

National Profile

# National Profile

# JAPAN



**ICYE JAPAN**  
International Cultural Youth Exchange

**2026-2027**

## Table of contents

ICYE JAPAN Office Information.....	5
Who can apply for Volunteering in JAPAN? .....	6
Facts about Japan.....	7
History of Japan .....	10
Language .....	12
Very Basic Japanese.....	13
Japanese Perceptions.....	14
ICYE PROGRAMS .....	16
Money.....	19
Preparing for Japan.....	20
ICYE JAPAN Annual Schedule.....	23
.....	23
ICYE JAPAN Rules and Regulations.....	24

# Dear Future Exchangees...

ICYE Japan provides a safe environment for you to engage in volunteer activities in Japan, and we support you during your activities. However, please remember: you are the main actor in this program. **You are the main character in this program.**

It is you who will learn about the lifestyle, build relationships, and experience and learn the essence of Japanese culture.

Like every country in the world, Japan has its own culture, language, customs, history, and unique ways of communicating.

**Especially during the first period of your program, there may be many things that will not go well or the way you want them to. This will be even more significant if you believe what you see in Anime and YouTube about Japan. It takes time, patience, and a lot of effort to get to know the culture, lifestyle, and become part of the community, especially in Japan, a country that has long preserved a tradition where silence and not speaking one's mind are considered virtues.**

There is a big difference between understanding what is explained in words at the orientations and actually feeling it firsthand.

If you have never taken a single Japanese class, if you cannot even read Hiragana, if you think Japan is a high-tech, futuristic world, or if Manga and Anime about Japan heavily influence you, the road ahead is challenging.

Think again about why you want to do Volunteering in the place where the language, culture, and values are so different from yours. Being passive will not get you anywhere. As a volunteer, you are expected to voluntarily participate in activities.

Japan is a country with unique, difficult, and very conservative customs, but its culture and traditions are profound, its natural environment is breathtakingly beautiful, and its people value harmony and discipline. We believe that living in such a country will make you persevere, more compassionate, and more appreciative of the diversity of human cultures.

We are looking forward to supporting your challenge in JAPAN.

Sincerely,  
ICYE JAPAN Office

## National Profile



Sakiko Oikawa  
National Director,  
Incoming Coordinator



Aki Imoto  
Outgoing/  
Incoming  
Coordinator



Tara  
Accountant



Seiko Kurose  
Liaison  
Officer/  
Incoming  
Coordinator

**Mission: Provide the opportunity to have interests in others and the world**

**Vision: Exchange your life~Have an experience that dramatically changes your life and your view**

**Goal: Realization of the world peace through mutual understanding**

ICYE Japan is a member of the International Cultural Youth Exchange Federation and shares the goals and objectives of our fellow committees. We provide a place for Inter Cultural Exchange and Understanding through volunteer work. Our aim is to break through the many barriers that separate people and to find a common ground on which we may live together in this world. We believe that all people are equal, regardless of ethnicity, religion, social/economic power and gender. We endeavor for the realization of cultural, religious, social, economic and individual freedom.

## ICYE JAPAN Office Information

Office Hour	10:00am – 18:00pm from Tuesday to Saturday(closed on every 5 <sup>th</sup> Saturday and a following day of the national holiday on Monday)
Address	1-7-21-901 Kita-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
TEL/FAX	+81-(0)3-5389-5041
Office staff	3 full-time employees and some part-time worker and many volunteers
Founded	1958
History	The Japan Committee of the ICYE Federation was founded in 1958 by the National Council of Churches in Japan and joined the ICYE program in 1959. Tokyo YMCA organized the program from 1983, in April 2002, ICYE JAPAN became an independent organization and was certified as a Non Profit Organization (NPO) by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government on August 30, 2002.

## Who can apply for Volunteering in JAPAN?

ICYE Japan offers exchangees the opportunity to experience Japanese culture through voluntary service, but it is up to each exchangee to make an effort to reach a deeper understanding during their exchange period. Our program is designed for individuals who have a keen interest in learning about Japan and are willing to adapt to the Japanese lifestyle.

Exchangees should be prepared to live with people and to stay in their placements and do voluntary work. This does not provide the same kind of freedom that you usually have when you are on vacation, but will allow you to experience a part of Japan that vacationers will not.

The most important thing to remember is to remain flexible, even if others are not, and try **not to judge what is right or wrong** about cultural differences. By keeping a positive attitude instead of worrying about what you don't like, you are bound to have a good time here.

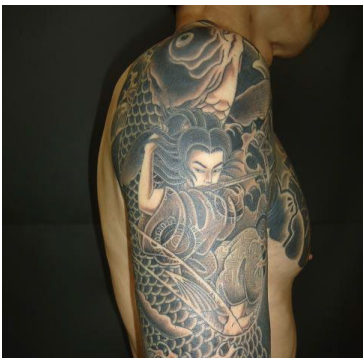
Even though ICYE JAPAN is open minded and diverse, Japanese society is still somewhat conservative. For this reason, we sometimes decide NOT to proceed to host a volunteer who has;

- Big Tattoo on your body (see the photo below)
- Piecing on your face (only ears are acceptable)
- Unnaturally colored hair

This is because although our culture is gradually changing, Japanese tend to have negative impressions towards you if you have such an appearance. You would be perceived as “negative” foreigners because of it. In Japan, these cause problems when trying to be included in society for many people, even if they are Japanese.

So please understand this Japanese custom and if you already have any of the appearances listed, please do not add to it until a decision has been reached. Please ask us if you are unsure and want to know if your appearance is acceptable in Japan.

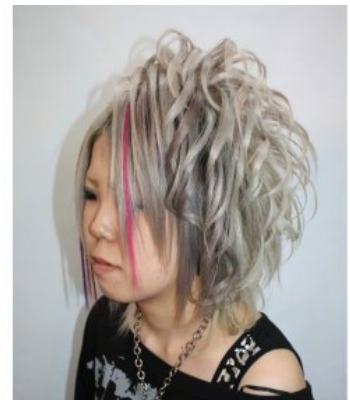
### Examples of unexpected appearance



**Big Tattoos (especially on your arms, face, neck, hands and/or places that are obvious to others)**



**Too much piercing on your face or other body parts (Only ears are acceptable)**



**Unnaturally colored hair ( Red, pink, blue , etc ...)**

## Facts about Japan

As an archipelago spanning over 3,000 kilometers from north to south, Japan consists of four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku. It does not share direct borders with any country but is surrounded by two great seas, the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Sea of Japan to the west.



Land Area	About 378,000km <sup>2</sup>
Population	Approximately 127 million people
Language	Japanese
Capital	Tokyo
Currency	Yen (¥) [160yen = approximately 1 Euro (Dec 2023)]
Time lag	UTC+9 (no summer time)

### Climate

The climate varies greatly from region to region, from the subtropical Okinawa in the south to the cool Hokkaido in the north. It is also very different depending on the season.

**Summer:** Lasts from June to early September. It rains frequently during the first two summer months and the temperature is usually cool at this time. Once the rainfall decreases, temperatures range from 25C to 35C with considerable **humidity**. The typhoon season is in September.



**Autumn:** Lasts from Late September to November. It can be a mixture of hot and cool days at first, but once it begins the humidity decreases and it becomes pleasantly cool as the leaves turn yellow, red and purple. General temperatures range from 15C to 25C in Tokyo.

**Winter:** Lasts from December to February. Dry air, cool winds and frequent snow in the north with an average temperature of 6.6C. However in Tokyo, it occasionally drops as low as -4C. Hokkaido and areas of the Japan near the sea have a lot of snow in winter, but not so much in the south and around Tokyo.



**Spring:** Lasts from March to May. This is the season of plums, cherry blossoms and new beginnings. April 1st marks the commencement of the academic and financial year in society.

**Geography** Japan is mostly rugged and mountainous, with many dormant volcanoes and a few active ones. Earthquakes occur about 1-2000 times each year (2424 times in 2023), although they are mostly tremors that can only be sensed by seismographs. Japan is a safe country in the percentage of crime base, but there are many dangerous natural disasters such as sudden tsunamis and floods, typhoons, huge earth slides and so on.

**Religion** It was thought that there are 8,000,000 Gods in Japan and this belief became today's "Shintoism" a long time ago. Today, most Japanese tend to think they are not religious, but our life and culture is still affected by Shintoism and Buddhism..

Shintoism 48.5% Buddhism 46.4% Christianity 1.1% Other 4.0%  
Total 181,146,092

Reference

[https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei\\_hakusho\\_shuppan/hakusho\\_nenjihokokusho/shukyo\\_nenkan/pdf/r03nenkan.pdf](https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/hakusho_nenjihokokusho/shukyo_nenkan/pdf/r03nenkan.pdf)

\* *Religious freedom is protected by the national constitution.*

**Political System** Japan is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. The Diet (parliament) is the highest state power and consists of the House of Councilors and the House of Representatives. All Japanese citizens above the age of 18 have the right to vote.(Enforced from April 2022)

**Judicial Branch** Supreme Court (the Chief Justice is appointed by the Emperor after designation by the cabinet; all other Justices are appointed by the Cabinet)

**Economy** Government-industry cooperation, a strong work ethic, mastery of high technology, and defense allocation (1.24% of GDP) has helped the country advance with extraordinary haste to the rank of the third most powerful developed economy in the world.

**The Imperial family** The members of the Imperial family do not have any political power, but act as figureheads for the country. The monarchy is hereditary. The Reiwa Emperor, Naruhito shall succeed to the Imperial Throne on April 30, 2019, and shall become the 126th Emperor of Japan on May 1, 2019. The imperial throne has long been exclusive to male heirs, but the birth of Imperial Highness Aiko to the the Emperor Naruhito and The Empress Masako in 2001 has initiated debate over an amendment in the national constitution to allow a female to inherit the monarchy in the future.

## History of Japan

The following is a general overview of Japan's history and culture. Since it does not cover issues in depth, please refer to books and websites for more information.

Ancient Times	Middle Ages	Premodern	Modern	Contemporary Age
(Kofun, Asuka, Nara, Heian Era)	(Kamakura, Muromachi, Sengoku era)	(Azuchimomoyama, Edo Era)	(Meiji, Taisho, Showa Era)	(Showa, Heisei Era)
—AD. 1185	AD. 1185 – 1590	AD. 1573 – 1868	AD. 1868 – 1945	AD. 1945 –

Period	Name	Description
-300 BC	Jomon	The early Japanese were gatherers, hunters and fishermen.
300BC -300AD	Yayoi	The introduction of rice agriculture begins the development of a social hierarchy and hundreds of small countries that started to unify into larger countries.
300-538	Kofun	<b>300</b> Japan is for the first time more or less united. Large tombs (kofun) were built for the deceased leaders.
538-710	Asuka	<b>538/552</b> Introduction of Buddhism. <b>604</b> Prince Shotoku's Constitution of seventeen articles is promulgated. <b>645</b> The Taika reform is introduced. The Fujiwara era starts.
710-784	Nara	<b>710</b> Nara becomes the first permanent capital. <b>784</b> The capital moves to Nagaoka.
794-1185	Heian	<b>794</b> The capital moves to Heian (Kyoto). <b>1016</b> Fujiwara Michinaga becomes regent. <b>1159</b> The Taira clan under Taira Kiyomori takes over the power after the Heiji war. <b>1175</b> The Buddhist Jodo sect (Pure land sect) is introduced. <b>1180-85</b> In the Gempei War, the Minamoto clan puts an end to Taira supremacy.
1192-1333	Kamakura	<b>1191</b> The Zen sect is introduced. <b>1192</b> Minamoto Yoritomo is appointed shogun and establishes the Kamakura government. <b>1221</b> The Jokyu Disturbance ends a struggle between Kamakura and Kyoto resulting in the supremacy of the Hojo regents in Kamakura. <b>1232</b> A legal code, the Jōei Shikimoku, is promulgated. <b>1274 and 1281</b> The Mongols try to invade Japan twice, but fail mainly because of bad weather conditions. <b>1333</b> The Kamakura bakufu falls.
1338-1573	Muromachi	<b>1334</b> Kemmu restoration: the emperor restores power over Japan. <b>1336</b> Ashikaga Takauji captures Kyoto. <b>1337</b> The emperor flees and establishes the Southern court in Yoshino. <b>1338</b> Takauji establishes the Muromachi government and a second emperor in Kyoto (Northern court). <b>1392</b> Unification of the Southern and Northern courts. <b>1467-1477</b> Onin war. <b>1542</b> Portuguese introduce firearms and Christianity to Japan. <b>1568</b> Nobunaga enters Kyoto. <b>1573</b> The Muromachi Bakufu falls.

1573-1603	Azuchi Momoyama	<p><b>1575</b> The Takeda clan is defeated in the battle of Nagashino.</p> <p><b>1582</b> Nobunaga is murdered and succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.</p> <p><b>1588</b> Hideyoshi confiscates the weapons of farmers and religious institutions in the "Sword Hunt".</p> <p><b>1590</b> Japan is reunited after the fall of Odawara (Hojo).</p> <p><b>1592-98</b> Unsuccessful invasion of Korea.</p> <p><b>1598</b> Death of Hideyoshi.</p> <p><b>1600</b> Tokugawa Ieyasu defeats his rivals in the battle of Sekigahara.</p>
1603 - 1867	Edo	<p><b>1603</b> Ieyasu is appointed shogun and establishes the Tokugawa government in Edo (Tokyo).</p> <p><b>1614</b> Ieyasu intensifies persecution of Christianity.</p> <p><b>1615</b> The Toyotomi clan is destroyed after Ieyasu captures Osaka Castle.</p> <p><b>1639</b> Almost complete isolation of Japan from the rest of the world.</p> <p><b>1688-1703</b> Genroku era: popular culture flourishes.</p> <p><b>1792</b> The Russians unsuccessfully try to establish trade relations with Japan.</p> <p><b>1854</b> Commodore Matthew Perry forces the Japanese government to open a limited number of ports for trade.</p>
1868-1912	Meiji	<p><b>1868</b> Meiji restoration.</p> <p><b>1872</b> First railway line between Tokyo and Yokohama.</p> <p><b>1889</b> The Meiji Constitution is promulgated.</p> <p><b>1894-95</b> Sino-Japanese War.</p> <p><b>1904-05</b> Russo-Japanese War.</p> <p><b>1910</b> Annexation of Korea.</p> <p><b>1912</b> Death of emperor Meiji.</p>
1912-1926	Taisho	<p><b>1914-18</b> Japan joins allied forces in WW1.</p> <p><b>1923</b> The Great Kanto Earthquake devastates Tokyo and Yokohama.</p>
1926-1989	Showa	<p><b>1931</b> Manchurian Incident.</p> <p><b>1937</b> Second Sino-Japanese War starts.</p> <p><b>1941</b> Pacific War starts.</p> <p><b>1945</b> Japan surrenders after two atomic bombs are dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.</p> <p><b>1946</b> The new constitution is promulgated.</p> <p><b>1952</b> The Allied Occupation of Japan ends.</p> <p><b>1956</b> Japan becomes member of the UN.</p> <p><b>1972</b> Normalization of relations to China.</p> <p><b>1973</b> Oil crisis.</p>
1989-	Heisei	<p><b>1995</b> The Great Hanshin Earthquake hits Kobe. Sarin Gas attack in the Tokyo subway by AUM sect.</p> <p><b>2011</b> Great East Japan Earthquake</p>

## Japanese Culture

Japanese history is evident throughout its culture, art forms, and attitudes. Many traditions are derived from Chinese culture but flowered into unique styles and perceptions over the centuries. Examples include the *Noh* theatre, the tea ceremony, and *ikebana* flower arrangements. Japanese art forms developed during the Shogun period, and the *kabuki* theatre and *ukiyo-e* painting originated in the Edo Period.

## Language

**Japanese (*Nihongo*) is the official language.**

The standard form is spoken on the news, taught in schools, and used in newspapers, while each region has its own dialect. There are three different forms of the written language, which are combined to create the modern Japanese language:

漢字

***Kanji*:** Chinese characters. Approx. 2,000 characters (Common use).

ひらがな

***Hiragana*:** A simplified form of *kanji* that is used to spell Japanese words that do not have *kanji* equivalents, such as prefixes, suffixes, prepositions, etc. Contains 51 characters.

カタカナ

***Katakana*:** An even more simplified form of *hiragana* that is typically used to spell foreign words. Contains 51 characters.

*\* English is taught as the first foreign language from junior high school in public schools. Many private schools begin earlier and/or teach other languages. English in Japanese schools mostly focuses on grammar*

Please practice reading and writing Hiragana and Katakana as a minimum before coming to Japan.

あ	ア	A	い	イ	I	う	ウ	U	え	エ	E	お	オ	O
か	カ	KA	き	キ	KI	く	ク	KU	け	ケ	KE	こ	コ	KO
さ	サ	SA	し	シ	SI	す	ス	SU	せ	セ	SE	そ	ソ	SO
た	タ	TA	ち	チ	CHI	つ	ツ	TSU	て	テ	TE	と	ト	TO
な	ナ	NA	に	ニ	NI	ぬ	ヌ	NU	ね	ネ	NE	の	ノ	NO
は	ハ	HA	ひ	ヒ	HI	ふ	フ	HU	へ	ヘ	HE	ほ	ホ	HO
ま	マ	MA	み	ミ	MI	む	ム	MU	め	メ	ME	も	モ	MO
や	ヤ	YA				ゆ	ユ	YU				よ	ヨ	YO
ら	ラ	RA	り	リ	RI	る	ル	RU	れ	レ	RE	ろ	ロ	RO
わ	ワ	WA										を	ヲ	WO
ん	ン	N												

※ Please remember at least “Hiragana” before you come to Japan, basic Japanese (or at least studying Japanese Experience) is required in most of our project.

## Very Basic Japanese

Good morning	Ohayou Gozaimasu
Good afternoon	Konnishiwa
Good evening	Konbanwa
Good night	Oyasumi nasai
Thank you	Arigatou Gozaimasu
You are Welcome	Doutashimashite
I'm sorry	Gomennasai
No problem	Daijobu desu
Excuse me	Sumimasen
Yes/No	Hai/iie
Please	Onegaishimasu
See you	Sayounara
Nice to meet you	Hazimemashite/ Yoroshiku Onegai Shimasu
My name is ~	Watashi no Namae wa ~ desu
I'm ~ years old	~ sai desu
I'm from ~	~ kara Kimashita
I don't know Japanese	Nihongo wa Wakarimasen
I like ~	Watashi wa ~ ga Sukidesu
I don't like ~	Watashi wa ~ ga Sukideha arimasen
It tastes good	Oishii desu
I'm having fun	Tanoshii desu
I'm tired	Tsukareteimasu
Where is ~ ?	~ wa Dokodesuka?
How much is ~ ?	~ wa Ikura desuka?
I'm not feeling so well	Guai ga warui desu

## Japanese Perceptions

Japan is an island and had closed to other countries for a long time. It made the very unique and different culture from other parts of the world. At the same time, they have roughly half the population of the United States in a land area about the size of Finland or the state of California. Given these crowded conditions, in addition to a long-standing culture of aesthetic formality, precise, detailed rules of etiquette dictate the Japanese way of life.

In order to live in Japan, **you must always be thinking of others**. 「和」 (harmony) is very important in the Japanese society. Over generations, people have developed a strong feeling of membership of a group, for example as a member of a family, school, company, or village, and prefer to live that way. If they leave the group, they cannot have a normal life because their social system and rules were formed for existence within the group. This idea is the cause of a lot of Japanese habits or manners. The avoid doing things that may make someone uncomfortable, even if they really want to do it or they think it is right.

Japan is a country that is open to foreign influence. In this modern age, this is demonstrated by the wide range of non-Japanese cuisine, movies, books, music and sports available. Contemporary culture has also incorporated many foreign aspects. On the other hand, the core structure of society generally remains unaltered and conventional. Foreigners stand out distinctly as “non-Japanese” and are often still stared at, despite the continuing increase of tourism and employment in Japan.

Japanese perceptions of foods are very different from your country. When we start eating, we say “Itadakimasu” and when finish, we say “Gochisosama”. The meaning is similar to us thanking all the people and lives concerned with the meal; for example, our parents, a person who cooks, farmers and also nature itself. We believe it is rude to leave foods and it is considered bad manners to be a picky eater or only eat some kind of food in Japan. Still vegetarian/vegan culture is not common here.



The following are a few characteristics of Japanese people that may be helpful in deciphering their tendencies:

- Japanese don't complain directly to a person but want him/her to "notice" how they are feeling or thinking. "Sassuru"(notice) is important in Japanese culture. As long as you are in Japan, you need to be sensitive to what and how people are thinking about you, especially when you are with host family or in any groups.
- Behaviors which are considered bad are e.g. breaking the rules, being rude, saying bad words, use the cursing words etc. In Japan, culture is wrapped around collectivism and if a person behaves in the wrong way (different from others), the act will not only reflect badly on the person but also on **all the people/organizations that is connected** to them. When coming to Japan you should bear this in mind.
- Hierarchy...even if the age difference is only 1 year, you have to respect the older person. It is not common to call nick names or first names to people older than yourself. To most of adult people the use of their last name connected to **-san** is the correct way to address them. With children it is okay to use their first name and add a **-kun** (if boy) or a **-chan** (if girl) (e.g. Sousuke-kun or Minami-chan)
- Physical contacts with the opposite sex in families, friends and even lovers are not so open compared to western countries. It is rare to display physical contacts between couple in public, such as hugging or kissing. Japanese distinguish private and public places.
- In contrast to many western people, who are more likely to express their opinions openly in a self-asserting way, many Japanese tend to speak and act only after consideration has been given to the other person's position, feelings, and points of view. Furthermore, clear cut "yes" and "no" answers are often avoided, and speech is often embellished with euphemisms and honorifics to prevent unnecessary offense and/or conflict. *Again – the respect for harmony (和/wa)*

## ICYE PROGRAMS

First of all, all exchangeees should be aware and accept the fact that this period is **NOT a vacation**. If you want to just see around Japan or behave in the same way you would while on vacation, we strongly recommend you visit Japan as a trip. If you join in the ICYE programme, please remember you will be a member of Japanese society and you need to work as a volunteer for the community.



## Accommodation

Most exchangeees will live at the host family. In Japan, It's very difficult to find a host family since it is not a custom here to host volunteers. In the case that you stay with a host family, you need to be much more careful. Ask about everything you do and have the same life style as the family, even though it depends on the family how much they want you to do that. Moreover, don't forget to communicate with the family. They accepted you as a volunteer because they want to communicate with you.

## Volunteer Work Placements

Exchangees coming to Japan should be excited about working as a volunteer in Japan. “Volunteer” comes from the word “Will”. Please, always remember to have a positive attitude and to take responsibility for what you do during your work.

Through volunteer work, please keep in mind the goals and purposes of ICYE: to break through the barriers which separate cultures and people, to share a basic equality regardless of culture, race and sex, and to work for social, economic, racial and personal freedom.

### **Before you start your project, we would like to stress the following:**

1. The ICYE JAPAN Committee provides work opportunities for you to encounter the thinking of others, reflect upon your own values, deeper understanding of yourself and to grow as a person.
2. The work you will do is on a voluntary basis.  
You will not receive a salary. ICYE JAPAN will provide you with a monthly pocket money based on the regulation of the ICYE-Federation. Working for money is strictly prohibited by ICYE JAPAN.
3. Exchangees cannot choose the project that you actually go on. We distribute the projects in regards to some aspects like your priorities, experiences and the hosting situation etc. In addition, you cannot choose the location of the project that you go to, such as a big city, a small town, the countryside etc. Most of our projects are placed in small towns or in the countryside. It is very rare to be placed within Tokyo or other big cities near downtown.
4. Take the work seriously. The volunteer work is the major activity for you.  
Working hour of Japanese is usually very long. We expect you to do at least 30 hours of volunteer work every week.
5. It would really be an advantage to have the ability to speak basic Japanese before starting the program. Otherwise you will end up with less interesting work (copying, stuffing envelopes, etc.) The more you understand the language, the more interesting your work will be. So let's start study **NOW!**
6. Everything will be decided by Japanese rules and norms whilst in Japan. Even if you don't feel right with Japanese culture, we are Japanese and are living by these rules. Sometimes Japanese rules or ways of doing things are sometime different from the world standard, but you will have to adapt as long as you live in Japan.

## ICYE JAPAN Conferences

Throughout the program year, ICYE JAPAN will hold three conferences, which all the exchangeees must attend. These are as following: the Orientation Conference, the Mid-Year Conference (only for exchangeees for a year), and the Final Evaluation Conference.

### **Orientation Conference**

**Introduction Camp** – After arriving in Japan, you will live with the short-term host families in Tokyo or camp site and will have to attend the Introduction Camp and the Language Course. This will be a great time for all the exchangeees to get to know each other, meet Japanese returnees, volunteers as well as get accustomed to the country. Fellow exchangeees and our ICYE JAPAN staff will be the people you will share some of your best experiences with, but they will also be the ones you will want to turn to during your difficult times. Spend this time to get to know each other.

**Language Course** – You will participate in approximately 30 hours (10-20 for short term) of language training. It is very important that all the exchangeees have at least a basic understanding of the Japanese language, so that you may settle into life in Japan as comfortably as possible.

### **Mid-Year Conference**

All exchangeees will get together at the midpoint of the program year in Japan, to review your first half of the program. This will be a good time to bring the staff up to date on both your positive and negative experiences so far, as well as to share them with your fellow exchangeees and any returnees who may attend.

### **Final Evaluation Conference**

Exchangeees will gather again at the end of the program year to look back at their year in Japan. You will each evaluate yourself as well as the program in Japan and the ICYE Japan Committee before heading back to your home countries.

Constructive opinions and active participation in this conference in particular will help improve the program for future exchangeees. You will also meet the outgoing exchangeees from Japan for the next year –It is possible that someone will be going to your country!

## Money

### Pocket Money

Each month, you will receive **around 70 Euros** as pocket money, based on the regulation of the ICYE Federation. This will be either given to you in cash or deposited into an account.

This pocket money is meant to cover only a certain portion of your personal expenses. It will not be enough to pay for personal travel (please note that public transportation is relatively expensive in Japan), gifts, clothing, eating out, international calls, mobile phone bills and so on. Therefore, you will need arrangements for **bringing extra money** to Japan to cover your expenses for such items.

ICYE JAPAN will not pay for additional language courses or special skills programs such as for computers. (The language course during the Orientation Conference and the supplementary Culture Program are included in the ICYE program.) We can help you find and enroll in such courses if you wish, but all tuitions and fees must be covered with your own finances.

### Transportation Fees

ICYE JAPAN will reimburse program-related transportation costs that are accrued each month during the program (e.g. conferences and other events). At the end of each month, you will fill out a “claim form,” and we will reimburse the costs along with the following month’s pocket money. This means that you will have to bear your transportation expenses from your pocket money first, until we reimburse you.

### Just how expensive is Japan?

Below is a list of approximate prices for various items:

*Exchange rates as of Jan 1, 2026*

- 1 Euro  $\doteq$  180 yen
- 1 USD  $\doteq$  150 yen

Milk	¥200/liter	Soft drinks	¥120/can, ¥150/bottle
Coffee	¥180/cup	Beer	¥500/jug
Cheap lunch	¥400-	Cheap dinner	¥1000
Newspaper	¥120-170	Cigarettes	¥250-400/pack
Tampons	¥280/pkt 10	Sanitary napkins	¥400-
Postage stamps	¥80- domestic	Airmail	¥110-
Roll of film/24	¥440	Developing film	¥700-¥1000
Shirt	¥2000-	Tennis shoes	¥5000-
Movie	¥1800	Club/disco	¥1500-
Subway	¥160- (1-4 stops)	Bus (local)	¥210-
Train	¥130-	Youth hostel	¥3000 incl. breakfast
Tokyo - Osaka	¥14600 Airplane, ¥13750 Shinkansen (bullet train), ¥8610 Long-distance bus		

## Preparing for Japan

### PLAN AHEAD.

As soon as you have decided on Japan as your country of destination through the ICYE program, start preparing for your year abroad. Here is what you need to do:

1. **National Profile of Japan 2024-2025/ ICYEJAPAN Work Profile 2024-2025**

Finish reading this profile and make sure you understand the project and host situation you will be placed in.

2. **Candidate's Application, Motivation letter and Health Certificate etc.**

Fill in these forms given to you by your sending committee as soon as possible, so that we may receive our copy from your committee right away. We will then send a *confirmation letter* to your sending committee.

3. **Agreement to Respect the ICYE Japan Rules and Regulations** (p. 30)

Please read the Rules and Regulations (following) in detail, fill in these forms, and send them to ICYE JAPAN with your Candidate's Application and Health Certificate.

4. **Visa Application**

Once we obtain the information of above from you, we will send you the "Invitation Letter" and "The document of planned activity". When you receive those documents, take it along with your passport to the nearest Japanese consulate or embassy and apply for **a Working Holiday Visa**. Please remember that it may take over two months to obtain this visa. You must receive this visa before you enter Japan.

5. **Travel and Health Insurance** – You will be covered by the ICYE Federation's travel and health insurance package with Dr.Walter (the fees are included in your participation fee). Coverage begins on the day of departure from your country and ends exactly one year later. The insurance covers medical treatment for accidents, non-pre-existing illnesses, basic dental treatment, and certain necessary operations. Please ask your sending committee for further details. Do not forget to bring the Dr.Walter insurance brochure with you!

6. \* For volunteers with Working Holiday Visa, it is your obligation to register the Japanese national health insurance. you will need to pay around ¥2000-¥3000 per month as the insurance fee.

\*For volunteers with tourist Visa (Visa Waiver Program), The period of stay granted at the time of entry permission is **"90 days"**.

Exchangees are responsible for organize own flight for the visa extension procedure. Plan ahead and well according to the schedule of your project.

\* Note: If you are planning to travel to other countries before returning home (meaning, if you will be returning home after your insurance expires), or if you want bigger medical coverage, then you should consider getting additional coverage on your own before you leave for Japan. Please note that this is optional and will be at your own expense.

7. **Money** – Foreign currencies can be brought to Japan in a variety of ways. All major foreign currencies are exchangeable in banks.

Traveler's checks: Travelers checks in US dollars can be cashed at national banks and most big department stores, sometimes free of charge.

Credit cards: Most credit cards are valid in Japan. Visa Card, Diners Club and American Express are accepted in most stores.

Withdrawal from your credit card: A fee will be surcharged when you withdraw cash with your credit card. Please check with your card company and make sure that you can withdraw cash with your card, because with some types of cards, you can cash only at certain ATMs which can be difficult to find in several areas.

Bank checks: Bank checks can be cashed, but a handling fee will be charged.

Bank account: Please refer to the next page for details.

## 8. **Other**

- a) **Student ID** – In general, no travel discounts or other special fares are available for students carrying an international student ID. However, this may vary according to certain institutions. (For example, you may qualify for a student discount at certain large cinema/movie theaters, concert venues, and such.)

- b) **Japanese Culture** – One of the most important aspects of any culture is its language. Although this is not the only consideration, the more you know, the better you will be able to “get around” in Japan. We suggest that you go out right now and obtain a book on Japanese language and start **studying ahead**.

It is also a good idea to begin researching some other aspects of Japanese culture. Try something new, like Japanese food, art or history. Japanese people will appreciate your interest and it will give you something to follow up on in Japan.

- c) **Know Your Own Country** – There will be numerous occasions when people ask you about your home country. You should think about the social, political, and cultural conditions and be ready to explain them to the people in Japan. Try thinking of activities, food, or holidays that are specific to your country/region. Bring things that will help you introduce your own culture! These could be pictures or books or even a favorite recipe, just as long as it is specific to your country. Also bring photos of your family. But keep everything small and light so that you will not have to carry around a heavy luggage.

Also, contact your country's tourist office and see if they have any information brochures about your country in Japanese.

- d) **Gifts** – Japanese people are “gift givers” by nature. We suggest you to bring small gifts and mementos for people you will meet in Japan. Any gift, however

big or small, will be well received. The best gifts are ones that show something of your country/culture. They can be as simple as a pen.

- e) **Clothing** – The most important thing to remember is, “what you bring, you must carry by yourself.” This applies to going up and down stairs, and on and off trains and buses (not all stations and public spaces have escalators and elevators). You are responsible for carrying and taking care of your own luggage.

Pack light clothes for summer and warm clothes for winter. Don't forget working cloths also. You should bring a jacket, cardigans, and long-sleeved shirts for autumn, sweaters, warm underwear, a warm coat, and a muffler etc. for winter. Please note that Japanese houses are really cold in winter because we don't use the heating item like a stove very much. An umbrella and some essential items will be needed for life. You can buy these things in Japan, of course, and prices range anywhere from 6-30,000 yen for a jacket, 3-9000 yen for cardigans and sweaters, and 10-40,000 yen for a coat. Umbrellas can be obtained quite cheaply, from as low as 100 yen.

As you will have to take off your shoes to enter peoples' homes, it would be best to bring shoes that are easy to take off and on, such as slip-ons.

- f) **Vaccination** – No vaccination is required to enter Japan.

## Once You Arrive in Japan

After your arrival in Japan, you will have a few months to get accustomed to your new environment, but do not get too relaxed! There are several important things that you must do:

1. **Resident Card** – As you are entering Japan with a working holiday visa, please get a resident card at the airport. Then you need to go to the local government office within 14 days of your arrival to register your address in Japan. This resident card must be carried at all times as proof that you are a legal resident in Japan.

### 2. Renewal a tourist Visa

People from some countries are allowed to stay for 6 months with tourist visa. However, they need to extend it after 3 months by themselves. They can do it in a regional immigration office. The cost to renew the visa should be covered by exchangees. Please also see the following URL and you can see the detail.

URL: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/visa/](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/)

## ICYE JAPAN Annual Schedule

This is a rough outline of your exchange year. A more detailed schedule will be handed out during the Orientation Conference. Additional events will be planned as well.

**September** Arrival in Japan  
Orientation Conference  
- Introduction Camp  
- Welcome party  
- Language Course  
Volunteer work begins



**January** Happy New Year! (An important holiday in Japan)

**February** Mid-Year Conference  
Arrival in Japan of in-comings with winter programs

**July- August** Final Evaluation Conference  
Farewell Party  
Travel Month



## ICYE JAPAN Rules and Regulations

Please read these rules and regulations carefully and return the signed agreement to ICYE JAPAN. Contact the ICYE JAPAN office staff if you need clarification on any of the points.

### 1. GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 1) **ICYE JAPAN National Profile 2024-2025: All exchangees must read the “National Profile of Japan 2024-2025”** before departing from their home countries. Once in Japan, all exchangees are expected to make a serious effort to live up to the purpose and principles of the ICYE program as well as ICYE JAPAN.
- 2) **Meetings and Conferences:** All exchangees must attend all the required ICYE JAPAN meetings and conferences.
- 3) **Visa and Immigration:** All exchangees must obtain a working-holiday visa or a tourist visa before coming to Japan. All exchangees will remain in Japan for the duration of the program year and depart for their home countries before their visas expire.
- 4) **Committee Prohibitions:** All exchangees must be aware that ICYE JAPAN is responsible for you during your program, and this gives ICYE JAPAN the authority to expel you from your program anytime if you violate any of the rules.
  - a) For safety precautions, exchangees will **not be able to drive any motor vehicle** (car, motorcycle, truck, etc.) or hitchhike, even if you have an international license to drive. Driving is permitted only with the permission of exchangees’ own parents and of the sending committee: in case of a car accident, the insurance does not cover injuries to third parties nor the damage to the vehicle. ICYE JAPAN recommends that exchangees to refrain from driving during the stay in Japan.
  - b) The possibility for misunderstanding and psychological suffering are extremely high in sexual relationships in cross-cultural contexts. Real life catastrophes and tragedies experienced by past exchangees and other individuals and/or family members involved have led to the rule at ICYE JAPAN that exchangees are **prohibited from having a sexual relationship** during the program year in Japan. If this rule is ignored and violated, and if any kind of problem arises regarding a sexual relationship involving an exchangee, ICYE JAPAN will consider the situation, consult the sending ICYE committee and the International Office of ICYE, and take action as it seems appropriate. Depending on the circumstances, the program contract with the exchangee can be considered null and void, and in such a case the exchangee will be sent back to thier home country immediately. If and when such a decision is made, the exchangee will accept and comply with the decision made by ICYE JAPAN.
  - c) ICYE JAPAN will not be held responsible for the exchangees’ medical expenses,

charges, and/or damages that are not covered by the ICYE Federation's insurance policy provided by Dr. Walter for all exchangeees (abortion, etc).

- d) ICYE JAPAN will not be held responsible for the exchangeees' personal expenses (mobile phone bills, etc.) incurred in Japan. If an exchangeee leaves Japan with unpaid personal bill or bills, ICYE JAPAN will bill the exchangeee and/or the sending committee to pay the outstanding bill or bills.

- 5) **Legal Prohibitions: All exchangeees must obey Japanese laws.** If any exchangeee becomes involved in any criminal activity, then the program contract with the exchangeee will be considered null and void. She or he will then be deported by the Department of Justice, and ICYE JAPAN will not be held responsible for any resulting problems.

## 2. VOLUNTEER/HOST PLACEMENT

ICYE JAPAN doesn't allow change of placement for the first three months unless something very exceptional happens. In order to change the placement, the place has to be approved by ICYE JAPAN beforehand.

### 1. Volunteer Work:

- a) All exchangeees' priority is their voluntary work.
- b) All exchangeees are expected to do a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer work every week until the Final Evaluation Conference. They cannot be away from their activities unless it has been pre-approved by ICYE JAPAN and the social project.
- c) **None of exchangeees can receive a salary**, but only a pocket money from ICYE JAPAN. Employment is prohibited during the ICYE exchange year because voluntary work does not involve monetary compensation.
- d) All exchangeees are required to work and live at the placement arranged by ICYE JAPAN for the entire duration of the program and to do their best to produce good work according to their skills and the needs of the placement. (**We cannot be sure that each exchangeee will be placed in either a city/town or countryside** since we do not have a lot of placement in towns/cities)
- e) All exchangeees must respect the staff and the project internal rules that will be provided to them on their first days of work.

### 2. Host Placement:

- a) All exchangeees have to respect and do their best in adapting to their host family and to a new life-style that may be very different from their own.
- b) ICYE JAPAN does not allow a change of placement and accommodations due to any personal reasons. Any family change requested by exchangeees will be analyzed and might be denied by ICYE JAPAN.

- c) Obey the rules concerning traveling: exchangees may travel with the permission of the host family or the community: **any trip longer than 3 days or abroad is to be reported to the ICYE JAPAN office** and is to be permitted by ICYE JAPAN. For the travel month in August, a written travel plan and a contact address is to be given to ICYE JAPAN at least a month before the final evaluation camp.

### **3. Cultural Differences:**

- a) The most important thing in Japan is politeness and seriousness. The work and attitude should reflect this, especially in front of your host family and at the working placement. Even if you think you are right, you should follow the Japanese rule in the community. Japanese rule is considered “the right way” in Japan. You have to follow ICYE JAPAN’s decision if you have any problems with rules and regulations during your volunteer life in Japan.
- b) Please do not forget that you have a responsibility and an obligation to amend your faults if you make something happen, even without the existence of a contract. Japan doesn’t have a custom to exchange contracts so often. Exchangees should just respect each other without paper, and must make up for it if something happens.

### **4. Transportation:**

- a) If exchangees decide to take a different kind of transportation from the one suggested by ICYE JAPAN, it must be pre-approved, otherwise you will have to be responsible for its costs.
- b) All Exchangees must pay the transportation costs that you made in your free time. ICYE JAPAN is only responsible for the transportation costs between Home-Project-Home.

### **3. DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

If any exchangee commits flagrant or repeated violations on any of the terms of this agreement, ICYE JAPAN, after due consideration of the case and in consultation with the ICYE JAPAN board and the exchangee’s sending committee, reserves the right to terminate the contract with the exchangee and to send the exchangee home prior to the completion of the program.

The ICYE JAPAN Committee will not be held responsible for any financial expenses or damages resulting from the exchangee’s violation(s) of this contract or from the exchangee’s failure to fulfill and carry out all of the terms of this contract. Depending on the circumstances, the exchangee and/or the sending committee will be required to pay for any such expenses and/or damages.

### **4. PERSONAL DATA AND USE OF PHOTOS**

ICYE JAPAN may use any photos/images we or someone on our behalf take of the



exchangees or any comments made during or in connection with the exchangees period for our promotional/marketing purposes without obtaining exchangees' specific permission or making any payment to them. All Exchangees agree to allow ICYE JAPAN to use any photos/information sent voluntary to the ICYE JAPAN office for use in our publicity material.

\*if you don't want it, please tell us though the sending NC before the project starts.

## 5. AGREEMENT TO RESPECT THE ICYE JAPAN RULES AND REGULATIONS

I have read and understood the Rules and Regulations of the ICYE JAPAN Program.

I hereby promise to respect and abide by these rules and to strive to participate in this program so that the goals of international understanding and world peace will be promoted through my efforts and activities in the voluntary service.

Exchangee's name (printed):	Exchangee's home country:
Exchangee's signature:	Date signed (month/day/year):

*Please retain a copy of pages 27 original to ICYE JAPAN with your Candidate's Application, Health Certificate, & ICYE Exchangee Information*

**<Note>**

**We can accept you only from the window dates and it will be your responsibility if you come earlier/later than these dates. ICYE JAPAN will NOT pay the transportation fee from the airport, neither for you nor the person who will pick you up from the airport.**

