

JAPAN

SCHOOL GUIDE



How to Plan the Perfect Student Trip to Japan Brought to you by Evolve Tours

Welcome! Evolve Tours has designed this guide as a helpful resource for those interested in organizing a trip for their students to Japan. In the following pages, you'll discover how to decide on the type of trip for you, the right destination, some of the activities your students can enjoy throughout Japan, where to sleep, where to eat, an explanation of travel insurance, travel tips and more! Our goal is to make the trip planning process as seamless and as stress free for you and your colleagues as possible.

Why should my student group visit Japan?

A trip to Japan can be a great way for secondary classes to experience travel, discover art, and learn about Japanese history and culture. Students will get the chance to visit some of the most fascinating cities in the world. It is perfect for any high school age group to specific class groups focusing on art or history class trips.

As Japan has so much to offer, the best first step is to determine the intended focus of the trip. For example

Educational Student Trip- Curriculum-related activities that bring to life the subjects of the classroom.

Outdoor Adventure- Do you want your students to experience both ancient history, and outdoor activities? Japan's numerous Mountains has all your hiking and stunning view needs!

Arts – Fill your itinerary with museum and gallery visits, theatre performances, live music and more.

Mixed focus – A balance of educational activities, outdoor activities, and entertainment.



What time of the year should my student group visit Japan?

The busiest time of year for student trips to Japan is towards the mid to the end of the school year, in February, March, and April. Many schools consider this as the March break trip for their high school students, and therefore run the trip during these months. Most Japan trips are 10 to 14 days long, though trip length varies depending on distance from the school and activities planned. Japan typically has spring weather during this time period as well, allowing the potential to walk between destinations around the downtown area.

Click here for some more information on Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima, and Tokyo weather:

<https://weatherspark.com/averages/33168/Izumisano-Osaka-Prefecture-Japan>

<https://weatherspark.com/averages/33224/Iwakuni-Yamaguchi-Prefecture-Japan>

<https://weatherspark.com/averages/33260/Ota-Tokyo-Japan>

What are the Best Student-Friendly Activities in Japan?

Check out this list of Evolve Tour's favourite and most popular activities for school groups

Tokyo Sky Tree- Tokyo- visit the highest tower in the world, to enjoy a stunning night view of Tokyo from 450 meters above. Weather permitting, you will be able to enjoy 360-degree panoramic view to distances of over 75km away. <http://www.tokyo-skytree.jp/en/>



Tokyo Trick Art Museum- Tokyo- where you will become part of the paintings in an interactive and fun experience. By posing in front of the artwork, students can make the illusions come to life. <http://www.trickart.info/>

Miraikan National Museum of Emerging Science & Innovation- Tokyo- discover all of the innovative scientific devices and exhibitions. <https://www.miraikan.jst.go.jp/en/>

Edo-Tokyo Museum – Tokyo- you can experience the life of merchants, samurai culture, and lifestyle from the Edo period, when Tokugawa Shogunate governed Japan in between the 17th to 19th century. <https://www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp/en/>

Kokugikan Sumo Stadium – Tokyo- have a chance to learn about one of the most famous sports that originated from Japan, Sumo wrestling! If you are lucky, you may also see some sumo events. <http://www.sumo.or.jp/en/>

Tokyo Memorial Hall – Tokyo- will take you back in time to the Second World War, to learn about the war from a different perspective. It commemorates the two great disasters, dedicated to the victims of the great Kanto Earthquake and to the victims of the WW II bombings. <http://www.jsjapan.com/archives/231>



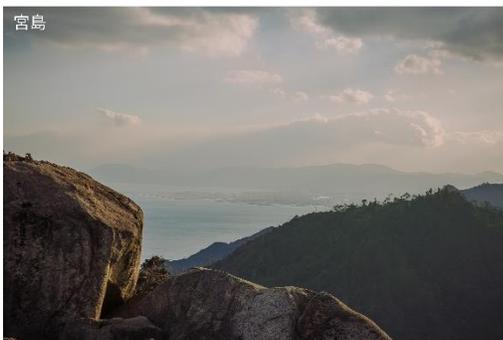
The **Kyu-Yasuda Teien Garden- Tokyo**, which has a pond in the shape of the Japanese kanji "kokoro", meaning "heart". This beautiful garden was designed in the Meiji Period style, beginning as a Samurai Residence and being transformed into its final state in 1927.

<http://www.japanvisitor.com/japan-parks-gardens/kyu-yasuda-teien-tokyo>

Ueno Park – Tokyo- where you will find Japan’s famous **cherry blossom** trees, which are an incredibly beautiful sight that millions of people travel from all over the world to witness. Blossoms are only in bloom for a brief two-week window, but typically this happens in early April. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3019.html>

Ueno Zoo- Tokyo- Japan’s oldest zoo which opened in 1882. Among the animals that live here, the most popular residents are the giant panda bears from China.

Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum- Hiroshima- Learn about the events of the atomic bombing that occurred in the area during World War II. Browse the exhibits, which also focus on the elimination of nuclear warfare, and promotes world peace. http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index_e2.html



Miyajima – Hiroshima - a small island located just off the coast of Hiroshima, and ranked one of Japan’s three best scenic spots. Wander along the walking trails on the “Island of Gods”, see wild deer and visit the Itsukushima Shrine. This Shrine is a UNESCO site and the most famous highlight on the island. <http://visit-miyajima-japan.com/en/>

Osaka Castle- Osaka- started in 1583 on the former site of the Ishiyama Honganji Temple, which had been destroyed by Oda Nobunaga thirteen years earlier. Toyotomi Hideyoshi intended the castle to become the center of a new, unified Japan under Toyotomi rule. It was the largest castle in the territory at the time. <http://www.osakacastle.net/english/>

Minoh Park- Osaka - This park is famous for its hiking road and waterfall. Here you can enjoy the best tree colours in the Western region of Japan along the way. <http://www.minohfalls.com/en/>

Instant Ramen Museum – Osaka - Here we will have the opportunity to create an original and completely unique instant noodle cup from over 5,400 options of ingredients. We will even be able to customize the design of the cup itself, and bring home our master creation to enjoy later. After we are done making our

very own ramen cup, we will go to the **Chicken Ramen Factory** to make some noodles from scratch. <https://www.tofugu.com/travel/momofuku-ando-instant-ramen-museum/>

Kyoto International Manga Museum- Kyoto- Learn the history of Manga and see the collection of approximately 50,000 publications, starting from the 1970s and going right up to the present day. <http://www.kyotomm.jp/english/>

Kiyomizu-dera – Kyoto- one of the most celebrated temples of Japan. Founded in 780 on the site of the Otowa Waterfall in the wooded hills just east of Kyoto, and derives its name from the fall's pure waters. In 1994 it became a world heritage site by UNESCO. <http://www.kiyomizudera.or.jp/en/>

Kinkakuji Temple- Kyoto- is a Zen temple in northern Kyoto whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Kinkakuji is an impressive structure built overlooking a large pond, and is the only building left from shogun Yoshimitsu. <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/spot/shritemp/kinkakuji.html>

Arashiyama Bamboo grove – Kyoto- walk along the paths through towering bamboo stalks that seem to continue on endlessly. Make sure to bring your camera too, as this is one of Kyoto's most photographed locations for good reason. <http://www.insidekyoto.com/arashiyama-bamboo-grove>



Nijo Castle – Kyoto- one of the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto, and an UNESCO World Heritage Site. The castle was originally built in 1603 as the residence of the first shogun of the Edo Period, and is considering some of the best surviving castle palace architecture in Japan. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3918.html>

Fushimi-Inari-Taisha Shrine- Kyoto- This massive complex consists of five shrines and is spread across the wooded hills of Inari-San Mountain. This is the head shrine for approximately 40,000 Inari shrines that can be found across Japan. http://kyoto.travel/en/shrine_temple/180

Gion Corner- Kyoto- an evening performance of traditional Japanese arts, including a tea ceremony, music, dance and theatre. <http://kyoto.travel/en/thingstodo/entertainment/106>

For more information about all of the above attractions and more, visit:

List of Japan's Museums: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2428.html>
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan#interests>

Lonely Planet's 'Top Experiences in Japan':
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan#experiences>

Should I work with a travel company?

Our next step is deciding whether you will plan the trip on your own, or use the help of a student travel provider. Some teachers are used to planning the trip themselves, but many enjoy the less stressful and



time consuming route of hiring a travel company that will expertly take care of all the pre-trip planning. To make the decision easier, we've made some comparison charts, comparing the pros and cons of doing a trip on your own vs. with a tour provider.

ON YOUR OWN

Pros	Cons
✓ Cheaper	✗ A lot of stressful planning. Organizing the hotels, transportation, meals, activities and more.
✓ Plan exactly what you want, without sticking to a schedule	✗ Missing out on professional, time-tested itineraries.
	✗ No on-ground tour director with local knowledge who oversees the trip.

WITH A TOUR COMPANY

Pros	Cons
✓ Having a guide(s) with local knowledge. As with any form of travel, whether it be museum hopping or outdoor activities, you're bound to learn more, gain a greater understanding of the local community, and just get more out of the whole experience when following a knowledgeable expert.	✗ Set itinerary: although some travel companies like Evolve Tours are flexible and dedicated to customizing their trips, many others offer no customization.
✓ Safety and Security- A travel provider will ensure all supplier companies (restaurants, hotels, activities) are safe, reputable and provide quality services. As well, emergency protocols and first-aid trained tour staff.	
✓ No details to worry about! You're free to focus fully on the ride, and have someone else sweat over the small, yet paramount details.	✗ Generally, planning with a tour company is more expensive than doing it on your own.
✓ Allergy, food restrictions communicated to all the suppliers (hotels, restaurants and activities)	
✓ Group rates on transportation and accommodation since they work with suppliers year round with many student groups	
✓ Years of expertise	

How to choose the perfect student travel company

(Adapted from "How to Choose a Reputable Adventure Travel Company or Guide" at <http://gadling.com/2011/08/05/a-guide-to-choosing-adventure-travel-companies-and-guides/>)



There are many student travel companies that run Japan; not all are created equal. There are some key things you should look for when choosing a company to plan and run your student trip. Here are tips on what to look for or avoid when choosing a company or guide.

Reputation and Safety

Even a brief online search will bring to light any serious breaches in safety or conduct. Safety doesn't just apply to those who plan to scale the Andes or kayak the Zambezi. Even the tamest "adventures" require guides who are knowledgeable about the area and activity. Make sure you have someone on hand that is currently certified in emergency first aid and rescue procedures. Ensure that the company has emergency protocols and risk management policies in place and that they truly value safety over all else.

Client Communication

How clear and accurate is the company's literature or website? How long does it take them to respond to your emails or phone calls? A few days is standard, but if you find yourself having to follow up repeatedly, move on. A reputable travel company will detail exactly what is included and what is not for the price. All services should be clearly spelled out and agreed upon.

Customized Itineraries

A legitimate student travel provider will have trip itineraries that they have successfully run time and time again. They know what works and developed what they believe to be a flawless itinerary. However, there is a big plus when finding a travel company who is flexible with their itineraries. Find someone who will work with you to create the best possible custom itinerary for your group's needs.

Guide qualifications

Are their guides knowledgeable about the region you are visiting? Do they have experience leading trips there? Ideal guides will have experience travelling in the cities you are visiting and will be energetic, informative, entertaining and organized.

Ask for referrals

We suggest asking a tour company for referrals of other schools who they have run Japan trips for before. You can also look at reviews on sites like TripAdvisor.com, or search travel blogs.

"In the end, sometimes it just comes down to how comfortable a person feels with the company and their interactions with them."

Where should my student group stay in Japan?

When choosing where your group will stay, it's important to keep a few factors in mind. Depending on your group, some factors may be more important than others. For example: location and proximity to activities, price, room types and sizes or youth hostels vs. hotels, or Ryokans. That being said, some accommodations that Evolve Tours frequently uses in this area include:

Traditional North American Hotels – *For school groups that want to stay in the heart of the city, within walking distance to the main centers and other close attractions. More expensive, but unbeatable location. With the traditional North American hotels, it offers the possibility for double/triple and quadruple occupancy, great for accommodating large groups.*

https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-q298184-Tokyo_Tokyo_Prefecture_Kanto-Hotels.html

Student Friendly Hostels – *A great compromise between location and value. These hostels offer bright and clean Japanese style student friendly accommodations. Located in most city centers, the proximity to main attractions is often a plus! There are also many possibilities for number of students per room. These are great for groups that are on a budget.*

<http://www.hostelworld.com/hostels/Japan>

Traditional Japanese style Inns- Ryokan – *These inns are family-run and thrive on the spirit of hospitality. A great plus about choosing this cultural experience is that all the meals are included. The chefs create daily meals based on seasonal ingredients- so each meal is unique! The beds in these inns are typical of classical Japanese homes complete with reed floor mats and a futon (sleeping quilts). The occupancy varies from around 5-10 per room. Although this is a wonderful experience, it is considered more on the luxurious side of accommodation types.*

<https://the-ryokan.com/?cosid=00000002>

Where are the best student-friendly restaurants in Japan?

When deciding on a restaurant for your student group, make sure the venue can accommodate large student groups. There should be plenty of options for students to choose from, or a buffet. Ensure the restaurant knows about any allergies or dietary restrictions your students may have.

Breakfast

Often, hotels will include a breakfast with room bookings, or offer one for an additional charge. This can range from a continental breakfast to a full hot breakfast buffet. Having breakfast at the hotel can save a ton of time, as you don't need to travel to another restaurant and can head straight to activities after leaving the hotel.



Great areas for Lunch and Dinner

If giving students free time for lunch, choose an area where there are plenty of dining options to suit everyone's taste and diet.

Tokyo– Being an international city, it is very easy in Tokyo to find many different types of food! It is very easy to find North American food for the picky eaters, as well as many Japanese specialties including numerous choices for noodles and of course Sushi! Head to the **Akihabara district** which is well known as a high tech hub, complete with thousands of electronics shops and a thriving base for video game culture. Find a variety of choices of sushi, soba, tempura, ramen, tonkatsu, and yakitori!

<http://www.picrumb.com/best-restaurants/akihabara/>

Osaka – Known mostly for their Ramen noodles, there are no shortage of places that offer them. Head to Osaka's **Umeda District** for different sushi and ramen options. As a side note, lunch is always less expensive than dinners so it is a good time of day to fill up! <http://www.picrumb.com/best-restaurants/osaka-station/>

Hiroshima- Hiroshima's most famous food is its own style of **okonomiyaki**. The local version of the dish is characterized by only a thin layer of batter and a generous amount of cabbage on top of yakisoba noodles. A great area from dining would be around the **Hiroshima Station**. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3408.html>

Satisfying group meals are an important part of a successful student trip. It's important to make sure that the restaurant you are visiting is student friendly and works well with large (and hungry) school groups.

Translation of the main food ingredients

豚 Pork	牛 Beef	鶏 Chicken	肉 Meat	魚 Fish	
動物油 Animal fat/oil	肉エキス Meat extract	牛肉エキス Beef extract	豚肉エキス Pork extract	鶏肉エキス Chicken extract	
ラード Pork fat	コンソメ Consomme	ブイヨン Broth	ゼラチン Gelatin	醤油 Soy sauce	
海老 Shrimp	魚介類 Shellfish	カニ Crab	乳製品 牛乳 Dairy product	小麦 Wheat	
羊肉 Lamb	ナッツ Nuts	大豆 Soy beans	酢 Vinegar	米 Rice	卵 Egg

Should my school group use a Coach bus or the trains while in Japan?

For larger school groups, we recommend using a coach bus. Although the subway system in Tokyo is fantastic from getting from point A to point B, it is not the most effective for travelling with a large group. Often times the carts are crowded and can be tricky for navigating with a larger group. Using a coach bus around the cities are a great way to travel efficiently and minimize chaos.



For travelling in between cities, coach bus is less idea as it is time consuming. We recommend travelling with the Shinkansen high speed bullet train for an unforgettable experience. The bullet train cuts the travel time in half, giving your group more time for activities.

**Prices vary depending on departure cities and time of year*



For more information about *Shinkasen bullet speed train*, visit:
<http://www.acprail.com/rail-passes/japan-rail/bullet-train>

Some student-friendly bus companies Evolve Tours in Japan works with:
Yuka Transport- <http://www.yutakatransport.co.jp/>
Japan Bus lines- <http://japanbuslines.com/en/>

Should we purchase Travel Insurance?

Purchasing the correct travel insurance can help in the event someone becomes sick or injured before, or during, a trip. Most travel insurance providers' coverage includes cancellation, trip interruption, and lost baggage. If families purchase travel insurance and the student falls ill before the trip, they may receive reimbursement for costs paid towards the trip. You can either order insurance for everyone in the group and include this in the trip cost, or provide it as an optional addition to families who would like to purchase.

Your Next Steps to Making this Dream Student Trip a Reality!

1. Deciding on working with a tour company, or commit to organizing the trip on your own
2. Promote the trip!
 - o Send letter home to parents, make announcements, tell you colleagues, put up posters (available from Evolve Tours) and think creatively to get the word out!
3. Hold a Parent information night
4. Distribute a Registration package to students- Waivers, Packing lists, other forms
5. Decide on a payment schedule
6. Collect deposits, registration package and payments
7. Complete rooming lists and other lists
8. Finally, board the bus or train and get the show on the road!

Additional resources for planning the perfect school trip to Japan:

<http://www.tripadvisor.ca/> - Helpful user based review site. Check here for honest reviews of attractions, museums, hotels and travel companies.

<https://weatherspark.com/averages/33260/Ota-Tokyo-Japan>- Japan weather

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan>- For great helpful descriptions popular attractions and activities in Japan



Evolve Tours

At Evolve Tours, we've been running student trips around the world since 2006 and have been perfecting the trip planning process ever since. After deciding you want your students to experience educational travel, there's a lot involved in organizing a trip before hopping on that bus. There's the logistics of accommodations, transportation, meals, activities and more- when planned properly they come together to ensure an incredible and memorable student trip.

If you have any questions about any of the content in this guide, please email us at info@evolvetours.com, or call us at 1.888.222.5066 (Toll Free)

You can also check out sample itineraries of our trips online at www.evolvetours.com

We'd be happy to work together to plan your student trip, or just talk travel!

Happy Travels!

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