



Visit Japan Organizer for Teachers

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Welcome to Japan!

Canada and Japan have enjoyed, over many years, the benefits and rewards of international education. We are fortunate that we are able to give our children an opportunity to learn about each other's culture and provide them with a balanced view of the world from an early age. In this day and age, it is particularly important that we nurture this cultural understanding amongst all of our children. In Canada, more than twenty thousand people are learning Japanese today. We also embrace almost 70 sister city relationships, and there are some 160 sister school charters between our nations. These are just a few examples of the ongoing cultural exchanges that are taking place.

Your students will discover not only the historical heritage of Japan but also its friendly people when you visit our country. Students will also discover with awe the modern technology and cultural diversity of Japan today. During their visit, we would love for them all to experience these different aspects of Japan, firsthand.

We are proud of the safety and cleanliness of our country as well as its natural beauty – a beauty that is constantly surprising because of the dramatic changes that mark the transitions between the four distinct seasons.

Discover our country with all of your senses. We are waiting to welcome all Canadian students.

Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO)

1. Why Not Japan?

1.1 Introduction

Without a doubt, no other travel destination excites an educator than a student trip to Japan. Japan is an ideal destination; it is safe, clean, efficient and **YES**, surprisingly affordable!

For many, the misconception of expensive Japanese accommodations and foods, prevent them from getting to the truth to such rumours. As is the case at home and abroad, where you choose to stay and where you eat and the types of food that you eat will affect your budget. It may surprise you to know that a student trip to Japan is economically competitive as student trips to European or some American destinations.

The purpose of this organizer is to encourage you to realize your long held dream of a student trip to Japan. A modest publication of this size can only suggest basic activities and strategies for consideration. It is still up to you to do the detailed work. Each school and boards of education have differing policies governing international school trips and the specific protocol to be followed. Please consult your school principal and the appropriate board officials for further information. All of the recommendations suggested here have been gathered from many teachers who have organized trips to Japan, some small groups of ten students to large sports and musical groups numbering up to one hundred students, including ten staff members and their equipment!

On average, international student trips will require a minimum of one year of preparatory work and ideally two years for large groups such as a school band or a sports team. The only caution with a two-year timeline is that there may be a danger, in some cases, of declining student interest halfway into the project, so it is important for teachers to generate activities that will sustain the momentum. School wide activities such as Japan Day or concerts will help to maintain or regain the momentum.

1.2 Benefits of Global Travel

Global Education allows students to appreciate the differences and similarities of cultures: it helps to increase their knowledge of our precious world, increases interaction with peers, highlights important world issues, and encourages them to become active learners and advocates. Global travel will bring into reality lessons learned in the classroom and helps to develop student empathy for other cultures, as well as a greater understanding of political and economic forces that impact society. Students will develop a greater sensitivity to the challenges faced by English-as-a-Second Language students within their own school as they try to communicate with Japanese counterparts. In addition to improved communication skills, they will also develop critical thinking skills.

Global issues such as education, the environment, energy, food, gender issues, globalization, water sustainability, health, natural disasters, peace and war, rice cultivation, rural development and volunteerism can be taught as cross-curricular topics in many subjects.

2. Japan as Your Classroom

2.1 Elementary and Secondary Education

In 1876, with the passing of the Haitorei Edict that banned the wearing of swords, feudalism came to an end and Japan fully embraced Western learning. Ironically, it was the fear of Western colonization that convinced enlightened leaders to embrace Western knowledge in order to insure Japan's autonomy. First time visitors to Japan are surprised to see the Romanized English signs and a Japanese population with basic knowledge of English. Japanese students take English language courses from grade seven to the final year of high school, and English words have crept into their everyday language.

Japan boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the world, with the adult literacy rate at 99% out of a total population of 127.5 million people (July 2006 figures). After the second world war, Japan's educational system was changed and is now made up of six years of elementary school, three years of junior and three years of senior high school, and four years of university or two years of junior college.

The Japanese educational system has a great impact on children during their formative years. On average, they will spend 240 days a year in school and about 60% of students attend "cram" (juku, yobiko) schools at the end of the day.

When deciding on the time of year for a school visit to Japan, please keep in mind that the Japanese school year begins in April and consists of three terms that are broken by short holidays in the spring and winter. Summer holidays are only one month in August; therefore, early July is an ideal month for Canadian students to see a school in session. Please consult sources for specific National Holidays.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Education

In the preparatory year, there will be opportunities for subject teachers to infuse Japanese topics or units into existing courses of study. Such an in-depth approach will help to dispel the stereotype of Japan as an 'exotic' and 'mysterious' nation.

Although Japan is an ancient civilization with a rich past, it is in the forefront of modern science and technology. It is a nation that has managed to harmonize the lessons of the past with the realities of

today for a better future. Canadian students are familiar with manga, watch anime movies and are aware of the latest Japanese developments in robotics. In major Canadian cities, a large number of non-Japanese students take Saturday morning Japanese language classes. Canadian teachers will discover that their students are in-tune with the latest cultural and technological developments coming out of Japan; thus making them receptive to learn more substantive information about Japan.

A comparative study of Canada and Japan that examines important issues and events is the suggested approach. To assist you, a sample list of topic areas and a list of suggested Japanese sites for visitation is given below. Please note that the topics and the sites are not exhaustive (there are over 800 museums in Japan). You are encouraged to check websites for a comprehensive listing of Japanese museums (<http://www.museum.or.jp/vlmp/japan.html>) and places of interest in other parts of Japan that fit your itinerary (<http://www.jnto.go.jp>). Please keep in mind that most of the museums do charge for admission and you are advised to budget accordingly. Many of the topics listed are also interdisciplinary and can be taught in other subject areas.

1. Technology and Industry:

National Science Museum	Tokyo	7-20 Uenokoen, Taito-ku http://www.kahaku.go.jp/english/
The study of the changing global environment and its impact on species from the Jurassic age to present.		
Tokyo Electricity Denryoku-Kan	Tokyo	1-12-10 Jinnan, Shibuya http://www5.mediagalaxy.co.jp/Denryokukan/
The study of: the relationship between lifestyle and electricity, electric generation, the mechanics of electrical transmission, and the relationship between environment and electricity.		
National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation: Miraikan	Tokyo	2-41 Oumi, Kouto-ku http://www.miraikan.jst.go.jp/index_e.html
Introduction to the latest technology, such as humanoid robots - workshops are available.		
Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology	Aichi	4-1-35 Norikake-shimachi, Nishi-ku, Nagoya, Aichi http://www.temit.org/english/index.html
The critical importance of research in all manufacturing sectors, such as the automotive industry.		
Toyota Centre	Aichi	1 Toyota-cho, Toyota, Aichi http://www.toyota.co.jp/toyotakaikan
The importance of the environment, safety, ITS, etc. via models and story panels. A Toyota factory tour is available.		

Nissan Mobile Oppama Factory	Kanagawa	1 Natsushima-cho, Yokosuka, Kanagawa http://www.nissan.co.jp/INFO/FACTORY/OPPAMA/
The coexistence between increased productivity and environmental protection. A product line tour is available.		
Mazda Museum	Hiroshima	Nihookimachi, Minami-ku, Hiroshima city, Hiroshima http://www.mazda.com/mazdaspirit/museum/
The history of the automobile and changing technology. A factory tour is available		
Panasonic Centre	Tokyo	2-5-18 Ariake, Kouto-ku http://panasonic.co.jp/center/tokyo/en/index.html
Learn how human dreams are related to technology and the environment.		
Nippon Steel Corporation	Kitakyushu, Fukuoka	1-1 Tobihata, Tohata-ku, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka http://www.yawata.nsc.co.jp
A factory tour that focuses on how the facility was built with environmental sensitivity with the latest in production technology.		

2. Environmental Protection, Natural Disasters, Public Welfare:

Osaka City Environmental Management Bureau	Osaka	1-1 Hokukoushiratsu, Konohana-ku, Osaka http://www.city.osaka.jp/kankyojigyo/english/index.html
Learn about recycling and proper waste management in a waste incineration plant.		
Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution	Hyogo	1-5-2 Wakihamakaigan-Tori, Chuo-ku, Kobe http://www.dri.ne.jp/images/english_all.pdf
Disaster prevention through videos and models of the Kobe Earthquake.		
Unzendake Disaster Memorial Museum	Nagasaki	1-1 Heiseimachi, Shimabara http://www.udmh.or.jp
Mechanical simulation of volcanic and natural disasters.		
Tokyo Fire Department Disaster Prevention Centre	Tokyo	4-6-6 Yokokawa, Sumida-ku http://www.tfd.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/index.html
A simulation of disaster prevention against earthquakes and rainstorms in daily life.		
Huis Ten Bosch	Nagasaki	1-1 Huistenbosch-cho, Sasebo http://english.huistenbosch.co.jp/index.html
A tour of the environmental facility, to view wastewater treatment.		

Japan Centre for Climate Change Action	Tokyo	1st Floor, Prime Shintanicho Building, 1-11-9 Azabudai, Minato-ku http://www.jcca.org/ondankan/pdf/english.pdf
The relationship between global warming, energy consumption and conservation.		
Oita Social Welfare Nursing Care training Centre	Oita	3-4-1 Akenohigashi, Oita http://www.okk.or.jp
Learn about the knowledge and skills needed for the care of the elderly and physically challenged people.		

3. Japanese History:

Historical Village of Hokkaido	Hokkaido	50-1 Konopporo, Atsubeku-cho, Atsubeku-ku, Sapporo http://www.kaitaku.or.jp/info/info.htm
An outdoor museum that explains Hokkaido's historical buildings from the Meiji (1868 - 1912) and Taisho (1912 - 1926) era. Learn about the pioneer history of the region.		
Tokyo National Museum	Tokyo	13-9 Ueno Koen, Taito-ku, Tokyo http://www.tnm.jp/en
Study Japanese history from exhibits of National treasures to other outstanding works of art.		
Kyushu National Museum	Dazaifu City, Fukuoka	4-7-2 Ishizaka, Dazaifu, Fukuoka http://www.kyuhaku.com/eng/
The history of cultural exchange between Japan and Asia.		
National Museum of Japanese History	Sakura City, Chiba	117 Jonai-cho, Sakura, Chiba http://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/english/index.html
This museum provides a comprehensive view of the history and culture of Japan.		
Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum	Hiroshima City, Hiroshima	1-2 Nakajima-cho, Naka-ku, Hiroshima http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/
Learn about the importance of peace education through an examination of the facts about the atomic bomb.		
Nishijin Textile Centre	Kyoto	Horikawa-Imadegawa, Minami-Iru, Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto http://www.nishijin.or.jp/eng/eng.htm
Workshops on Kimono wearing, Nishijin weaving, and traditional performing arts.		

3. Let's Get Started

3.1 JNTO School Matching Service

In a sincere effort to give Canadian students and teachers the opportunity to interact with Japanese students and staff, the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) has created a “New School Matching System for Educational Trips to Japan”.

By establishing a direct link to the National Council for Promoting Educational Trips to Japan, JNTO has introduced a new system to help North American schools (or companies/organizations working on their behalf) find a matching school in Japan for educational visits or exchange programs. Statistically speaking, 7,144 students made educational school trips to Japan in the 2004 fiscal year (based on research done by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan). It is hoped that this new system will alleviate the difficulties in finding counterpart Japanese schools and greatly increase the amount of educational trips to Japan.

For more details or to apply, please contact the JNTO Toronto office **as far in advance as possible** to the departure date with the following information:

- 1) Name of the applying school, company or organization (and contact information such as address, phone number, fax number and e-mail address)
- 2) Number of participants (including students, grade level, teachers, translators/guides, and parents/chaperones)
- 3) School information (The Canadian school's profile and contact information)
- 4) Destinations the group would like to visit in Japan
- 5) Land operator or travel agent in Japan, if known, and contact information
- 6) Requests regarding the school visit, including: trip dates (more than one option), desired location (more than one option), type of school, desired activities, and other requests (home stay, home visit, etc.)

Please keep in mind that applying as far in advance as possible will greatly increase the chances of finding a counterpart Japanese school.

3.2 A Trip Tailor-Made for You

The **two-week educational/cultural trip** seems to be the most popular length with schools. Given a total of twelve days in Japan (two days lost for travel to Japan and back), the students will have enough time to sample traditional Japanese culture, visit historic, commercial and geographic sites, as well as visit schools and take part in a short-term home stay if arranged early enough. The itinerary will evolve once a school planning committee has been established and a reputable travel agency has been identified. Most itineraries tend to be organic and will evolve at the beginning of the planning stage, but it is important for the sake of the parents that a close approximation of the travel costs be determined earlier rather than later.

The short-term trip may provide the opportunity for the establishment of sister school relationships, which may lead to reciprocal **one year student or teacher exchange programmes**. Canadian students interested in the one-year exchange should consult with their guidance counselor to determine if some of the courses taken in the Japanese school will be granted a matching credit upon return. The home school usually has the latitude to issue open credits, although mandatory subjects may not have the same flexibility. Some students may opt to take a summer credit course prior to leaving to reduce the number of courses that they will need to make up upon return. Many boards of education offer Distance Education credits, but students are warned that this may be a heavy workload on top of the course demands of their host school.

Summer teacher study tours for educators are enjoyable and highly recommended. There is comfort in traveling with peers, and the time together allows for the sharing of classroom resources, discussion of pedagogy and exchange of observations. An additional project for consideration is the **intensive summer credit courses**. Some Canadian travel agents, in co-operation with local boards of education, offer a system-wide intensive summer credit course abroad that is usually of a three-week duration. Students will be gathered from within and outside the sponsoring board jurisdiction. In exchange for teaching the course, the teacher's flight and room and board are covered. Many teachers organize a series of pre-departure classes in order to free up more time for daily excursions. If there are no travel agents with such a summer programme available, perhaps you can take the initiative. You will require board approval to run the off-campus course and a host school that will allow you to use a classroom for three weeks.

3.3 The Principal at Heart

The support of the school principal is critical to the success of any international trip!

Regardless of the fact that the initiative for the Japan trip may have come from an enthusiastic teacher, the principal is the one who gives the initial approval and is the gatekeeper to the senior administrators within the board. The principal can provide advice and assistance in the area of budget, internal and external funding sources, as well as help to steer you through the multitude of paperwork. As the leader of the school, he or she will ensure that the project has the support of school staff and parents.

The daily demands of managing a school makes it impossible for the principal to look after the leadership of the trip. The principal will select, through an interview process, a teacher coordinator(s) (male and female teacher if the group is co-educational) who will organize all aspects of the trip and who will travel with the group. The principal should also be an ad hoc member of any committees formed.

3.4 Teacher Coordinator

Like the Greek god Atlas, the teacher coordinator will feel as though they are carrying the whole world on their back most days. Luckily, that burden will not be for a lifetime (just a year or two) and it does have the reward of great memories and lasting friendships. Although this list is not exhaustive, here are some of the qualities a principal should look for in a prospective teacher coordinator:

- sensitive
- flexible
- creative
- self-motivated
- fair and firm disciplinarian
- active in extracurricular activities
- enjoys new challenges
- works well with adolescents
- shows interest in other cultures
- organized
- good fundraiser
- good bookkeeper
- good communication skills
- enjoys working with the public
- good public speaker
- compassionate
- able to delegate responsibilities
- some travel experience
- reasonably good health
- good temperament

3.5 The Travel Agent

The first order of business for the coordinator is to select a travel agent to assist in generating the initial itinerary, determining the total cost of the trip and recommending a schedule of payments. It is wise to shop around for a reputable agent. Since the bulk of travel days will be spent in Japan, it is important that there are representatives who will be able to deal with issues that may arise in Japan. It is also important to invite the agent as a partner and a member of the parent/teacher committee.

Some things to look for when selecting an agent:

- their service rating?
- the number of years in the travel business?
- do they have offices in Japan? If not, what Japanese agencies do they use?
- ask for referrals
- have they had experiences in booking group tours?
- will the agency assign one person to work on the school's account?

Some travel agencies may have the flexibility to offer incentives. If the travel group is large, the agency may offer to cover the cost of one or more teachers. If this is not possible, the cost of the teachers must be factored into the overall cost of the trip. Keep in mind that the teachers are responsible for the safety and well-being of students during the entire duration of the trip, and it is not fair to have them pay.

Costing will include the following: air and ground transportation, hotel, Japan Rail Pass (recommended), luggage service, admission to facilities and guided tours, trip cancellation and medical insurance. Gifts and pocket money can be estimated separately but should be noted to parents as an extra cost. If possible, it would be convenient to purchase medical insurance from a company that has agents in Japan who will pay all medical expenses directly for you. It is wise to estimate slightly higher than the amount suggested by the travel agent in order to allow for currency exchange rate and unexpected costs. Determine if the agency can guarantee the cost of future increases. Once the initial itinerary and costs have been determined, publicize the Japan Trip in your school. The student application form should follow your board's guidelines on international travel. The poster should contain the following information:

- date of the trip
- length
- itinerary
- cost
- meeting date
- application deadline

Remember to balance your itinerary so that the students will visit different sites each day. Historical and cultural sites should be mixed with commercial and contemporary sites to maintain student interest. Allow short break times between sites to compensate for ‘jetlag’.

Your principal will advise you of the board application deadlines for approval of international trips. Without having some idea of the number of students participating in the trip, it may be premature to seek board approval prior to the first parent meeting.

3.6 Student Selection

The ability to pay for a trip should not be the sole criteria for student selection. Some students may not be suitable representatives of your school abroad due to their level of maturity. It is suggested that the candidates be screened in a two-step process.

The Application Form: Beside the basic family and medical information, the application should ask for the following information:

- their academic achievements,
- awards received,
- community service,
- personal values,
- interests and hobbies,
- history of vacations,
- three letters of recommendation (one current and one former teacher, and one community representative) and
- a minimum 500-word essay that asks, “What are your expectations for the trip and how would you use the knowledge gained in Japan?”

Promising candidates should be invited to the interview. The Application Form should state clearly the expectations of a successful candidate, and they must be aware of the contracts that they will be required to sign upon acceptance.

The Interview: The interview process will allow the candidate to expand upon the information in the application form and the essay. Several hypothetical scenarios should be posed that touch upon the issue of leadership, group consensus and self-image. The candidate should be able to clearly articulate their reasons for wishing to visit Japan and what they hope to learn. Upon acceptance, students and their parents/guardian should sign the following agreements:

- A Participation Agreement & Code of Conduct
- Fundraising Contract
- Payment Schedule Contract

Here are a few qualities to look for in a successful candidate:

- self-motivated
- consensus builder
- flexible
- trustworthy
- articulate
- good academic standing
- problem solver
- patient
- compassionate
- reasonable health

Successful candidates must realize that participation in the trip is a privilege that may be revoked if their academic standing is in jeopardy, if they are found to exhibit inappropriate behaviour, or if they have developed a serious medical problem.

Once the students have been selected, the coordinator should create a parent/teacher committee and a student committee to assist. Although a student committee may seem to be redundant, it is important that their participation is respected and their ideas are heard amongst their peers. The head of the student committee will sit as a representative on the parent/teacher committee and there will be a teacher advisor on the student committee.

3.7 Fundraising

Fundraising is an important component of any international trip even if all parents are able to finance the entire trip. Additional funds will mean upgrades in accommodation, more guided tours, payment of entrance fees, school gifts and perhaps a school jacket or a group T-shirt. Fundraising activities give the students clear benchmarks and will help to sustain and increase the interest level.

All students will sign a Fundraising Contract that will commit them to participate in fundraising campaign; aside from unique circumstances, no exceptions should be made. An important component of fundraising is a student volunteer tracking sheet that will record the number of volunteer hours and dollars raised by each participant as well as their payment history. Ongoing, private meetings should be held with each student to evaluate and reinforce the student's commitment towards the trip. A teacher with a strong business or computer background will be an indispensable resource.

Volunteer time can be used as a monetary credit toward the trip. Fundraising will also allow a more equitable student participation in the trip from among those students who may not have the economic means by having volunteer time used as a subsidy. Schools may also have discretionary funds to provide financial assistance to those in need.

A famous saying speaks of a journey of a thousand miles starting with one step. All too often people feel overwhelmed when they see the total cost of the trip. If enough time has been set aside, then follow the fifty percent rule. **At least half of the total travel cost can be covered through a vigorous and energetic fundraising campaign.** Concentrate on one fundraising event at a time and you will be surprised how quickly the fifty percent rule is realized.

Here are some fundraising ideas:

- car wash
- school dance
- Japan concert or a Japan Day Fair
- plant sales
- chocolate candy and almond sales
- silent auction (in conjunction with a concert or fair)

- seasonal specialty sales (Christmas, Easter, etc.)
- cash (or in kind) donations from service clubs
- school juice/pop dispensing machines
- board-wide karaoke competition for teachers and support staff

By establishing a good rapport with your travel agent, they may become an active participant in your fundraising campaign. The agent may be able to provide you with complimentary prizes for the various draws and competitions as incentives. The success of the trip to Japan is also in their interest.

School pop/juice dispensing machines do generate a substantial amount of money for the manufacturer. A meeting with a sales representative may create some innovative ways of generating money for the trip.

The fundraising campaign should involve the entire school population, and it is important that the larger community is also brought into the activities. A subcommittee in charge of publicity should be responsible for news releases and media relations. The selected students should be seen as ambassadors of the community and of Canada.

The school should also establish a separate bank account with the principal as one of the co-signers. Consideration should be given to depositing the money raised into a short-term, high interest bearing investment or account.

4. Preparation

4.1 Student Meetings

An effective and efficient way of maintaining the momentum is to have a regular series of student meetings. Meetings should be held on a specific day(s) of the month, and attendance should be mandatory. The following topics should be discussed:

- fundraising
- travel and itinerary updates (itinerary and handouts to be kept in a binder by each student)
- passport and visas (to be obtained well in advance)
- gifts to take and bring home
- travel tips
- currency exchange
- rules of conduct
- dress code
- packing tips
- orientation schedule
- journals (students should write daily journals while in Japan)
- hotel information
- spending money
- insurance
- electronic devices
- airport procedures

One regular meeting per month should be set aside for orientation, and parents should be encouraged to attend. The workshops should cover such topics as:

- introductory Japanese language
- Japanese cultural norms
- history, religion and geography
- gender roles

- foods and food etiquette
- bathing
- transportation
- shopping
- home stay expectations (if arranged)
- Japanese school system

4.2 Documentation

The teacher coordinator must insure that they have the following photocopied documents from all participants, including teacher and parent chaperones:

- copies of student passports
- medical plan and number
- extended health care information
- travel medical and insurance information (if purchased)
- special medical and dietary requirements
- passports
- Visas for non-Canadians (contact the local Japanese consulate)

One set of documents will be taken on the trip, and the second set should remain with the home school.

In addition, the coordinator should provide the school with a copy of all contact names, telephone numbers and addresses in Japan and of the travel agent.

5. Conclusion

There you have it! Certainly this is not an exhaustive organizer, but we hope that it has helped you to realize that a student trip to Japan is possible if there is a systematic plan of action, a supportive administration, a competent travel agent, and energetic students and parents.

If you are fortunate to have access to a Japanese language school or Japanese cultural groups in your city, they will most certainly assist you in putting together orientation workshops. Adequate preparation of your students will help them make a positive adjustment to Japanese culture and a way of life that will insure a memorable experience for them.

If you are a teacher, take this organizer to your principal with a proposal. If you are an administrator, pass this organizer to that energetic teacher who might make an excellent trip coordinator.

Lastly, the Japan National Tourist Organization here in Toronto is a phone call or e-mail away. Let us assist you in finding a matching school through our 'School Matching Service'. Please contact us for resource support and extra encouragement, and say **Yes!** to Japan.

Note: The content of this organizer is based on information obtained and collected from educators who have extensive experience in organizing school trips to Japan, and is current as of the publication date of January 2007. Any errors or omissions are not the responsibility of the Visit Japan Campaign Committee or Japan National Tourist Organization.





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