appropriate for you to wear your traditional formal clothes for these events. The same is true for the graduation ceremony.

## 6. Japanese Language

Many of the Omani students in Japan strongly recommend studying Japanese before you arrive in Japan. The ability to read and speak some Japanese will definitely make your life a little easier.

The Oman Japan Friendship Association in Muscat offers some Japanese language courses at differing levels. Each course is for 3 months and offered twice a week in evening hours. All inquiries about the courses should be directed to the Cultural Section of the Japanese Embassy in Muscat. Sultan Qaboos University also offers Japanese language courses as electives.

If you do not want to enroll in a course or do not live in Muscat, you may wish to study on your own with basic Japanese language books. In addition to books there are some websites and YouTube videos that teach Japanese online. One site is: <http://www.freejapaneselessons.com/>

Japan has a unique writing system that combines Chinese characters “kanji” and two types of Japanese phonetic characters “katakana” mainly for foreign words and “hiragana” for Japanese words. It is helpful if you are aware of the examples on the list in the Appendix. It becomes important in traveling and shopping because even though many station names and store signs are written in the English alphabet, many signs in smaller and rural places and on streets are still written only in Japanese.

Some sample characters in hiragana, katakana, and kanji (Chinese characters) are shown below:

Hiragana おはよう (o-ha-yo: Good morning)

Katakana オマーン (Oman)

Kanji 日本 (ni-hon: Japan)  
東京 (Tokyo)

## II. Arrival in Japan

### 1. Arrival at Narita/Haneda/Chubu/Kansai Airports

You will probably land in one of the four international airports, Narita, Haneda, Chubu or Kansai. After you deplane, you will pass through Quarantine, unless you have some illness to declare there. You will go onto the Immigration section, where there are separate windows for Foreign Visitors and for Japanese. You will line up as a Foreign Visitor. You should be ready to submit:

1. The admission approval from the Japanese educational institution you have been accepted into (Japanese language institution, junior college, university or others)
2. A valid passport
3. Visa from Japanese Embassy or Consulate from your home country
4. Certificate of Eligibility for Status of Residence (if already issued)

Your passport will be returned to you with a stamp “Landing Permission.” In addition, a “Residence Card” will be issued to you if your stay is for more than 3 months.

If you land at an airport other than the above-mentioned ones, your residence card will not be issued at the time of entry to Japan but will be mailed after you notify your local city office of your address. Your passport will be stamped with the “Landing Permission” stamp and a note indicating the later delivery of a residence card.

After the Immigration, you will collect your luggage and go to the Customs. It is illegal to bring any unprocessed food items, plants/seeds, pornography or non-medicinal drugs into Japan. If you are carrying over ¥1,000,000 yen with you in cash or cheques, you are required to declare it.

### 2. Transportation out of Airport

For specific information on how to get to your school, you should contact the international student office.

There are various methods of public transportation in Japan; trains, subways, buses and taxis. Taxis are most convenient but most expensive as well. The fares are fixed by law, but vary between regions. For example, from Narita Airport to Tokyo Station, taxi fare would be approximately ¥20,000, while train fare is about ¥2,600 yen; from Kansai International Airport to Osaka Suita area where Osaka University is located, it would be approximately ¥22,000 by taxi, while it is about ¥1,200 by train.

To check train fares and routes (train lines) from one place to another, the following site is very convenient and useful if you know exact names of stations: <http://www.hyperdia.com/en/>

### **Narita & Haneda International Airports (Tokyo)**

Two train lines and various buses are available out of Narita and Haneda. "Airport Limousine buses" have set rates for each destination. They have an information desk and ticket counter outside the Customs area in the airport building. The buses go to almost all major hotels and train stations in the Tokyo and Yokohama areas, so you should check if a limousine bus goes to your hotel. A great deal of information including bus fares is available at the following Airport Limousine Bus company website: <https://www.limousinebus.co.jp/en/>

If you prefer to take trains, NEX (Narita Express) and Keisei lines start from the basement floor of the airport building.

### **Chubu Centrair International Airport (Nagoya)**

Meitetsu Railways run "μSky" (express) to Nagoya Station, where it connects to other railways and subways. The following website has various information on the area including the trains' timetable and travelling time.

<http://www.meitetsu.co.jp/eng/airport-access/express.html>

In addition, there are bus services available at the airport. Buses and taxis are available only at the "Access Plaza" where you can reach by way of concourse from the arrival area. Some suggest that Centrair Limousine may be most convenient if you are going to the central part of Nagoya city. [http://www.centrair.jp/en/to\\_and\\_from/access/bus.html](http://www.centrair.jp/en/to_and_from/access/bus.html)

### **Kansai International Airport (Osaka/Kobe)**

JR (Japan Railways) and Nankai railways are connected to the airport. Limousine buses to various directions are also available. If you want to use a taxi, go to the First Terminal where you will find more available taxis. The taxi stand at the Second Terminal somewhat specializes in passengers in groups. <http://www.okkbus.co.jp/en/>

The KM Shuttle Bus (skygate shuttle) may be very convenient to and from Kansai International Airport (KIX). The fare as of this writing is ¥3,600 per person with one carry on and one regular piece of luggage and ¥1,000 per item for extra luggage, and it will take you to the address you provide. However, you need to book at least two days in advance at their website. And also be sure to check the fares and luggage regulations, since they are subject to change. <http://www.mktaxi-japan.com>

### **3. Hotels/Temporary Accommodations**

There are many hotels near airports and in cities. Unless you have already arranged an accommodation in Japan, you should make a reservation online. It may be more convenient if your hotel is near your school. Some hotels around airports operate free shuttle buses from terminals to the hotel.

Hotels usually have restaurants and shops. As is anywhere in the world, prices at hotels are rather expensive.

### **4. Sales Tax & Tips**

The sales tax in Japan is currently 8%, which means whatever item(s) or service(s) you purchase, you need to add 8% to its cost when you pay unless the price says the tax is included. For example, if the price of a book is listed as ¥500, you have to pay ¥540. The Japanese Government has a plan to increase the tax to 10%, so you should be aware of this.

While the addition of taxes may be somewhat bothersome, you do not need to worry about tips anywhere in Japan, at restaurants, hotels, taxis, etc. If you try to leave a tip, most places will return it to you.

## III. Starting Life in Japan

### 1. Reporting to School

You need to follow the instructions you receive from your school. Most universities have a “foreign student center” or “international center.” In those offices, you will find international student advisors who can answer your questions and help you with various aspects of your upcoming school life. The school may tell you to report to the international section or to your advisor’s office. Even if they do not, it is a good idea to visit those offices to notify them of your arrival. It also helps to walk around the campus and get to know where things are located and what students look like, what classrooms look like, and where the school bookstore, convenience store and cafeterias are located. You may also find the university operate free shuttle buses between different campuses or to near-by stations.

You will learn all the necessary information, e.g. who you can consult which courses to take, how to register for them, how your grades will be reported, etc. at orientations your school schedules. There may be more than one orientation to attend, such as a departmental orientation and one for international students. It is very important to attend all of the orientations you are required. Some universities may provide orientations for international students in English, some others may not, so it is a good idea to find out in advance at the school’s international center.

We found following information on orientations in English and whether their cafeterias offer halal food. However, it may change, so you should ask at the international center. (see following page)

	Orientation for Int'l students	Halal food at Cafeteria
Hitotsubashi University	Yes	Yes
Keio University	Yes	No
Kyoto University	Yes	Yes
Kyushu University	Yes	Yes
Osaka University	Yes	Yes
Tohoku University	Yes	Yes
Tokai University	Yes	No
Tokyo Institute of Technology	Yes	Yes
Tokyo Univ. of Foreign Studies	Yes	No
Tsukuba University	Yes	Yes
University of Tokyo	Yes	Yes
Waseda University	Yes	Yes
Yokohama City Univ.	No	No

Course registrations are usually made electronically. If you know which courses you are taking, you should register as soon as the registration begins. If you wait, the courses you intend to take may become full capacity and you may not be able to register.

If you do not have a computer or smart phone with you, you should find out in advance where you could access computers on campus. International advisor should be able to tell you locations of those facilities.

Once you determine which courses you will take, you should find out which textbooks you need to purchase at the university bookstore.

## 2. Residence Card

As described earlier, a residence card will be issued to you at the Immigration at the airport. It is very important to remember that you are required to carry it with you at all times and present it to authorized personnel such as immigration or police officers when requested. It is your ID card while in Japan. Once you determine your address, it is your responsibility to report your address to a local city office within 14 days. You should take your residence card and passport with you.



You will be unable to open a bank account and/or purchase a telephone until you notify the city hall of your address. If there is any later change in your address or school, you must report it to the local city office or Immigration Bureau.

In addition to the city office, it is very important for you to register the following with the Omani Embassy in Tokyo:

1. Your name and a copy of your passport (the page with photo and passport number) and residence card
2. Address, phone number and email address
3. Names of your university and program
4. Date of arrival in Japan
5. Name and contact details of next to kin in Oman

### **3. National Health Insurance Plan**

All residents are required by law to be covered by the national health insurance plan. Even if your school may have a clinic for students, you are still required to enroll in the national health insurance plan if your stay is for a year or longer. The premium you may pay varies depending on the municipality you reside, but it will be around 20,000 yen a year according to JASSO (Japan Student Services Organization). Should you get sick or injured, the insurance will cover 70% of the medical expenses so that you will pay 30%. You can arrange for your own supplemental insurance to cover the balance if you wish. It is a good idea to apply for your national health insurance when you go to the city office with your residence card to notify your address. See the following website for more details:

[http://www.g-studyinjapan.jasso.go.jp/en/modules/pico/index.php?content\\_id=21](http://www.g-studyinjapan.jasso.go.jp/en/modules/pico/index.php?content_id=21)

### **4. Housing**

Some universities provide dormitories for their students but many do not, so it is most likely that you will need to rent an apartment. There are unfurnished and furnished apartments. Unfurnished ones are much more common and less expensive than furnished ones. However, if you

choose an unfurnished one, you will need to furnish it with everything you need for daily life, including bedding, eating utensils, pots and pans for cooking, light bulbs, refrigerator, etc. Depending on the age of an apartment building, it may or may not be equipped with a gas burner for cooking.

Rental costs vary greatly depending on the distance from a train station or a bus stop, the age of the building, the direction the room faces (east and south are considered desirable), the size of the room, etc. So, it is recommended that you find a real estate agent who has rented apartments to students. The international center of your school may have a listing of reliable real estate agents. Even if they do not, they should be able to help you find one.

Whether you rent a furnished or unfurnished apartment, you will have to be prepared to pay 5-6 months' worth of rent at the time of signing a rental contract. These fees include the first month's rent plus a "shiki-kin" (refundable deposit) and "rei-kin" (non-refundable deposit). The amounts of the deposits are regulated by law but vary between regions. They will also require payment for fire insurance. When you vacate your apartment, the landlord will deduct cleaning fees and/or fees for any damage you might have caused during your stay from the refundable deposit.

Be sure to read and understand all the details of any contract before you sign it. If you cannot read Japanese, take it to an international student advisor and ask him/her to explain it in English. Most Japanese housing contracts include a provision that nobody other than the tenant is allowed to stay in the apartment. If you have a visitor from your home who wants to stay with you for a few days, you should be sure to contact the landlord and get his/her permission.

All renters in Japan are required to have "guarantors" to rent an apartment. The guarantor assumes financial responsibility should the renter become unable to pay the rent. Check with your school's international student advisor if your school could become your guarantor. If they do not, you may want to check with your embassy. If you cannot provide a guarantor, the real estate agency may recommend a "guarantor company" to use instead. A guarantor company serves as your

“guarantor”, and charges the amount of a month’s rent for the service. See the following website for more information about housing:  
[http://www.g-studyinjapan.jasso.go.jp/en/modules/pico/index.php?content\\_id=29](http://www.g-studyinjapan.jasso.go.jp/en/modules/pico/index.php?content_id=29)

An average size of an apartment for a student in Tokyo is about 20m<sup>2</sup>, one room with a small kitchen area and possibly a bath or shower room. Most reasonably priced apartments are in the Japanese style. They typically have tatami mats for floors. “Tatami” are a tightly woven straw mats that fit into the flooring. You are not supposed to walk on them with shoes or slippers. So it is customary that you remove your shoes at a small entry way area called a “genkan” as soon as you enter a house or an apartment. Some recent apartments may have wooden floors, but it is still the custom to remove your shoes.

The following shows a typical student apartment. The rent for this apartment is approximately 60,000 yen a month.

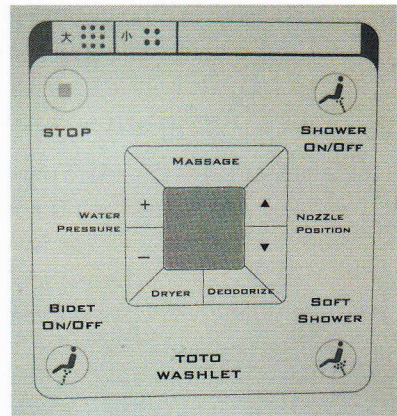


Japanese rooms are traditionally multi-purpose, which means a room can be used as a living/dining room or a study with a low table with folding legs during the day, while at night the table is folded and it will become a bedroom with “futon” bedding laid out on the floor. The futon is folded and put away into a closet in the morning.

### **Baths, Showers, and Toilets**

Japanese houses always have a bath tub and/or shower separate from toilet, although recent apartments may have them together to save space.

It is quite common in Japan that “western” style toilets have a heated toilet seat. You will find some buttons with various functions either on the side of the toilet or on the wall. These functions have pictures on buttons, so you should be able to figure out what each button is for. However, if you want to press them to see what they do, make sure to do so while you are sitting on the seat. Otherwise you may end up spraying the whole room.



You may also encounter traditional style toilets in old homes and public buildings. It is a squat style where you face towards a round porcelain part of the toilet. There is no shower in the room like Omani toilets, so the floor remains dry.



## Furniture, Electric Appliances, and Other Household Items

A number of stores sell reasonably priced furniture and household goods. Seiyu and Nitori are two examples of those types of stores located throughout Japan. You may also find “recycle shops” near your school. They tend to sell all kinds of used items including electric appliances such as refrigerators and vacuum cleaners as well as furniture and other household goods. They usually sell items that are clean, reasonable in price, and in good condition.

## 5. Business/School Hours

You should check the hours of your school operations at the international student office. The offices may be open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, while classes may start at 8am or 8:30am and extend later in the day. Generally speaking, business hours of public offices and companies are 9am to 5pm, while banks open at 9am and close at 3pm. Local shops and department stores may open at 10am or 11am. Closing hours also vary

greatly. There is no custom of closing offices and stores in the middle of the day and reopening in the evening.

## 6. Transportation – Travel within Japan

There are very extensive public transportation networks in Japan. Buses, trains, and subways are the most common mode of transportation and they are relatively inexpensive. They are operated by municipalities as well as private companies. There are typically web sites available describing the local services that you can learn about by asking the international student office.

### SUICA, PASMO, ICOCA

It is not easy to find out how much a train or subway fare may be if you cannot read Japanese. The easiest method of resolving this difficulty is to purchase a SUICA, PASMO or ICOCA card. These are electronic debit cards that can be used for almost all trains, subways and buses. You can buy them at stations.



When you go through the wicket at stations, all you have to do is to “touch” the card at the console to enter. It automatically records in the card which station you boarded at, and when you touch it again at the exit wicket, your fare is deducted from the card.



You can charge the card balance (add funds) in ¥1000, ¥2,000, ¥3,000, ¥5,000, or ¥10,000 increments at ticket machines at stations. You can also use the card to purchase regular tickets by inserting it to the designated slot of a ticket machine if you like. Should you find that you do not have enough balance remaining in the card to exit, there are charging machines nearby to adjust the balance. If you have a problem in charging your card, there is always a station staff member near exit, who can help. Kiosks (station shops) and regular vending machines inside and around stations and convenience stores will often accept payments made with these cards, but they do not recharge them.

## Buses

Buses are generally operated by drivers alone without conductors. There are two doors, one next to the driver, the other on a side of the bus. Passengers getting on the bus enter by one door and exit from the other. In the Tokyo metropolitan area, the fare is fixed on most buses and payment is required on boarding, so passengers enter near the driver. In some other areas, the payment varies with the distance traveled. So their passengers enter from the center and take a ticket from a machine and hand in the payment and ticket as they exit from the front of the bus. So you should watch what people ahead of you are doing as they board.

There is a fare machine next to the bus driver where you make your payment and if needed put in your ticket. If the bus charges 220 yen and you insert a 500 yen coin into the machine, it automatically returns 280 yen in change for you to pick up. If you use a bus line regularly you may wish to purchase a prepaid pass or a debit card such as the PASMO or SUICA card.



Buses have automatic systems for announcing the name of the next bus stop that also display it on a screen above the front window. When you want to get off, you signal the driver by pressing a button (red and yellow button on a bar and the side of the seat in the photos) which you will

find in various locations in the bus. The buttons will remain lit until the bus stops at the next bus-stop.

There are special front seats on buses designated for elderly, the handicapped and/or passengers with small children. They are identified with a sticker on the window next to them. Some of these seats are equipped with belts to restrain baby strollers or wheel chairs.



## Trains and Subways

Rail service is widespread and generally very convenient. It is divided into trains that are usually above ground and are either local or long distance and subways that are underground and usually local. Train and subway fares vary with the distance you travel. So it is important to locate the route map in the ticket area to determine what you will have to pay. The station names and fares are listed on the maps. Once you determine the amount of the train fare, you specify that amount on the ticket machine. It will issue a ticket once you have put in sufficient money and will provide change if you put in more than the fare.



You will put your ticket into the slot at the wicket in order to proceed to the boarding platform. You will need to retrieve the ticket and retain it in order to exit at your destination. When you exit the station, you put the ticket into the slot at the wicket, otherwise a set of blocking bars appear so that you will not be able to go through the wicket. Make sure to retain tickets until you exit the station. If you lose the ticket before exiting, you should go to the window next to the wicket and tell the staff person there. Please be aware that you may have to pay a full fare again.

### **Elevators, Escalators and Transferring to Other Lines**

If you are travelling with heavy luggage, it is difficult for you to go up and down the stairs at stations. At such times, you should look for elevator or escalator signs at station entries, inside the wicket and on the platforms. Elevators may be located at platform ends. Most above ground train stations have one, unless they are old or in countryside.

Just like buses in earlier section, trains automatically announce the next station and to which train line(s) you can transfer. You can often find which station the train is approaching on a screen above the doors. The names of next stations and lines that are connected there are displayed both in Japanese and English in large cities.

If you are transferring to another line, there are signs showing which way to go to get to the desired line on station pillars and/or guide boards at the platform. If the train line you are transferring to is operated by a same company, you can simply go to another platform. If it is operated by a different train company, you will have to go through an exit wicket from the first line, and then go through an entry wicket to the station of the line you wish to use, even though both may be in the same building or connected with a corridor or concourse. Some large stations such as Tokyo Station or Shinjuku Station have several companies' lines connecting in them.

### **Women Only Cars**

A word of caution for male students.

Depending on the train line, they may have a "women only" car during rush hours in the morning (typically between 7:00-9:30am)





in cities. It means one of the cars of a train is designated for women only to avoid sexual harassment by men. While they are clearly marked usually in pink, should you happen to get in on one of them, don't worry, they should be understanding, but you should change cars at the next station.



## 7. Student Discount – Gakuwari

If you commute to school by trains and/or buses, you are eligible for student discount for their passes. Passes are sold at stations or bus depots of the line(s) you use. They are sold for terms of 1 month, 3 months, or 6 months. You will need to get a certificate of commute from your school and present it with your student ID when purchasing them. Some schools issue student IDs with embedded commute certificate in them.

You may be able to get other student discounts at some movie theatres, art galleries, museums, and long distance trains by presenting your student ID.

## 8. Crowdedness

One difficulty for anyone who is used to a spacious physical environment may be adjusting to Japan's crowdedness.

Japan's land area is slightly larger than that of Oman (see Japan Fact Sheet in Appendix). Yet the population today is approximately 127,000,000, with over 13,000,000 people living in the Tokyo area. Although Tokyo has one of the largest urban areas in the world, the great population density is obvious. There are lots and lots of people on streets, in trains and buses, in cars and stores, almost everywhere you might go. If you go to a school in a small city outside the metropolitan area the situation is less extreme; but if your school is in a large city such as Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka, etc., you may need to be mentally prepared for the crowdedness in Japan.

## 9. Banking

You must have a registered address in order to open a bank account (see page 11, Residence Card). Many schools will take their new international students to a nearby bank to help them open an account, so you should check with your school's international office first.

There is no specific procedure for an international student to open a bank account. Each bank has its own rules and procedures, but all banks require your residence card, passport and some money to deposit. It may prove helpful to take your school ID with you. You should also know that they may tell you that your account is for a non-resident, despite your Residence Card. In that case, you should confirm that you can receive remittances from home. If you receive a Japanese government related scholarship such as Monbusho Scholarship, you must open an account at Yucho Bank (postal bank) at post offices. Some other government-related scholarships may require a "resident" account. If that is the case, you may need to tell the bank that you must open a resident account due to the scholarship.

When you open an account, you will receive a bank book and a cash card. Your bank book enables you to record all your transactions and your balance. The cash card allows you to make withdrawals and deposits at the bank's ATMs (automatic teller machine), and withdrawals from ones in other locations but there is usually a fee. When you receive a bank card, you will be asked to set a 4 digit pin number. Banks do not want you to use your birthday for it, since it is relatively easy for criminals to guess the number should your card be lost or stolen.

Bank offices in Japan are open from 9am to 3pm. However, there are many ATMs throughout Japan: at banks, post offices, rail stations, convenience stores, shopping centers, etc. You can generally deposit/withdraw cash using your bank card at your bank's ATMs at any time of the day or night, though there are limits on withdrawals from bank ATMs. Generally you can only withdraw cash, not deposit, from ATMs that do not belong to your bank. However, you should be aware that there is a charge of 108 yen if you use an ATM other than that of your own bank. Even at your bank's ATM, there may be a charge after a certain hour of the day. The terms governing those charges vary from bank to bank, so you should check before you use the ATM.

Added information from Omani students in Japan: one person was able to use her Omani ATM card (Visa card) in Japan to withdraw some cash, although there was a fee for each transaction. The card was issued by Bank Muscat. Another person with this card found it was not very reliable, that sometimes it worked and sometimes it did not.

## 10. Grocery Shopping and Halal Food

You can purchase groceries at various shops such as supermarkets, convenience stores which are called “kon-bini”, co-ops as well as small “mom & pop” shops. There are supermarkets of various sizes where you can purchase groceries. Some of large “suupaa”s (as many Japanese call them) carry not only food items but also toiletries, detergents, stationeries, and sometimes simple clothing. In large cities such as Tokyo and Osaka, the station buildings often have grocery stores in them. They are very convenient but tend to be a little expensive.

You may find a shopping street in your area, where you can do shopping at small grocery stores, such as “yao-ya” (vegetable shop) or “sakana-ya” (fish store), or “niku-ya” (meat shop), etc.

Halal food restaurants and markets in Japan can be searched on-line, although it may not be easy to find outside large cities. The following are some URLs of Halal restaurants and related sites for your reference:

In Tokyo

<http://www.halalfoodshopjapan.com>

<http://www.baticrom.com/>

<http://www.onlinehalalfood.com/>

<http://e-food.jp/cgi-bin/restfind/view.cgi?kind=25>

In Kyoto

[http://kyoto-halal.com/index\\_e.html](http://kyoto-halal.com/index_e.html)

<http://www.kyoto.travel/muslim/>

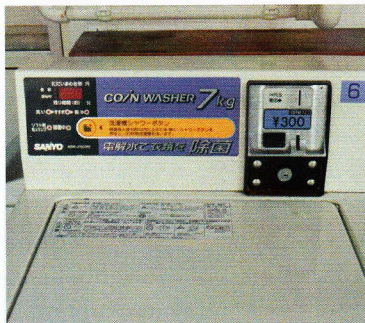
## 11. Washing – Coin-operated Laundry

Have you ever done your own laundry? If not, it will be a good idea to practice using a washing machine and/or a dryer and iron at home before coming to Japan. Some apartment buildings provide laundry rooms in the building, so you should check with your landlord to see if one is available. It would be a good idea to include clothes basket and hangers on your list of initial shopping.

For washing laundry, “koin randori” (coin-operated laundry) will be convenient.



You will find a few large washers and dryers in a room or an area. These machines are coin operated, like a vending machine. So you can only wash or dry your clothes and other items by inserting the specified amount of money into the machine before using it.



You need to provide your own detergent, which you can buy at a supermarket, a convenience store or a drug store (pharmacy). The amount of time it takes to wash or dry a load of laundry varies on its size. So when you use the washer you need to specify the size of the load you want to wash before turning on the washer. Once your laundry is washed, you can dry it in the dryer, which again requires payment and

the setting of the size. You may opt to dry your laundry by hanging it in your apartment, of course, although it may take a long time to dry since Japan is relatively humid.

Since anyone can go in and out of koin randori, it is recommended that you remain there to keep an eye on your laundry. It is also advisable to go during the day time, with a friend if possible, particularly if you are a woman, in order to avoid possible negative encounters or harassment from strangers.

## 12. Trash and Recycling

Japanese have become very conscious of our environment and limited resources. So there is a nation-wide effort to reduce trash by recycling as much as possible. This effort is reflected in each municipality's rules on "trash sorting by type."

When you rent an apartment, you should learn which type of trash is collected on which day of the week, and how it should be placed in the designated space. For example, burnables (including kitchen waste, tissue papers) might be collected on Mondays and Fridays, paper items (newspapers, magazines, books, cartons, paper boxes, etc.) might be collected on Tuesdays, non-burnables (cans, metals, etc.) might be collected on Wednesdays, plastics and styrofoams on Thursdays, etc.

Each type of trash may need to be put in certain types of bags, so make sure to check these details with your landlord. You can also get the information at the city hall. If you fail to do so, you might create ill feelings without intending to by throwing trash out on the wrong day or in the wrong way. This can become a source of unnecessary disputes with your neighbors. If you conform to the rules, your neighbours will appreciate your efforts and feel good about you and your country.

## 13. Paying Bills and "Konbini" (convenience stores)

You will receive regular monthly or bimonthly bills for electricity, gas, telephone, and water unless they are included in your rent. The most convenient way of paying those bills is by automatic deduction from your bank account. When you receive each bill by mail for the first time, they

usually include information on automatic deduction from your bank account. If you wish to arrange for it, you need to submit a specific form they provide with your account information. This method is the most convenient, although you need to be conscious of your bank balance. If your bank balance is short of the amount of a charge, they will send you a bill by mail with a payment deadline. In addition, you must remember to make the payment for your final month in Japan before you close your bank account.

If you prefer to pay bills in person, good places to do so are “konbini” (convenience stores). The major chains include 7-11 (Seven Eleven), Lawson, Family Mart, Mini Stop, Circle K, and Sunkus. Konbinis tend to be open early in the morning until late at night 365 days a year. If you bring your bills to the cashiers with your payments, they will stamp them on several places and return stamped receipts to you. Make sure to keep the receipts as proofs of payment.

If you live near a post office, you can pay bills there too, however, you will be asked to fill out a form, so it is a little more complex. You can also pay for your health insurance at a post office or a konbini in the same way you pay your utility bills. Post office staff tends to encourage people to use konbini for paying any bills.

Konbinis are really convenient. Their functions have evolved and developed over time. Many of them are equipped with an ATM and a copier, and sell small amounts of anything you may need, e.g. food, drinks, postage stamps, stationary, newspapers, books and magazines, shoe repair kit, etc. Some of them also sell theater tickets and offer courier service if you want to send something within Japan.

## **14. Computers, Cell phones, and Internet**

You can purchase cell phones and subscribe to the internet only after you have a registered address.

## 15. Telephones and Other Methods of Communication

Once you have your address determined and registered at the local city office, you can buy cell phones at various phone shops and electronic stores. Before you purchase a cell phone, you should study what each type of phone can and cannot do. For example, there are various applications (such as WhatsApp) you can download free for regular cell phones or specifically for smartphones, through which you can send voice or short text messages to/from Oman. Before you download those applications, make sure to check what their usage cost in Japan may be.



However, if you need to contact your family before you obtain a cell phone, you can use a public phone. Since the spread of cell phones, public telephones have disappeared drastically. However, you can still find them at and near train stations and on some streets. (see photos, left)

International calls can be made using gray public phones. A local call is ¥10 for almost one minute for a close area, but instead of preparing so many coins to make a phone call, “phone cards” are convenient. They are ¥1000 yen and sold at convenience stores, kiosks and at train stations.



Some public phones are equipped with a “red” button. It is an emergency call button. Press the red button, then dial 110 (police) or 119 (fire and ambulance) to get help. If the public phone does not have a red button, just lift the receiver and dial 110 or 119 for help without inserting any money.

There are “hot spots” (free wi-fi) in some areas in Japan. You may be able to find them at coffee shops, etc. or inside subway stations. Go to

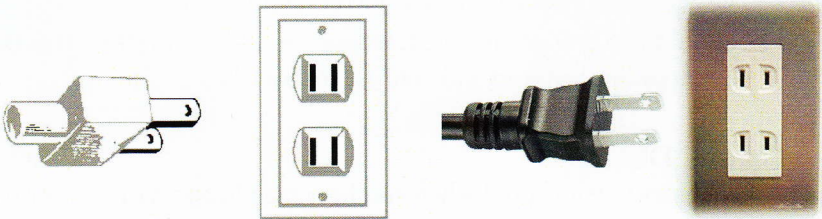
<http://www.ntt-bp.net/jcfw/en.html> and see various free wi-fi signs (go down to a list of Partner Companies for a scrolling image).



You can also rent or purchase pocket wi-fi service for a set amount of time. There are many service providers, so you should study the terms carefully.

## 16. Electricity in Japan

The voltage used throughout Japan is uniformly 100 volts, A.C. However, there are two frequencies zones — the 50 Hertz zone in eastern Japan and 60 Hertz zone in western Japan (Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka). Go to [http://www.sharp.co.jp/support/info/info\\_hz\\_1.html](http://www.sharp.co.jp/support/info/info_hz_1.html) for the dividing line. Japan only uses flat 2 pin plugs (see photo below). Therefore, it is advisable to bring the necessary adapters if your computer and other electric equipment do not have Japanese style plugs.





## 17. Mosques and Prayer Rooms at Universities

Some universities provide prayer rooms for Muslim students on their campus, so check with your international student advisor. You can also find a list of mosques in Japan at <http://www.masjid.jp/list.html>

## 18. Safety, Security and Natural Disasters

Japan is known as a very safe country, but it is not *crime free*. So international students should take normal precautions as they would at home or anywhere else in the world. Following is a list of common precautions:

- Always lock and chain the door of your apartment when you are inside.
- Make sure to lock the door and all windows at night, not to mention when you leave the apartment, even if you live on a upper floor of a tall building.
- If your door bell rings, make sure to know who it is before you open the door. Remember, you have the right NOT to open it. If it is a delivery that you were not anticipating, make sure to ask who it is from, and keep the door chain on when you open the door.
- Do not walk alone late at night on an unlit street. If you have to, keep your ears open for any sound around you.
- If you are a man, do not keep your wallet in your back pocket. It is too readily accessible to pickpockets.
- Hold your bag in front of you on a crowded bus, train and on a street.
- Do not leave your bags unattended even in school.
- Should you ever get attacked, scream “Kaji-da!” (fire!) It attracts attention quickly and will confuse the attacker.

### Natural Disaster

What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “natural disaster”? Most Japanese would think of earthquakes, typhoons, and tsunami. We certainly hope there will be no such disasters while you are in Japan, but just in case one occurs you have some knowledge of what to do.

Japan has frequent earthquakes although people often do not feel them because most are quite small. Still you should be prepared for the possibility of a large one. You should also be prepared for the other disasters as well, just in case one occurs. You should be sure to have a supply of food and water on hand. Keep a flash light handy to be prepared for blackout due to typhoons and/or earthquakes. If you are on trains or subways, follow the instructions of the crew. Be aware that it is extremely dangerous to walk on subway tracks since they have high voltage wires along tracks.

The following are some of common things you should do for earthquake safety:

- If you are using gas, turn it off immediately to avoid fire. Fire often kills more people than the collapsing of houses and buildings.
- Open doors or windows to secure exitway to outside.
- Get under a desk or table to avoid being hit by falling objects.
- Never use an elevator at the time of earthquake or fire.
- Tsunamis are rare after earthquakes, but if you are residing area where there is a tsunami warning, you should immediately evacuate to higher ground.

### **Typhoon Preparation**

Weather tracking is generally good in Japan, so typhoon warnings are usually issued days in advance. You should make sure that your windows are shuttered and that you have not left loose objects outside, such as an unsecured bicycle or trash can or even a plant. You should also be prepared for power outage or phone outage.

### **Disaster Emergency Message Dial 171**

Following the earthquake and tsunami experience of 2011, the Disaster Emergency Message Dial, a special voice message board, was established. When a disaster such as an earthquake hits an area, communication traffic to the area will drastically increase. As a result it becomes impossible to get through to a desired number. Through the voice message board, you can leave a message for a recipient who can also leave and hear a message by accessing 171.

Please read more detail and how it works at:  
<http://www.ntt-east.co.jp/en/saigai/voice171/>

### **Omani Embassy Disaster Alert**

The Omani Embassy in Tokyo has an Arabic twitter alert service that covers earthquakes, typhoons (cyclones), etc @OmanEmb\_Alerts. The Embassy encourages all students and visitors to follow this twitter account.

## IV. Japanese Customs and Society

Both Oman and Japan are old countries therefore there are various traditions and customs that may not make sense to someone who is new to the country. However, as an old saying goes, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," it is a good idea to know Japanese social customs and follow its rules.

In comparative terms, Omani culture developed out of nomadic tribal traditions, which strongly emphasize personal hospitality while Japanese culture developed from the traditions of settled agricultural villages in which people emphasize the differences between public and private spaces and public and private faces. Part of the public face is an emphasis on group cooperation and harmony. This tradition of cooperation and respect for "Wa" (often translated as harmony) is one of the core values which has shaped today's Japanese society.

### 1. Greetings

Japanese bow to each other for greetings. If you see some person bowing while on a telephone, you can assume the person is greeting the other party. Shaking hands is very common as well even between a man and a woman. A firm hand-shake communicates confidence although it should not cause pain, but a limp one gives a poor impression. So if you shake hands, give a firm shake but if you feel uncomfortable shaking hands with a person of the opposite sex, a Japanese style bow will do very well. Traditionally, Japanese never hug nor rub noses. Also if two men hold each other's hands, it looks too affectionate and may be misinterpreted, although it is acceptable for two women to hold hands.

### 2. Punctuality

One of the most noticeable difference in life in Japan and that of Oman may be people's sense of time. In Oman, time flows naturally while Japanese "live by the clock" and expect everything to be scheduled and on time.

It may be difficult for an Omani to switch gears but it is considered bad manners and even rude to be late for an appointment, since it

automatically makes the person wait for unknown period of time. If you are late for an appointment or a meeting, you should always call and apologize and let him/her know when you can be expected.

### 3. Japanese Diet

Japanese main diet includes rice and other grains (wheat products), meats (beef, pork, poultry), seafood (fish, shellfish, and seaweeds), dairy products, and vegetables. Minors (age 19 or younger) are not allowed to drink alcoholic beverages. Richard Hosking's *A Dictionary of Japanese Food* will help you find out ingredients of Japanese dishes in English with pictures.

Other than sushi, breads, and snack foods which are eaten by hands, chopsticks (o-hashii) are traditionally used for eating. When "Western foods" are served, utensils (knives, forks and spoons) are used.

Restaurants will sometimes ask if you prefer to use a fork rather than ohashi. It is considered polite to lift bowls (rice, soup, salad, etc.) with your left hand, particularly since Japanese soups are usually drunk directly from the bowl without spoons.

### 4. Religion

It may seem very strange for someone in an Islamic country that Japanese seem very disinterested in religion. If asked, the majority of Japanese would respond they are not religious. Still Shintoism and Buddhism are the basis of Japanese society and culture.

Shinto is Japan's ancient traditional religion which is based on Shamanism. When Buddhism spread to Japan in 6-7th century from China, the Japanese accepted it without replacing Shintoism. So, the two religions have co-existed harmoniously and shaped and developed Japanese society to date. The following story is probably very confusing to a non-Japanese but illustrates the current religious status of Japan: it is quite common when a baby is born, he/she will be presented and blessed at a Shinto shrine; when the person grows up, he/she may choose to get married at a Christian church, and when he/she dies, he/she may have a Buddhist funeral.

When people speak of “shrines”, they always mean Shinto buildings that have a “Torii” gate. When they say “temple” it indicates a Buddhist structure, while “church” indicates a Christian one. People are less familiar with Islam, but they are aware of mosques, which are called Islam ji-in.

Buddhism traditionally prohibited eating any animal food including fish, therefore Buddhists were vegetarians. The average Buddhist no longer practices the prohibition. In Shintoism, sake (an alcoholic beverage made from rice) was considered a sacred gift from God, so there is a tradition of toasting and “breaking a keg of sake” at auspicious occasions such as New Year, weddings, and the opening of businesses.

## V. Advice from Omani Students in Japan

### What to Consider in Studying Abroad

*Eman Al-Naamani*

Ph.D. Program in Chemical Engineering

Osaka University

The true feeling of success comes after failure, sacrifices, and hard working. Studying abroad is a lifetime experience and a chance that most probably won't repeat.

A very common question people ask to a foreign student is the reason for studying in a particular country. The right selection for where to study should be based on two important factors; first is your major and second is the country condition. For the first factor, you have to be sure that you are going to study the right thing at the right place. Second, the country condition will have a direct impact on you to stay comfortable and safe. In addition, being abroad will let you not only to learn at the university but also from the people surrounding you.

Japan is among the most culturally rich countries where every day you will have something new to learn about. Language, food, Japanese traditions, and the inspiring nature of Japan all together make our lives here wonderful. Along with focusing on your university classes you are encouraged to study Japanese language as well. It's a big advantage to study a new language especially if it is beautiful like Japanese language. Japanese people like Omani people we both believe that our culture is valuable and consider it our identity. However, there are a lot of differences between Oman and Japan in many aspects. It is important to accept and understand these differences in order to live smoothly and happy.

To study abroad means to be away of your parents, your family and your friends. This challenge is the most difficult and the most lasting for you and your family as well. However, difficulties we go through shall always be doses for strengthening us. These challenges and many others will make you understand the true meaning of success. Always be optimistic and enthusiastic to make your dreams come true.

## **Study Abroad is More than Just Studying Abroad**

*Hamza Mohammed Al Kindi*

Master's Program in Chemistry, Science  
Tohoku University

Before I came to Japan as I was surfing the internet I came across a picture of a welcome poster hung in one of Japan's airports. What I found astounding was not the fact that "welcome to Japan" was written in ten different languages, but what caught my attention was that they also wrote "Japan Endless Discovery." After living in Japan I came to realize that the word "discovery" is not just limited to science and technology, almost every day there is a chance to explore and discover something new. It's little wonder when one is in a country where breathtaking natural scenery, rich culture, and inspiring people are all gathered.

Japan is a country of diversity and tradition, it can offer the singular experience of visiting the same place in different seasons and make it seem as if each time it's a new destination. Along with its beautiful landscapes cultural evidence, such as castles, shrines, and temples, allow anyone to dive deep into rich history, something which all Japanese are proud of. Even with the rapid advance of technology, Japanese strongly preserve their traditions and customs, but they are also very open and willing to learn more about other cultures, especially the qualities that make them so different to their own. This is a trait that foreign students can benefit from when living in Japan.

The main objective of all students is to succeed in their studies while in Japan. But that does not mean that one should limit oneself to study and miss the opportunity to learn more about a culture that is completely different to our Omani culture. Life for foreigners in any country is never easy in the beginning, but by patiently understanding your surroundings and those around you, things start to become easier and with time become enjoyable. Even language barriers can be overcome with time, one very important piece of advice to make life in Japan smoother: make friends and as many as possible.



Remember a good plan, willing heart and some hard work and support, will make your dreams come true. I wish you all have successful studies and take back great memories of Japan.



### **Life in Japan**

*Khadija Tahir Al Kindi*

Master's Program in Environmental Science  
Tsukuba University

Congratulations on choosing Japan as your destination for graduate and post-graduate studies. Japan is very rich in culture and advanced in so many great aspects from technology, policy and law, and hence it is important to take every advantage and opportunity you have to learn and experience the rich culture. People are so friendly, kind, and humble; never hesitate to ask and seek for help whenever you want.

Life in Japan is not as hard as it seems, it gets easier once you understand the traditions and culture and everything will make sense. It is very important to respect the Japanese lifestyle and habits and imply them in the daily life routine. I hope you excel in your studies and make your country and parent proud, wish you all the best in your new journey in Japan.



### **I Didn't Imagine Being in Japan**

*Haitham Suleiman Ambu-Saidi*

Bachelor's Program in Applied Chemistry  
Tokai University

I can't imagine 4 years have already passed since I took my first step on the land of Japan. I wasn't looking to come to Japan since my childhood as many other Omanis do. Also I didn't even have enough knowledge about Japan as a country and its culture. Before I came to Japan, all I had was a kind of ambition to discover a new world especially Japan, which is not popular for Omani students for studying abroad compared to other countries such as the United States or Australia.

These were my thoughts in those days. However, in talking about the present time, honestly I might think sometimes it was maybe better to choose another place but what I am sure about is that I won't be able to get all the good moments and chances that I had in Japan until today. Comparing to other countries, Japan as a country has many facilities which make life easier especially for overseas students. Considering features in the field of transportations, safety, and the education system, Japan is one of the best around the world.

There are many things I wished I had got the chance to do before I first came to Japan. Firstly, let's talk about Japanese language. The reason why I'm making it first is the importance of language in order to make life easier and interesting. I'm not saying that you can't live without it at all but there are really many places and interactions where Japanese is needed. Most of the difficulties I had during my first period of staying in Japan were all around the language, so I wished I had acquired enough knowledge of the language before I came here. Secondly, I would like to mention the importance of Japanese culture and the psychology of the Japanese people themselves. From my point of view, knowing about these two things will give people coming to Japan the key of the gate of knowing Japanese people closer and make many new friendships.

As most of the beginnings, my beginning here in Japan wasn't easy as the life I'm living nowadays. One of the most surprising things about Japan is the 20 years old rule. The 20 years old rule is a Japanese rule that does not allow people who are under 20 years old from doing most of the life requirements from simple things as getting a cellphone card to big things like renting an apartment. This was the biggest difficulty I had at the beginning since I came here at only 17 years old. I got help from a friend in finding a shop that allowed me to get the SIM card in those days. I also needed a guarantor for renting an apartment, the Embassy of Sultanate of Oman in Tokyo does now guarantee Omani students since the law required a guarantor in this case.

The system of education here has many things to consider. For Omani students coming here to study for the Bachelor degree Japanese language is needed because most of the Japanese universities don't use English in major lectures. However, for students coming here to take the Master degree, Japanese language is not needed but students are always advised

to take a short Japanese language course for 6 months as maximum in order to get the benefits of language in daily life. For undergraduate students, students will have to take the EJU exam which is required to enter most of the universities. After doing the exam, you will find the university journey will begin by doing some exams and interviews depending on the University requirements.

Since my first step on the land of Japan until now, each day here has something special and something new to learn and every moment on this country has its own feature. Many things are different than Oman and the culture itself has such a wide area to sail on it. Each day here gave me and will give me more in the future and I will gain new knowledge about the country that has been to me my beloved destiny.



# Appendix

## Embassy of Sultanate of Oman in Japan

Address:	4-2-17 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0012, Japan
Phone:	03-5468-1088 (from outside Japan +81-3-5468-1088)
Fax:	03-5468-1068 (from outside Japan +81-3-5468-1068)
Email:	info@omanembassy.jp, tokyo@mofa.gov.om
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/omanembassy
Twitter:	@OmanEm

## Japan Fact Sheet

<a href="http://web-japan.org/other/index_ar.html">http://web-japan.org/other/index_ar.html</a>	
Land Area:	377, 796 square kilometers (As of 1 October, 2012)
Population:	128,057,352 (As of 1 October 2010)
Capital:	Tokyo
GDP per capita:	40,817 (nominal, 2012)

## Useful Telephone Numbers

Police (urgent):	110
Fire/Ambulance:	119
Disaster Emergency Dial:	171
JR East Infoline:	(050) 2016-1603
The Japan Help-Line: (Emergency help assistance service 24 hr/day, 7 days a week)	(0570) 000-911

## Useful Japanese Words

Hello/Good afternoon	Konnichiwa (kon-nichi-wa)
Good morning	Ohayo gozaimasu
Good evening	Konbanwa (kon-ban-wa)
Good night	Oyasumi nasai (oya-sumi na-sa-i)
I am XX (My name is XX)	Watashiwa (watashi-wa) XX desu (des)
Thank you	Domo arigato
We shall meet again (said in parting)	Mata aimasho
Excuse me for disturbing you (said when leaving a room or at the end of a phone call.)	Shitsurei shimasu (shi-tsu-rei-shi-mas)
Thank you for the food I am about to eat (words to say before eating)	Itadakimasu
Thank you for the food I ate (words to say after eating)	Gochiso-sama
Delicious	Oishii (oi-shii)
Excuse me	Sumimasen (sumi-ma-sen)
Yes	Hai (ha-i)
No	lie (ee-eh)

## Useful Kanji (Chinese characters) for Visual Recognition

Common Building and Street Signs			
入口	entrance	出口	exit
押す	push	引く	pull
上	up	下	down
左	left	右	right
開	open	閉	close
男	male	女	female
禁	prohibited	立入禁止	No Entry
リサイクル	recycle		

ID card related	
交番	police box
区役所 市役所	city office
在留カード	residence card
学割	student discount
学生証	student ID

Health related	
国民保険	national health insurance
薬	medicine/drug
薬局	pharmacy
病院	hospital
病気	illness

Transportation related			
急行	express	各駅停車	local
乗り換え	transfer	遅延	delay
平日	weekday	土日休	Saturday-Sunday-Holiday
バス停	bus stop		

Food related			
肉	meat	豚肉	pork
牛肉	beef	鶏肉	chicken
酒	sake / generic alcoholic beverage	味醂 or みりん	mirin (seasoning containing alcohol)
アルコール	alcohol		
水	water	湯	warm or hot water, sometimes public bath
氷	ice		
砂糖	sugar	塩	salt

## Japanese Calendar

There are many national holidays in Japan, days on which schools and public offices are closed, and public transportation may run on a different schedule. Some of them are based on Buddhist traditions, some are historically based, some others are recent additions.

January 1st	New Year's Day
January 15th (or second Monday before the 15th)	Coming of the Age Day
February 11th	Nation Foundation Day
March 21st	Vernal Equinox
April 29th	Showa's Day
May 3rd	Constitution Memorial Day
May 4th	Green Day
May 5th	Children's Day
July 21st (or third Monday of July)	Ocean Day
Sept. 15th	Respect the Aged Day
Sept. 23rd	Autumnal Equinox
October 10th (or second Monday of October)	Physical Exercise Day
Nov. 3rd	Cultural Day
Nov. 23rd	Labour Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 23rd	Emperor's Birthday

## Books on Japan: A Partial List

*Eigo de Nihon Shoukai handobokku (Handbook for introduction of Japan in English)* by Yoshie Matsumoto, ALC, Tokyo, 2014

*Shin-Eigo de kataru Nihon Jijyou (New English book on Japan)* by Hiroyuki Eguchi & Daniel Dumos, Japan Times, Tokyo, 2011

*Eigo de Nihon wo kataru tameno Jiten (A Dictionary to explain Japan in English)* by Nobuyuki Honna & Bates Hoffer, Asuku Publishing Co., Tokyo, 2010

*Nippon-sono sugata to kokoro (Nippon-The Land and its People)* by Nittetsu Human Development, Gakuseisha, Tokyo, 2002)

*Oman and Japan* by Haruo Endo, Muscat Printing Press, Muscat, 2011

*Japan's New Middle Class* and *Japan as Number One* by Ezra Vogel,  
Harpercollins, 1979  
(Sociological study of the emerging Japanese middle class and Japanese technological achievements)

*With Respect to the Japanese* by John Condon, Intercultural Press,  
(Various cultural features of the Japanese and Japanese society)

*The Japanese* by Edwin O. Reischauer, Belknap Press, 1978  
(An authoritative book. Reischauer authored numerous books on Japan and served as Ambassador to Japan in the early 1960s)

*Japan Is Not All Raw Fish* and *Son of Raw Fish* by Don Maloney, Japan Times,  
1975  
(Collection of essays on a business man and his family's experiences in Japan)

*Japanese Lessons* by Gail Benjamin, NYU Press, 1997  
(Overview of Japanese school system compared to that of U.S. by an American woman whose children attended Japanese primary school)

*The Making of Modern Japan* by Marius Jansen, Harvard U Press, 2002.

## Useful Websites

### General

Architecture

<http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/japan/architecture.htm>

Currency Calculator

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Time in Japan

<http://swissinfo.net/cgi/worldtime/clock.pl?Tokyo,Japan>



Weather in Japan

<http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html>

Guides to Japan (travel)

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/>

[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north\\_east\\_asia/japan/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north_east_asia/japan/)

<http://www.japan-guide.com/>

## **Japanese Media**

The Japan Times (largest English newspaper in Japan)

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/>

Yomiuri (major newspaper)

<http://the-japan-news.com/>

Mainichi Shimbun (major newspaper)

<http://mainichi.jp/English>

Asahi Shimbun (major newspaper)

<http://www.asahi.com/english>

Nikkei (major financial daily)

[http://asia.nikkei.com/?n\\_cid=NARAN101](http://asia.nikkei.com/?n_cid=NARAN101)

NHK (national TV station)

<http://www.nhk.or.jp/english/index.html>

## **Japanese Culture**

Tea Ceremony

<http://japanese-tea-ceremony.net/>

Flower Arrangement

<http://www.ikebanahq.org/profile.php>

Judo

<http://JudoInfo.com/>

Aikido

<http://www.aikiweb.com/>

Kabuki

<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/kabuki/en/>

<http://www.kabuki21.com>

Origami

<http://www.paperfolding.com/>

---