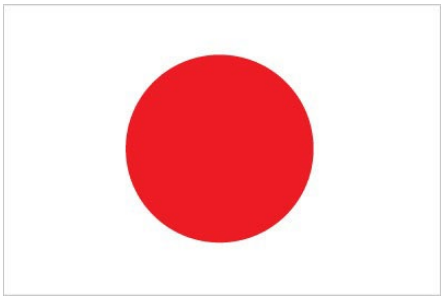
IDENTITIES ABROAD: JAPAN



IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via Diversity Abroad), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Japan as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Japan, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

Capital: Tokyo

Population: 123,201,945

Language(s): Japanese

Religions: Shintoism (48.6%), Buddhism (46.4%), Christianity (1.1%) and Other (4%)

Ethnic groups: Japanese (97.5%), Chinese (0.6%), Vietnamese (0.4%), South Korean (0.3%), Other (1.2%)



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Japan is an island nation, with 6,000 plus islands, off the eastern coast of mainland Asia. It is rich in history and a leader in industry and culture. Japan is the world's 10th most populous country with over 120 million people. After the end of WWII, Japan has rebuilt itself into a peaceful, democratic country with a focus on economic and technological advancement.

Students enjoy studying abroad in Japan due to Japanese influence on pop culture across the world and an interest in its language, art and food.

The average cost of living in Japan is nearly 30% lower than in the US with rent being nearly 66% lower. An inexpensive meal could cost around $6 with a nicer dinner costing somewhere between $15-20.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Review current travel risks for Japan:

- U.S Department of State Travel Risks
- Travelers' Health

According to the Open Doors Report 2023, 9,675 students from the United States studied abroad in Japan.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN JAPAN

Japan is a highly ethnically homogenous country. However, it is considered to be a welcoming and tolerant country. Some ethnic hostility does exist towards Chinese and Korean immigrants, which is largely seen through hate speech and hate crime.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

Students of color tend to be well received in urban environments, however many students of color report feeling singled out as the popularity of black American celebrity entertainers and athletes is transposed onto them. Curious stares, especially in non-tourist areas, should be expected, which can be attributed to genuine interest. Black haircare and beauty products may be difficult to find and/or more expensive. Students may encounter various comments and questions about their hair, including unwanted touching.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Person of Color in Japan, TravelBud
- The Hair Question, CET Academic Programs
- Myths and Facts About Racism in Japan, Zenbird
- World Directory of Indigenous People-Japan, Minority Rights Group International
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 in Japan (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- Indians in Japan, the Diplomat
- Identity Resources, Associated Kyoto Program

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN JAPAN

Although there are no national anti-discrimination laws to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, it is legal to be LGBTQIA+ in Japan. Although same-sex marriage is illegal, it has gained overall public support. More and more Japanese are supportive of this community, but some of the older generation may still have discriminatory views.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

Students in the LGBTQIA+ community tend to be more generally accepted in more urban areas, such as Tokyo and Osaka. It is atypical to hear in-depth conversation about romantic relationships, sexuality, or gender in public, as these topics are viewed to be "private"

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or “personal”. Public bathrooms are typically separated by gender with it being uncommon to find gender neutral bathrooms. Some Japanese may be less familiar with terms such as “transgender” and “gender fluid”.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Connecting Japan’s LGBTQIA+ International Community, Stonewall Japan
- The ABCs of LGBT+ in Japan, Gaijin Pot
- My Experience as LGBT+ in Japan, Leedsuniabroad
- Alumni’s Advice for Studying Abroad as a Transgender Student in Japan, Greenheart Travel
- Identity Resources, Associated Kyoto Program
- LGBT Rights in Japan, Equaldex
- LGBT Travel Information, U.S. Passports & International Travel
- How LGBT Friendly is the Japan?, Once Upon a Journey
- Sexual Orientation Laws in the World (December 2019), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association

DISABILITY IN JAPAN

Physically, intellectually and psychiatric disabilities are the three categories of disabilities in Japan.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

For students with physical disabilities, Japan is pretty accessible with all curbs being cut (often with slopes). Accessible toilets are very common to find, but it can be difficult to find accessible restaurants. Nearly all train stations are entirely accessible.

For students who are visually impaired, Japan uses tactile paving that can be used as a guide. As long as a guide dog is a certified member of the International Guide Dog Federation, the guide dog has access to public and private facilities.

Many common medications that are used to address learning disabilities, such as Ritalin for ADHD, are illegal in Japan. Please contact the local Japanese consulate/embassy to confirm the legality of the medication.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Accessible Japan
- Being Disabled in Japan, Interac
- Living with a Disability in Japan, TokyoDev
- Identity Resources, Associated Kyoto Program
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 in Japan (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses and Trafficking in Persons; Persons with Disabilities), U.S. Department of State
- Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities, Mobility International USA
- Travelers with Disabilities, U.S. State Department (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- Traveling with Disabilities and Medications, Transportation Security Administration

RELIGION IN JAPAN

The two major religions in Japan are Shinto and Buddhism, with many practicing both religions simultaneously. The place of worship in Shintoism is a shrine typically with an entrance gate made of wood. Many Japanese people do not consider themselves to be religious.

The Japanese government legally respects and protects religious freedom through the constitution which guarantees religious freedom.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

Typical religious holidays that are observed in the US may not be observed in Japan. However, religious travelers should feel encouraged to celebrate their personal religious beliefs. Mosques, churches and synagogues can be found in most urban environments.

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ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Religion in Japan, Japan-Guide
- Christianity in Japan, Japan-Guide
- Jewish Community of Japan, JCJ
- Kosher and Jewish Life in Tokyo, TotallyJewishTravel
- Halal in Japan, Halal Media Japan
- Halal in Tokyo, HHWT
- Countries and Their Cultures: Japan (see section on Religion), Every Culture
- Faith-Based Travel Information, U.S. Passports & International Travel
- 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Japan, U.S. Department of State
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Japan (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses and Trafficking in Persons on Anti-Semitism, U.S. Department of State

WOMEN IN JAPAN

Japanese women were recognized to have equal rights to men after WWII. However, Japan is still very behind in closing its gender gap and is considered to be a primary example of a patriarchal society. It is still mostly expected for women to stop working upon being married and having a child.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

It is unlikely to experience this kind of discrimination while at school, but if/when out at a restaurant with a group of people of mixed genders, expect to order last after all of the men in the group.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 in Japan (see Section 6 on Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons, subheading for Women)
- Information for Women Travelers, U.S. Department of State

REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the CIA World Factbook. Accessed online in January 2025
Open Doors Report | BeGlobalii

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in January 2025 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.