JAPAN ESSENTIAL TRAVEL TOOLKIT

SHORT & SWEET KNOW-BEFORE-YOU-GO GUIDE FOR TRAVELERS

Welcome to Japan! Known for seamless efficiency, incredible hospitality, and rich traditions, Japan is a dream destination. This bite-sized toolkit covers the must-know essentials to make your trip smooth, stress-free, and culturally respectful.

1. Money, Cash & Payments

- **Cash is Still King:** While credit card acceptance is growing rapidly in major cities, small ramen shops, temple entrance fees, rural buses, and vending machines require local Yen (¥).
- **ATM Withdrawals:** Withdraw cash at 7-Eleven (Seven Bank) or Lawson ATMs—they accept foreign debit cards with low fees and 24/7 access.
- **Tipping:** Tipping does NOT exist in Japan. Exceptional service is standard; leaving money behind can confuse or embarrass staff.

2. Transit & Getting Around

- **IC Cards (Suica / Pasmo / ICOCA):** Tap-to-pay transit cards used for subways, local trains, buses, and convenience stores. Add a digital Suica card directly to your Apple Wallet before you fly!
- **Bullet Trains (Shinkansen):** Reserve luggage seats in advance if traveling with oversized bags (total dimensions > 160 cm).
- **Luggage Forwarding (Takkyubin):** Send large suitcases directly from hotel to hotel via Yamato Transport so you don't have to haul bags on busy trains.

3. Technology & Staying Connected

- **eSIM / Pocket Wi-Fi:** Public Wi-Fi can be spotty. Set up an eSIM (like Ubigi or Airalo) or rent a Pocket Wi-Fi router for instant Google Maps and translation access.

- **Power Plugs:** Japan uses Type A/B 2-prong plugs (100V). US 2-prong plugs fit without an adapter, but 3-prong plugs require an adapter.

4. Key Cultural Etiquette

- **No Walking & Eating:** Eat or drink near the vendor or vending machine where purchased before walking away.
- **Garbage & Trash:** Public trash cans are rare! Keep a small plastic bag in your daypack to carry trash back to your hotel or convenience store.
- **Quiet on Trains:** Keep phones on "Manner Mode" (silent) and refrain from phone calls or loud conversations on public transit.
- **Footwear Customs:** Remove shoes when entering homes, traditional ryokans, temple indoor halls, and fitting rooms (look for tatami mats or raised wooden entryways).

5. Quick Japanese Phrases

Phrase	Pronunciation	Meaning / Context
Sumimasen	*soo-mee-mah-sen*	"Excuse me" or "Sorry" (Use to catch a waiter's attention or navigate crowds)
Arigatou gozaimasu	*ah-ree-gah-too go-zay-mas*	"Thank you very much"
Kore o ku-da-sai	*koh-reh oh koo-dah-sigh*	"This one, please" (while pointing at a menu)
Eigo o hana-se-masu ka?	*ay-go oh hah-nah-seh-mas kah*	"Do you speak English?"
O-kai-kei o ku-da-sai	*oh-kai-kay oh koo-dah-sigh*	"The bill, please"

Provided by Destination Loading LLC — Author of *'Destination Kyoto: A 7-Day Travel Agent's Guide'*