

BASIC JAPANESE ETIQUETTE

Japan is a warm and welcoming country, but its unique culture can be as daunting as it is captivating for the first-time visitor. To help create a blooper-free journey, ready yourself with a few of these basic etiquette tips before your trip.

JAPANESE CUISINE

A typical Japanese meal consists of a bowl of rice, a bowl of soup, pickled vegetables, and grilled fish. The traditional way to consume a meal is to taste a dish, then have a bite of rice, sample another dish, then have another bite of rice. Rice is meant to cleanse the palate.

CHOPSTICKS

DO

- + Lay down your chopsticks between bites.
- + Use the special chopstick rest, called a *hashi-oki*.

DON'T

- Wave chopsticks around, use them to point, or use them as toothpicks.
- Stick your chopsticks upright in your rice, as this is a symbol related to death in Japanese culture.
- Rest your chopsticks across your plate or bowl.
- Rub or roll your chopsticks together.
- Spear your food with your chopsticks.
- Pass food from chopstick to chopstick.
- Stir food around with your chopsticks.



TIP:

Don't put soy sauce on white rice; it is considered disrespectful to the chef.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

It is very hard to maintain a vegan or vegetarian diet in Japan; even if the dish doesn't contain meat, the stock is generally made from meat or fish. It is also hard to adhere to other dietary restrictions, as most menus are set.

FOOTWEAR

It is best to wear shoes in Japan that are easy to remove. When entering temples, historic sites, homes, hotels, and some restaurants, it is tradition to remove your shoes in the *genkan*, a space between the door and the interior of the building, and replace them with indoor slippers.

PLEASE NOTE: There are usually special slippers to be specifically used in the bathroom.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Slippers are one size fits all; do not ask for a smaller or larger size.

ONSEN

Here are a few tips to make your visit effortless and relaxing:

- * Bathe in the shower area before you enter the onsen; onsens are for soaking only, not cleaning (or swimming).
- * Remove your clothes in the locker room; it is normal to relax in the hot springs completely nude. Bathing suits are *not* allowed.
- * You are welcome to drink water while soaking, but refrain from drinking beer or other alcoholic beverages.
- * When you're done soaking, rinse off in the shower, then dry off before entering the locker room.
- * Onsen time is not photo time; leave your camera at the hotel.
- * Tattoos are *not* allowed. If you have a small tattoo, cover it with a waterproof bandage before visiting the onsen, so that it is not visible.