

Welcome to your next big adventure!

Studying in Tokyo is more than just a big adventure, it's a life changing experience. If you apply yourself steadily, stay focused and open-minded, you will enjoy a phenomenal increase in your Japanese language proficiency. The international friends you make are a bonus. This Essentials guide is designed to acquaint you with the logistics of daily life in Japan. There's certainly a lot to know. Visit the links and use them as tools to help you navigate your first weeks and months of this important escapade.

1. Setting Up

Do I need to know some Japanese before I study at KCP?

Although there is no rigid Japanese language requirement, we strongly recommend at least one semester of Japanese, or sound knowledge of hiragana and katakana, before applying.

You can brush up on your skills by using the tools on our [kana page](#).

See other resources on [Learn Japanese online](#).

What types of housing are available to me?

At KCP, you have two options for your [lodging](#): homestay with a Japanese family, or dormitory.

Dormitory life offers several advantages. [KCP dorms](#) feature private rooms and allow closer contact with other students. Although dorms are more restrictive in Japan than in the U.S. (they have curfews, and no visitors of opposite gender are allowed), they are better for students who want control over their own schedule or more interaction with young people.

Since KCP can offer homestay only during the first term of your study, if you choose homestay and will continue for a further term, you will most likely be placed in a dormitory during the rest of your time.

Homestay—living with a Japanese family—is truly the Japanese way of life. Many students develop close relationships with their host families as they eagerly participate in contemporary Japanese family life. In a homestay, students can experience Japanese culture in a family situation.

While there are definite benefits to living with a host family for students who are open-minded, genuinely

interested in becoming a member of the family, and willing to adjust their schedules, some students may not prefer this. Homestays are not recommended for very independent students who want to experience Japan on their own. Homestay families may want to spend time with students, especially on weekends. They may expect a student to become a member of the family by helping out around the house. Some families may also impose a curfew.

For more, see [Lodging](#).

What travel documents do I need to study at KCP?

First, you need a passport. If you don't have one, apply right away. Your post office has passport applications.

If you plan to study for one term (temporary visitor), buy a round-trip ticket. Choose a return date within 90 days of arrival. If the date of your return is further out than 90 days, or if you purchase a one-way ticket for a single term, you will not be allowed entry into Japan.

Non-U.S. students: check with your local Japanese Consulate about eligibility and applying. If you are from a country without a visa treaty with Japan, you will be entirely responsible for acquiring your own visa.

Safety

To protect yourself if your passport is lost or stolen, make two photocopies of your passport (including all pages with stamps). Leave one copy and some extra ID photos with a responsible person in the U.S., and bring one copy plus photo ID with you. This makes it much easier to replace your passport.

Traveling Before or After Term

If you plan to attend KCP with a 90-day temporary visa and you also plan to travel before or after the term, schedule your travel time carefully to avoid staying longer than your 90-day allowance. For example, the Fall 2018 semester is roughly 12 days short of the 90-day allowance.

If you travel beforehand, we ask you to return to the airport with your luggage, so that we can help you reach your KCP-program lodging. Be sure to arrive at Narita Airport by 3:30 pm on the program arrival day so we can pick you up. If you are staying in Tokyo, contact KCP well in advance of your arrival to let us know where you will be staying and to determine the best meeting point.

See [How does airport pickup happen?](#)

What general health planning should I do before I leave?

- We encourage you to have complete physical and dental examinations before traveling abroad. See [Do I need a complete physical?](#)
- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring an extra pair plus a copy of your prescription in case of loss or damage.
- Inoculations are not required when traveling to Japan from the U.S. However, if you are traveling to Japan from another country, check with the nearest Japanese Consulate for requirements.
- If you take prescription medicine, bring enough for your entire stay, and bring a prescription to refill it if needed. Some medications may not be available in Japan; check with your doctor. See [What types of medicine?](#)
- If you have a pre-existing condition that may affect your stay (serious illness or health issue), you must notify KCP when filling out your application. You may be required to have a complete physical exam and have a doctor write a summary of your condition. You will not be disqualified for participation in this program unless it is determined that the study abroad experience could be a serious risk to your well-being.
- If you are struggling, we highly recommend sharing an action plan for emergencies with your family and support people, including how to reach your practitioner, family, and KCP staff.
- Neglecting to tell KCP of your issue or illness before you arrive in Japan can result in possible expulsion, with financial repercussions.

- If you have a learning disability, inform KCP as soon as possible and provide us with proper descriptive documents from a doctor so that we can best assist you. If you have academic accommodations through your school, please obtain a letter on university letterhead detailing what accommodations you need. KCP is limited in what accommodations it can provide, but we will do our best.
- For more information on bringing medicines for personal use into Japan and other medical concerns, please visit [Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare site](#). You can also see a sample of the Yakkan Shoumei form and read some [common questions and answers on bringing medicines to Japan](#) such as [Yakkan Shoumei](#) requirements and where to submit them.

See also [Is this program right for me?](#)

What types of medicine can I take to Japan?

It is illegal to bring into Japan some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States, including inhalers and some allergy and sinus medications: specifically, products that contain stimulants such as pseudoephedrine.

For more, see [Bringing Medication for Personal Use into Japan](#).

Is there any phone planning I need to do?

Yes. There are quite a few options for cell phone use in Japan, but for best results, you need to find some things out or arrange some things before you leave.

Contact your phone service provider. Find out:

Whether they offer a reasonably-priced international plan, especially for Japan.

Whether your phone is SIM-locked (can install another company's SIM card).

If your phone is SIM-locked, your best option is to arrange an international plan with your current phone provider before you go to Japan.

See also [How Do I Contact My Family and Friends?](#)

What cash plans should I make before I leave?

- We suggest that you obtain about \$300 US worth of Japanese Yen (roughly ¥30,000–35,000) before you leave. Best to do this through a bank.
- Check your credit cards' price limits and commission charges.
- Tell your credit card company that you will be traveling outside your home country.
- If your bank is not informed in advance, when you use your credit card, you may find it blocked, because unauthorized use in another country flags the bank's fraud protection. If you let your bank and/or your credit card company know before your trip, they will note your account and thus prevent a fraud alert when you use your card in Japan.
- Prepare for emergencies. Set up (or learn the specifics of) an emergency method to receive money from your family, such as Western Union.

I can't wait to go to KCP In Japan. What are Shinjuku and Tokyo like?

Tokyo is one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of over 12 million people. As the political and economic center of Japan, Tokyo is a convergence of corporate headquarters, government institutions, research facilities, and universities. Tokyo's cultural opportunities abound: students can enjoy performing arts, fashion, design, and the largest collection of Asian art in Japan. KCP provides frequent opportunities for students to engage in Japan's culture by visiting museums, palaces, theaters, and corporations, and by attending numerous other enriching events.

Tokyo is divided into three main parts: the 23-ku (the urban core); the Tama (the western part of the metropolis with farms, mountains, and suburbs); and the islands surrounding Tokyo. Major modes of transport are the electric railroads, the subway, and the bus.

The streets are packed with people day and night. Even though the city is centuries old, a first impression is shaped by skyscrapers, concrete, and neon lights.

What makes Tokyo so exciting to visit is that amidst its modern setting, the traditional Japanese culture still thrives. Tokyo is also the center for academic achievement in Japan.

Shinjuku: Tokyo's Central Ward

KCP is in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo. The school is only a five-minute walk from the Shinjuku Gyonmae subway stop and a ten-minute stroll from the Sanjome stop.

Sometimes called Tokyo's second center, Shinjuku is a big commercial, entertainment, and business center situated atop the world's most populated, busiest railway station. Shinjuku Station serves a huge number of commuters daily. Shinjuku has shopping centers, grocery stores, and other service facilities for students.

Shinjuku Gyoen

One of the metro's best cherry blossom viewing areas, Shinjuku Gyoen is only a stone's throw away from KCP. You can take a stroll in this nearby park and appreciate nature amidst the surrounding buildings and busy streets. It was created as a private garden for the Imperial Family in 1903, and opened to the public 46 years later.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office (TOCHO)

The Tocho is popular for its 243-meter tall twin skyscrapers containing the assembly hall and offices of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. It also features observatories on the 45th floor of each tower. Don't miss the splendid view from the South Tower.

See these [maps of Japan, Tokyo, and the KCP neighborhood](#).

Do you have any maps of the KCP area and Japan?

Yes. We have [downloadable maps](#) of Tokyo and the KCP neighborhood.

2. Packing

What should I bring to Japan?

Some Packing Wisdom

1. Travel light! You will have to carry your own [luggage](#), and you'll regret taking an unwieldy amount. Be sure to leave space in your bags for items you want to bring back from Japan.
2. Invest in covered luggage tags for your luggage and bags. In your carry-on bag, pack necessities for at least a two-day stay in Tokyo in case your checked baggage is lost.
3. Practice carrying all your packed luggage ahead of time.
4. You'll be walking a lot in Japan, so bring a good pair (or two) of walking shoes. Sizes are generally smaller than in the U.S.; larger-sized shoes may be especially difficult to find in Japan.
5. Keep in mind that, generally speaking, Japanese people tend to dress more conservatively than Americans.
6. Bring heavy socks, especially for the winter months.
7. Because of high summer humidity and the relatively few automatic dryers in Japan, bring clothes that dry easily and don't wrinkle badly.
8. Bring clothing appropriate to the climate in Japan. The climate may be very different from what you're used to. Summer could be hotter and winter could be colder than where you now live.
9. When in transit to Japan, always keep your passport, other important documents, and medication with you. Do not pack them in your checked luggage.
10. The U.S. State Department provides a great [traveler's checklist](#).

Clothes

- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
- 1 jacket
- 2 pairs of jeans
- 1 dress slacks/skirt
- 5 shirts (During hot season you may want enough spare shirts to change)
- 2 sweaters
- 1 pair slippers (must have for dorm)
- 2 pairs pajamas
- 5 pairs socks
- 5 sets underwear
- 1 pair gloves

Personal Items

- Eyeglasses (and spare)
- Contact lenses, solution (and spare)
- Medicine plus copy of prescription
- Toothbrush, paste
- Motion sickness pills (if needed)
- Travel mirror
- Cosmetics, deodorant
- Stationery, pens
- Shampoo, soap
- Hairbrush, comb

Travel Goodies

- Travel umbrella
- Travel first-aid kit
- Two-prong adapter for appliances
- Pictures, addresses, email of family, friends
- Gifts
- Camera and charger
- Good map of Tokyo
- Travel books on Japan
- Sturdy waterproof backpack
- Extra sheets (if staying in dorms)

Learning Tools

- English-Japanese dictionary
- Helpful textbook or study material you used in the past

Documents

- Passport (keep a copy separate from original)
- Traveler's checks (keep copy of check #s separate from checks)
- Airline tickets
- Picture ID (driver's license, student ID)
- Credit card #s, phone #s for lost card
- List of emergency contact #s
- Medical info (allergies, blood type, immunization history)

What is the voltage in Japan?

Electrical current in Japan is 100 volts. Most appliances made for the U.S., like hair dryers and electric shavers, will work in Japan, but at reduced efficiency. Appliance outlets accept flat, two-pin plugs similar to the U.S. and Canada. If you take a three-pronged appliance, bring along a two-prong adapter, or you can purchase those adapters in Japan at electric appliance shops.

Most U.S.-based electric clocks will not work well, since they time themselves against the frequency of the current: they will lose about 10 seconds per minute. Take along a battery-run clock instead.

See also [What should I bring to Japan?](#)

What are the luggage allowances for flights in Japan?

For international flights, the luggage allowances change very frequently. It's best to check with your airline. When you do, ask how long the allowances they give you are in effect.

You will also be allowed one carry-on that must fit under your airline seat. Keep in mind that you'll need to manage all your luggage by yourself while in Japan. Having someone at home send belongings can be very expensive and is not recommended—you'll only have to cart all that stuff back home. Try to pack only essentials, leaving enough room in your bags for gifts or souvenirs you'll purchase in Japan.

3. Getting There and Back

What are some direct flights to Tokyo?

For students using KCP-arranged housing, we ask you to arrive at Tokyo, Narita International Airport before 3:30 PM on the program start date. [Here are some direct flights to Tokyo, Narita](#) that arrive before 3:30 PM. This list is subject to change, but you may find it useful.

NOTE—

If you are attending for one semester or less, you can enter Japan as a temporary visitor without getting a visa. As a temporary visitor, buy a round-trip ticket. If you buy a one-way ticket instead, when you arrive in Japan your temporary visitor status will be much more difficult to obtain.

How does airport pickup happen?

KCP staff members will meet and pick up students who are living in KCP-arranged housing and who are on [flights that arrive at Narita airport](#) before 15:30/3:30 pm. There is no pickup for those who arrive at Haneda airport.

On landing at Narita, you proceed through immigration, collect your luggage, and pass through customs. When you come out to the arrival lobby, please head to the specific meeting point that the KCP student coordinator specified before you left the U.S. At the meeting point you should see a KCP sign and staffperson waiting for you, beginning at 13:00/1:00 pm and until 17:00/5:00 pm. If your flight is early in the morning and you reach the meeting point before that, please be patient and wait until staff and other students come to the meeting point.

If you can't find the meeting point in the arrival lobby, please call the number that you were given by the KCP student coordinator and get directions from the staff.

As in any airport, never leave your belongings unattended. If before you leave the U.S. you have a sudden delay or change of flight schedule, and you cannot reach Japan, please call the KCP USA office immediately.

Luggage Delivery

You won't have to carry all your luggage with you! When you meet KCP staff, they will help you arrange to send your luggage to your place of lodging, right from the airport. (Delivery of the first piece of luggage is free. There is a delivery cost for additional pieces of luggage.) That luggage won't be delivered until the next day, though, so please plan to:

- separate out what you need for the first night.
- carry fragile or valuable items with you. Don't pack them in the luggage you arrange to have delivered.

I will arrive early in Japan. Who needs to know this?

If you are planning to arrive early, no later than a month before program start, please give the KCP-Japan student coordinator your arrival flight information, lodging information, and contact number to reach you in Japan.

If you do not arrive on the scheduled airport pickup date, you are responsible for arranging your own local transportation and accommodation until the program begins. For a smooth check-in at school-arranged housing on the program arrival day, please arrange with the student coordinator well in advance. Unless previous arrangements have been made, it is your responsibility to be at KCP International Japanese Language School in time for the Japanese placement test and interviews.

If you plan to arrive early, consult your travel agency to arrange accommodations. Your program coordinator does not have the resources to pick up students at the airport before the scheduled arrival date or on an individual basis. If you have never traveled to Tokyo or Japan before and are uncomfortable with your survival Japanese, KCP highly recommends that you make every effort to arrive on the program start date. Best to do any independent travel after the program, when your Japanese will be a lot more fluent.

What if my flight schedule changes?

NOTE: You should choose a flight that arrives before 3:30 pm. Since flights are delayed sometimes, we suggest you plan to arrive as early in the day as you can.

NOTE: One month before program start, you'll receive information on airport pickup, housing and KCP contacts. Always keep KCP-USA & KCP-Japan contact information with you.

If you find out about a flight plan change well in advance, please email KCP-USA and KCP-Japan about the changes and if possible call both offices to describe the situation.

- provide the new flight schedule (flight number, arrival date and time).
- provide hostel/hotel contact information (if staying overnight).

If your flight plan changes due to bad weather, airline delays, and other conditions beyond your control, please tell us immediately.

For minor flight plan changes, we may still be able to pick you up at the airport, and we would like to do so if possible. However, you will likely have to hustle to get to the scheduled meeting location before the group typically leaves the airport. Please call KCP staff's number and follow the directions for arriving at the Narita airport meeting point.

It usually takes 1 hour after arrival to go through immigration and customs. The last KCP student group typically leaves the airport around 4:30–5 pm. If you miss that cutoff, contact KCP right away. You will be instructed, either to take the airport shuttle bus to a meeting point, or to stay at the airport hotel (or a nearby hotel) until the next morning. When you are up and ready to go, call us again for additional instructions.

If your flight changes its arrival day, we will email you the basic plan for your check-in. Depending on your housing location, we will provide directions on what transportation for you to take from the airport to our suggested meeting point.

If you are not staying in KCP-arranged housing, you won't receive airport pickup.

What are Narita Airport and the meeting place like?

[Narita International Airport](#) (NRT), also known as Tokyo Narita Airport, is about 40 miles east of central Tokyo. Narita is Japan's main international airport, handling about half of Japan's international passenger traffic. The airport serves as the international hub of both Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways. KCP has been using Narita as our primary airport pick-up spot since our first US partner affiliation back in 1996.

KCP's primary meeting point is Terminal 1 North Wing arrival lobby. We try and have KCP staff waiting there beginning 1–1:30 pm until the last group of the day joins us, usually around 4:30–5 pm. If you arrive in the North Wing of Terminal 1, you'll easily make your way out to the meeting point. If you arrive in the South Wing of Terminal 1, please walk to the North Wing meeting point at the arrival lobby. Those arriving in Terminal 2 will likely take a [free terminal connection bus](#) to Terminal 1.

It takes about 1 hour to get to central Tokyo using Skyliner, Narita Express, or high-speed bus ([see access map](#)), including transfers. We budget 2 hours once we leave the airport, to get checked into students' housing assignments. Staff leave the airport to take groups directly to their housing assignment periodically during the afternoon, with the final group leaving around 4:30pm–5pm.

Details about the meeting place, emergency contacts, course calendar, and housing (if arranged by KCP) are emailed to students 2–4 weeks prior to the program start date.

If a student arrives later than expected and misses the pickup, we have the student arrange to stay at a nearby hotel. This does occur sometimes, especially if there are last-minute flight delays. Eighteen-year-olds are allowed to reserve hotel rooms on their own.

What if I arrive very late and need to get a hotel at the airport?

If you arrive late, be sure to call your KCP coordinator in Tokyo as soon as possible. It's common for students arriving quite late, especially if due to a last-minute flight delay, to stay at an airport near the airport. Foreign students of age 18 and older are allowed to reserve hotel rooms themselves.

Many students have used the [9h Capsule Hotel](#) right inside the airport—no need for taxi or public transportation.

More options: [Tokyo-Narita hotels](#) (TripAdvisor)

What time of day is best for my return flight to the U.S.?

You can fly out any time you want. Later in the day is better, since the day before you fly, you will have your final exam, an informal farewell party, and perhaps other celebrations. For this international flight, be sure to arrive at the airport 2–3 hours ahead.

Note that KCP will not be accompanying you to the airport. If you have several pieces of luggage, you can take an airporter shuttle, muscle your luggage along on public transportation, or arrange ahead, with the KCP student coordinator, for a luggage delivery service.

What is the return flight process?

You are responsible to get to the airport; transportation or delivery fees are not provided by KCP, but we do have complete information about how to get to Narita Airport. Be sure to confirm your international flight at least 48 hours before departure. If you do not want to carry your luggage to the airport, Green Port Agency (0476-32-4755), JAL ABC (0120-919-120) and QL Liner (0476-35-2855) operate luggage delivery services from anywhere in Tokyo to Narita Airport.

Be sure to pack valuables, medications, and important documents like your passport in your carry-on luggage. Keep enough clothes and toiletries in your carry-on to last the remaining few days. If you won't be home when the delivery service comes to pick up your luggage, drop it off at a local convenience store that offers this service. Your luggage will be waiting for you at the agency counter on the departure floor at Narita on your departure date.

Narita Airport requires that you pay a departure tax for any international travel. Usually it is included in the airline ticket fee, but if you're not sure, check with your travel agency or the airline.

To get yourself to Narita, you have several transportation options. Prices range from ¥1300 to ¥3500 if you are to travel from Shinjuku as example. Please also ask your KCP student coordinator for more information.

[JR East website](#)

[Airport limousine bus](#)

[List of airline phone numbers](#)

4. Adjusting

Will it be easy for me to adjust to life in Japan?

Expect to experience culture shock when you arrive in Japan. It is a completely normal reaction to an unfamiliar environment. Culture shock is personal; each individual may experience it differently. Likewise, effective ways to deal with culture shock may differ from one student to another. Here are the general stages most people experience when encountering a new culture.

Anticipation

In this early stage, you are busy with preparations and farewells. You are also preoccupied with thoughts of the host culture and how you will adjust.

Arrival

A time filled with excitement, expectations, and vivid initial impressions.

Culture Shock

After some time, the novelty of being in a new place wears off. You may experience mental fatigue, irritability, isolation, and frustration in coping with the language barrier and cultural differences.

Adjustment

As the culture becomes more familiar, you begin to settle into your new environment and establish friendships. Your language ability improves, and you feel more confident.

Integration

You become comfortable with the culture. You feel at home and accepted.

Return Anxiety

Just as you are finally settled, you must prepare to leave your new friends. You realize how much you have changed and wonder if people at home will understand these changes.

Re-entry Shock

You are expected to return to your previous role, but you are not the same person. Your family and friends may not fully understand your experiences nor share your enthusiasm.

How do I cope with culture shock?

Although you can't avoid culture shock, the more you can prepare yourself for it, the less traumatic the transition will be. Here are suggestions for dealing with culture shock.

- Acknowledge your symptoms. Dealing with them as they arise helps you adjust much more quickly. Ignoring your symptoms doesn't make them go away.
- Don't try to cope with your feelings all alone. Find someone to talk to who can sympathize with what you are going through. Fellow student participants may be experiencing similar things. Use this opportunity to make friends and share your feelings.
- While it is normal to experience negative feelings like frustration, irritability, anger, and loneliness, you need to find an outlet for these feelings. Writing or calling home, keeping a journal, getting exercise, or listening to your favorite music are some ways to cope.
- Try to leave behind preconceived ideas about the culture, and instead observe with an open mind. Don't rate Japanese customs as better or worse than your own, but try to accept them as equally valid.
- Pay attention to your physical health. You are better able to cope with each day's challenges if you get enough sleep, eat right, and get regular exercise.
- Keep your sense of humor, especially when you make an embarrassing mistake. It eases the tension for everyone involved.
- Be prepared to encounter some Japanese people who may have negative stereotypes about you as a foreigner. As they get to know you, they will see you are different from these stereotypes.
- Resolve personal or family problems before leaving. This allows you to focus all your energy on your studies and adapting to a new culture.
- Talk to others who have recently visited Japan to get their insights on adjusting to the culture.
- Become informed. Learn as much as possible about the Japanese culture and current events before arriving in Japan.

See also [Will it be easy for me to adjust to life in Japan?](#)

The Ugly American

A classic opinion of thoughtful American travelers is that, because of the indiscretion of a few boorish tourists, many people around the world consider Americans abroad as rude, offensive, ignorant or uncaring of others' customs. The stereotypical Ugly American expects to be served; believes that home is always better; has a constant need to express how Americans would do it—usually better; is loud and impatient; complains about inconveniences; and is wasteful and careless of money, material objects, energy, and the environment.

To avoid being an Ugly American (and to dispel the myth), respect patterns of polite behavior that may be new to you. Observe those around you; ask questions. Find a trusted person who can explain things to you. Above all, don't complain—this habit endears you to no one.

See also [Any phone etiquette I should know?](#)

If I'm struggling, what do I do?

If you have existing issues, tell KCP-USA immediately; don't wait until you are in Japan. While still in the States, arrange an action plan for emergencies that includes how to reach your practitioner, family, and student coordinator, and share it with all involved.

If you have a problem while in the program—drugs, alcohol, sexual harassment, anxiety, depression, eating disorder, and so on—KCP coordinators and their staff are available. Go to them right away and explain the problem. It will remain confidential. They will be able to assist you.

If needed, you will be referred to competent professionals. Unlike in the U.S., there are no support services of this nature on campuses abroad, so you are financially responsible for any treatment. The cost tends to be less expensive than in the U.S., and your health insurance may cover it.

5. Daily Logistics

How do I exchange and spend money in Japan?

The Japanese unit of money is called Yen. Yen coins are ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100, and ¥500. Bills are ¥1000, ¥2000, ¥5000, and ¥10,000. Very roughly, one U.S. dollar is worth almost 100 yen. Of course, exchange rates fluctuate.

If you do not already have Japanese Yen, visit the money exchange counter before leaving Narita airport and change about \$300 US.

Exchange rates fluctuate nonstop, but usually you'll get a better rate in the country itself. Banks (or your own credit cards) tend to give the best exchange rate.

Debit cards are probably the best way of exchanging money. Students are encouraged to bring both a credit card and a debit card with them to Japan. While Japan's international ATMs are compatible with most processing agents, it is best if your debit card has a Visa or MasterCard logo on the front of it.

International ATMs are available at many 7-Eleven's in Japan. A very convenient station is the ATM at the post office near the school. ATM fees in Japan are very reasonable, usually less than what most foreign banks will charge you.

A few precautions:

- Credit cards are convenient, but scams happen all over the world. Use care and discretion when using your card.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash, but we suggest that you keep some cash securely in your room for unexpected situations when your card is lost or doesn't work.
- Students typically withdraw about \$300 USD worth of Yen per ATM visit. They usually do this a few times during their stay in Japan.

Click [here](#) for more information about ATMs in Japan.

What time is it in Japan?

In Japan, time is measured on a 24-hour clock, 9 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. To convert the 24-hour clock to our 12-hour clock, simply subtract 12 hours for times after noon (12:00). For example, 20:00 becomes 8:00 pm.

Daylight savings time is not observed in Japan.

To see what time it is right now in Japan (or to calculate the time difference between two locations), [see World Clock](#).

What is commuting like in Tokyo?

The most convenient method for you to get around Tokyo is through the metro subways and trains. Buses tend to be more expensive and slower than trains. Taxis can get very expensive—minimum fee is around ¥ 730.

Japan Railway Company

Tokyo is a dense network of subways, trains, and bus lines operated by several companies. The trains operated by JR East are convenient for central Tokyo. The city's most famous train line is the JR Yamanote Line that connects the city's centers.

Tokyo has 13 subway lines operated by two companies. These lines run around the Yamanote circle and areas around Shitamachi and Ginza. Many of the suburban train lines start at Yamanote Line, which is made up of six major stations—Ueno, Tokyo, Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, Shinagawa, and Shibuya.

The Subways

The city's subway network is managed by two companies—Tokyo Metro with nine lines and Toei Subways with four. Together, these subways cover central Tokyo and are concentrated on the Yamanote circle, Ginza, and Shitamachi. At terminal stations, trains of other subway lines still operate on the tracks run by other companies on train lines. For instance, you may see trains on the Hibiya Subway Line that run on the tracks of the Toyoko Line in the Nakameguro Station.

Other Railways

Besides JR East and the two subway companies, several other railways connect Tokyo with the outer towns and prefectures. Their lines usually begin at the JR Yamamote Line. Most of the private railway firms also manage department stores at their major train stations.

- Tokyo Railways—Kanagawa and Southwestern Tokyo
- Tobu Railways—Tochigi and Saitama
- Seibu Railways—Saitama and Tokyo Tama Region
- Keisei Railways—Chiba
- Odakyu Railways—Kanagawa
- Tsukuba Railways—Ibaraki
- Keio Railways—Tokyo Tama Region

As mentioned above, there are a lot of railways, and transfer is complicated at first.

You can check in advance how to get to your destination by using this [Japanese Transit Planner](#).

See [What is the train ticket system like in Tokyo?](#)

See [What is a PASMO or Suica card?](#)

See [Maps](#).

Useful Words For Commuting

切符 (kippu) = (train or subway) ticket

電車 (densha) = train

地下鉄 (chikatetsu) = Subway, Underground, Metro

定期券 (teikiken) = commuter ticket

乗り換え (norikae) = transfer

How will I get from my lodging to school? How long is the commute?

Setting Up Your Transport

If your lodging is arranged by KCP (dorm or homestay), on your arrival day at the airport you'll receive a pass for transport between your lodging and school. KCP staff will tell you how to travel to KCP from your lodging. You can use the pass or coupons the very next day to go to KCP. If you receive coupons at the airport, KCP staff will give you a train allowance before you use up the coupons. If you wish to take a different route to school, you are responsible for the difference in the transportation fare.

To greatly ease the logistics of paying for your daily transportation, consider getting a rechargeable [PASMO or Suica card](#).

Each month, your student coordinator will give you the money to extend your commute resources for another month. Many students obtain rechargeable PASMO or Suica smart cards, which they can use for train travel, bus travel, and even shopping. Then at the train station they transfer the monthly KCP train pass to their smart card. It's not hard to do, and KCP staff can explain the process to you.

- Make sure you bring the KCP pass with you when you go to extend.
- Long term students with a student visa can apply for a student discount for their commute. You can fill out an application form and receive the document at the KCP office.

If you lose your pass or your PASMO/Suica card, you are responsible for replacing it. If you change your housing, you are responsible for your own local transportation.

NOTE: Students not enrolled in housing through KCP (course-only program) are responsible for their own transportation.

The Commute

Be ready for a longer commute than you may be used to. The average commute for a businessperson in Tokyo is 1½ hours each way. KCP tries to find suitable host families and dormitory complexes within a 1-hour commute from the school.

Try to stay positive, as the commute is a great opportunity to practice memorizing your vocabulary and kanji, to people watch, or explore other locations on your commute path without any additional transportation cost.

See [What is commuting like in Tokyo?](#)

How do I contact my family and friends while I'm in Japan?

The short answer is: (1) [LINE](#), [Skype](#), or [Viber](#), via wi-fi; (2) texting, via wi-fi or phone; (3) emailing, or (4) calling them.

The advantages to email are obvious—it's efficient, fast, cheap, easy, and spans time zones nicely. But do keep in mind that you are going abroad to immerse yourself in a new culture. Daily emailing with people back home can hinder your adjustment process. Of course, email is still an option for occasional or important communications.

Students have access to computers at KCP 2F—Library, and the entire building has wi-fi.

The options for phone, text, and wi-fi use are changing fast. Be sure to check in with KCP staff or students who've been at KCP for a while.

See [Is there any phone planning I need to do?](#)

Data SIM Card

If your cell phone is NOT SIM-locked (can install another company's SIM card) and you can make monthly payments by credit card, you can use a "data SIM card" that you can purchase at major electronic stores in Japan.

These data SIM cards are usually for Internet use only, but some data SIM cards support both Internet and phone, or Internet and SMS (text). For more on this, search Wikipedia: SIM lock and other topics.

There are many kinds of data SIM cards (including sizes, like regular, micro, nano), so it's best to shop for one after you arrive. Unlimited convenience use types are usually expensive. Cheaper ones often have a monthly maximum

data limit; once you use it up, your connection reverts for the rest of the month to the slowest speed.

With a wi-fi connection, you can also use LINE (most popular in Japan), Skype, Viber, or other phone applications. These give you a Japanese phone number to call through an Internet connection. That way you can have both a phone number (usable via wi-fi only) and a data SIM card.

You can buy Internet-data-only SIMs at shops, but if you register online you can usually start using the service that same day. When you buy a data SIM card at a shop that includes regular phone service (and a phone number), it may not come in the mail to you until several days later. Most students are okay with the Internet data only SIMS.

SIM-Free Phone

If your own phone is SIM-locked and you still want to use the third-party SIM options above, purchasing a SIM-free (not locked) phone model in a shop can be an option. You can buy these phones in major electronic shops in Japan such as in Shinjuku's Yodobashi Camera.

Prepaid Phones

Most students don't use prepaid phones, since they are not smart phones and need monthly prepaids. If needed you can purchase a pre-paid cell phone at the airport. Softbank (the only prepaid phones sold in Japan) are available there.

Wi-Fi Rental

Rental wi-fi, or pocket wi-fi, is usually more expensive, but people without SIM-unlocked phones who still want constant internet phone access may find it useful. It's helpful to arrange it in advance: you can have the company send the wi-fi transmitter to your Japanese address or to KCP. You can rent a wi-fi router from companies like wifi-honpo.

Contract

Except for the Softbank prepaid phone, if you run over in a month, your contract may charge you extra. If you wish to make a contract for a data SIM card or Wi-Fi service, check first whether it is unlimited or a monthly fixed price so that you won't be charged more later if you run over.

Pay Phones

As in the U.S., most people have cell phones these days. However, after the recent earthquakes, there is a concerted effort to keep some [pay phones](#) in public places.

What's Japan's transportation system like?

Tokyo features one of the most extensive metropolitan transit systems in the world. It consists of Japan Rail (JR) and private train operators, numerous subway systems, and bus service. However, be prepared for a long commute. It is not uncommon for a business person to commute for two to four hours round trip each day.

KCP will try to find host families and dormitories as close to the KCP campus as possible, but finding good host families is difficult. It is not always possible to find host families in downtown Tokyo.

The massive web of public transportation may seem overwhelming at first. In time, however, you will become accustomed to it and feel confident traveling anywhere in Tokyo. Most participants of this program quickly learn to explore Tokyo and its surrounding areas like a native!

The Train System

Japan has an extensive rail system for access to all areas of the country. Trains are frequent and punctual. Subways and trains are relatively inexpensive, usually have some maps and signs in English, and are quite regular. Timetables differ by line, though none run 24 hours. The subway usually departs every 5–10 minutes. Trains are **always** on time.

Japan has quite a few different train lines—a web of lines, really. There are too many to list here, but getting a map of the system will really help you. Detailed maps are available at KCP, train stations, Narita Airport, and tourist bureaus. Also, you can find phone apps for the train system: just search on “tokyo subway maps”. Once you are more fluent in Japanese, you can find Japanese-language apps like EKISPERT. Try the apps you like—and let us know what you think of them!

Other Modes of Transport

Bus service is readily available within Tokyo and between Tokyo and other major Japanese cities. Ferries provide economical transportation to Japan's many islands. Taxis are readily available but very expensive, particularly late at night.

NOTE: In a taxi, the door you enter and exit from opens and closes automatically.

Driving

In Japan, drivers drive on the **left** side of the road, not the right side. Be aware of this when walking on and crossing roads. KCP does not allow students to drive in Japan.

Hitchhiking

Do not hitchhike. It is not a common practice in Japan, and it can be dangerous.

Transportation Pass

Those who stay at school-arranged housing receive a transportation allowance to cover your regular class commute. It is provided during your first few days at KCP.

What kind of gift do I give my host family?

[Gift-giving](#) is an especially meaningful part of Japanese society. Nearly every major train station is lined with gift shops, and entire floors in mega-department stores display only gifts. Business people send gifts to their bosses twice a year, a tradition called Ochugen Oseibo. They do this in late summer and during the New Year holiday.

When visiting a Japanese home, offer a gift to show your appreciation. If you are staying with a host family, bring something from your home country to present to your host family.

Offering a small gift is not only highly appropriate; it's also a great way to share some of the good little things in your life. To keep this custom from becoming a financial burden, select a few small gifts suggestive of your home country to give as occasions arise. Consider small unbreakable items like a regional picture book, non-perishable candy, stationery, coffee beans, pins, perfume, or cosmetics.

You may want to bring a special gift for your host family. You may even want to bring ingredients for your favorite meal (or at least the recipe) and offer to cook for your host family once or twice during your stay.

NOTE: Measurements in Japan are metric, so for ease of use, convert the measures in your recipe to metric. Here's a [metric converter](#). Also, Japanese homes may not have ovens, or the oven may be very small.

Be sure to wrap all gifts. Presentation in Japan is often almost as important as the gift itself.

Can I work while studying at KCP?

Japan considers foreign students as being in Japan for the purpose of studying at school, and not for working in a paid job. If you reside in Japan as a college student and still wish to take a paid part-time job, you must obtain an official permission called shikakugai katsudo kyoka (Permit to Engage in Activity other than that Permitted

by the Status of Residence Previously Granted) from the nearest regional immigration bureau. If your permit is granted, you must ensure that paid work does not interfere with your schoolwork, which is your primary purpose for being in Japan.

See [Finding Part-time work](#).

Can I vote while abroad?

If an election is scheduled to occur while you are in Japan, you can arrange to vote by mail-in ballot through your U.S. county election office. Be sure to set this up before leaving. If you are from a country other than the U.S., check with your local agency governing elections for absentee voting procedures before you leave.

6. Safety

In an emergency, who do I call?

EMERGENCY—DIAL 110

If you are involved in or witness a crime, accident, or other police matter, connect to the 24-hour police department by dialing 110. Give the operator your name and explain what happened and where it happened. You may also contact one of the many local koban (mini-police stations) throughout Tokyo. Most neighborhoods have koban, where police handle a wide range of activities, including patrolling neighborhoods, filling out reports, tracking lost and found items, and giving directions.

FIRE/AMBULANCE—DIAL 119

To report an injury, fire, or severe sickness, dial 119 for the 24-hour fire department. Give the operator your name and explain the nature of the emergency and the location.

NOTE: 110 and 119 have English-speaking staff and are available 24 hours.

Other Important Phone Numbers

U.S. Embassy: 03-3224-5000

Tokyo English Life Line: 03-5774-0992 (M–Sat 9–4/16:00, 7–11/19–23:00)

Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center: 03-5285-8181

Emergency Translation Hotline: 03-5285-8185 (languages: English/Chinese/Korean/Thai/Spanish)

How to Make an Emergency Call:

Speak clearly and slowly.

If possible, enlist the aid of a Japanese speaker in placing the call. If the operator doesn't understand English, these phrases will be helpful.

Kyukyusha o yonde kudasai. (Please send an ambulance.)

Kaji desu. (There is a fire.)

Keikan o yonde kudasai. (Please send a policeman.)

Watashi no namae wa ----- desu. (My name is -----.)

Watashi no jusho wa ----- desu. (My address is -----.)

Watashi no denwa bango wa ----- ban desu. (My phone number is -----.)

Does KCP hold earthquake drills?

Japan, an archipelago of 6,852 islands, is situated on the convergence of many oceanic and continental plates in the Pacific Ocean. Japan is rich in natural resources. An abundance of volcanoes means lots of hot springs to enjoy all around the country. And along with volcanoes come earthquakes.

It is useful to know that the Japanese use the shindo scale to measure the seismic activity or degree of shaking in an earthquake rather than the Richter magnitude scale, which determines the energy being released by the earthquake.

We hold an evacuation drill every semester. Please take it seriously.

During an earthquake:

- Stay calm.
- Crawl under a sturdy table or brace yourself in a door jamb.
- When you feel the first shock, immediately turn off any flame or heat source that could cause a fire. Also, open a door or window to secure an exit.
- Keep away from windows; don't use elevators.
- In a large store, theater, or other building, follow the employees.
- If you are outside, get to an open area, but avoid driving.

Afterwards:

- Confirm the situation.
- Give first aid.
- Be prepared for aftershocks.

What precautions should I take while traveling in Japan?

Grow your spidey sense.

For a truly fun and safe trip, think ahead about what you might do if a problem develops. That way you are prepared even for unlikely contingencies.

Say where you're going.

When you're going out, tell your plans to your host family, dorm staff, or friends. If nobody is around, at least leave a note. For overnight or longer, include the name, address, and phone number of your destination. For three days or more, make sure the student coordinators at KCP have your itinerary.

Don't travel alone.

On an extended trip, it's safer (and more enjoyable) to travel with companions. Plan in advance for long travel, hotel stays, and so on.

Develop street smarts.

In a large city you need to be more aware of your behavior on the street than in small towns or campuses. Be careful in unfamiliar environments. For example:

- Ask questions of "safe" persons: shopkeepers, officials, students, or adults with small children.
- Don't put valuables in your backpack. Use a money belt or waist pack (with pouch in front) instead.
- Keep a low profile and stay alert. Avoid risky areas.
- Dress conservatively.
- Don't stay out alone at night in unfamiliar territory.
- Don't be overly friendly with strangers.
- If you are whistled at or receive verbal compliments on the street, try not to take offense. Just move on quickly.
- If your intuition tells you a situation is dangerous, you're probably right. Act as if it is, and protect yourself.

Don't look for trouble.

If trouble develops on the streets, resist your curiosity and head in the other direction immediately.

Keep informed.

Embassy bulletins, frequently updated, are posted on the main bulletin board. These tell about any current security issues. Be sure to check them.

Guard your passport.

While in Japan, you must always carry either your passport or a foreign registration card as your official I.D. at all times. But don't give up your passport to other people.

If you like, you can register with the U.S. Embassy's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program ([STEP](#)).

Fire prevention tips:

- When you leave a room, turn off all air conditioning and heating units. This saves energy and prevents fire. If a unit is located in your room, remember to turn it off before you go to bed.
- Don't put anything burnable (such as laundry) near heating units.
- Never smoke in bed or in any place that does not have an ash tray.

7. After KCP

Can I extend my stay in Japan?

For travel to Japan, it's always best to plan your entire itinerary ahead of time. If you think there's a chance you might study or travel beyond the 90-day allowance, we strongly suggest you apply for a [long-term visa](#) rather than leave your re-entry to chance.

We do have many students who attend one term and want to continue for another term. Since these students are typically on a tourist or short-term visa, they are allowed only 90 days in Japan. They will have to change their return ticket from Japan and purchase a round trip ticket to a nearby Asian country, such as South Korea. They spend a few days sightseeing, maybe visiting fellow classmates' homes, and return to Japan for another term or 90 days. In the past, students have done this multiple times, but recently the Japanese government has become more strict with this kind of behavior and is refusing entry or issuing warnings to students doing this more than once. We have never had a student denied reentry to Japan for doing this once.

Although I look forward to going back home, I will miss Japan and KCP. Any advice to ease the transition?

Coming back home may be very challenging. You'll be leaving Japan just when you're getting used to your new surroundings. You will have had many new experiences and will have gained new perceptions about Japan, America, or your home country. Your time in Japan is a very personal experience that many of your friends at home may not be able to understand or even seem to care about.

You may find it hard to relate to friends or to the latest trends and happenings. This may be frustrating at first. You may begin to question your own country, re-evaluating what many Americans simply take for granted. You will have become a member of a small group of people who have had the opportunity to live and study abroad.

To help ease this transition, plan your return early. Discuss re-entry into classes with your advisor.

When you get home, consider reaching out to international groups on campus, and visit your study abroad office to find out ways of participating in Japan-related or international events on campus or in the greater community.

Find other students who have lived overseas. They'll understand more easily what you're going through and relate to your feelings. You will have gained a greater understanding of the Japanese culture, while at the same time seeing your own culture from a different perspective. You will also have a very good idea about what other foreign students feel when they study in America.

We at KCP encourage you to write to us and let us know how you are doing. We wish you the very best!

1. Setting Up

[Do I need to know some Japanese before I study at KCP?](#)

[What types of housing are available to me?](#)

[What travel documents do I need to study at KCP?](#)

[What general health planning should I do before I leave?](#)

[What types of medicine can I take to Japan?](#)

[Is there any phone planning I need to do?](#)

[What cash plans should I make before I leave?](#)

[I can't wait to go to KCP In Japan. What are Shinjuku and Tokyo like?](#)

[Do you have any maps of the KCP area and Japan?](#)

2. Packing

[What should I bring to Japan?](#)

[What is the voltage in Japan?](#)

[What are the luggage allowances for flights in Japan?](#)

3. Getting There and Back

[What are some direct flights to Tokyo?](#)

[How does airport pickup happen?](#)

[I will arrive early in Japan. Who needs to know this?](#)

[What if my flight schedule changes?](#)

[What are Narita Airport and the meeting place like?](#)

[What if I arrive very late and need to get a hotel at the airport?](#)

[What time of day is best for my return flight to the U.S.?](#)

[What is the return flight process?](#)

4. Adjusting

[Will it be easy for me to adjust to life in Japan?](#)

[How do I cope with culture shock?](#)

[If I'm struggling, what do I do?](#)

5. Daily Logistics

[How do I exchange and spend money in Japan?](#)

[What time is it in Japan?](#)

[What is commuting like in Tokyo?](#)

[How will I get from my lodging to school? How long is the commute?](#)

[How do I contact my family and friends while I'm in Japan?](#)

[What's Japan's transportation system like?](#)

[What kind of gift do I give my host family?](#)

[Can I work while studying at KCP?](#)

[Can I vote while abroad?](#)

6. Safety

[In an emergency, who do I call?](#)

[Does KCP hold earthquake drills?](#)

[What precautions should I take while traveling in Japan?](#)

7. After KCP

[Can I extend my stay in Japan?](#)

[Although I look forward to going back home, I will miss Japan and KCP. Any advice to ease the transition?](#)