

A Practical Guide For Japanese Traveling to the USA

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At the table:

- Eat slowly. Don't be in a hurry to finish.
- Conversation at the table is OK but make sure you don't talk with your mouth full.
- Always chew with your mouth closed.
- Don't reach in front of other people. If you want something, say, "Will you pass me the ____, please?"
- When eating soup don't slurp it. Eat it with a spoon and pick up the bowl.
- Don't burp at the table. If you do, say, "Excuse me."
- Don't pick your nose or blow your nose at the table.
- Don't lick your knife.
- Don't lean on the table with your elbows.
- Don't get up and leave while others are still eating. If you must leave, say, "May I be excused?"
- After dinner remember to thank the host for the meal. Say, "That was delicious. Thank you very much."
- Special Notes:
 - When invited to a home for dinner it is polite to bring a bottle of red or white wine. Red for beef, white for or poultry.
 - The day after the dinner it is polite to call and thank the host again. If you can't call then a thank you note is very much appreciated.

Appointments:

- Be on time for all appointments. If you can't make it on be sure to call. Not calling is considered very rude. Say, "I'm very sorry but I will be a little late."
- If you must cancel or re-schedule an appointment call as early as you can and apologize for not being able to make it. Say, "I'm very sorry but I won't be able to keep our appointment. Can we make it for another time?"
- Special Note:
 - Make sure you call. If you do not it is considered insulting.

Smoking:

- There are "Smoking" and "Non-smoking" areas in all restaurants, clubs, many bars and conference rooms. *The general rule is to ask before you smoke.* Say, "Do you mind if I smoke?"
- On domestic flights smoking is not allowed. Don't smoke in airplane toilets.
- Always ask if you may smoke in someone else's home.

In a Restaurant:

- If you have a reservation arrive on time. If you can't be time call the restaurant and let them know. Most restaurants don't hold tables open for more than 20 minutes. Make sure to call.
- Don't be loud or arrogant.
- Don't talk "down" to waiters or waitresses.
- If you get something you didn't order you can say, "I don't think I ordered this."
- Remember to be courteous. You will get much better service.

In a Hotel:

- First of all check where the fire escape stairs are and remember the quickest way to get to them in case of an emergency.
- *ALWAYS LOCK YOUR HOTEL ROOM DOOR, EVEN WHEN YOU ARE THERE!*
- Special Note:
 - Many times hotel and motel restaurants are average in quality and rather expensive . Usually restaurants away from the hotel will be better.

Tipping:

- Restaurant breakfast and lunch. Usually 10 to 15%.
- Restaurant dinner. Usually 20 %. Never less than \$5.00.
- Airport porters. Usually \$2.00 per suitcase.
- Taxi drivers. Usually \$2.00 for every \$10.00 of fare.
- Hotel room service. Small services (towels, soap, sheets, etc.) usually \$2.00. Large services (catered dinner, champagne, whiskey, etc.) usually \$5.00 to \$10.00.
- Bellhops. Usually \$5.00.
- Special Note:
 - You don't have to tip the front desk personnel. Also, if service is not good or if the staff is not polite you do not have to tip.

Public Transportation:

- When getting on or off any public transportation it is very impolite to shove, push or crowd anybody.
- It is considered polite to offer your seat to the elderly and physically challenged (handicapped people).
- Many trains and buses do not announce stops. They expect you to know where you are going. Make sure when you leave that you check to see if you have forgotten anything.

Driving:

- Make sure you have an international driver's license with you and your passport. Also, have your Japanese driver's license.
- Don't honk at other drivers. This is very rude and can sometimes lead to trouble.
- In America the roads are opposite that of Japan. The best way to not get confused is to remember that in a standard left hand drive automobile the driver is always next to the dividing line.
- Don't go over the speed limit.
- Always wear a seat belt.
- *DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE.*

Gifts:

- When taking gifts to American people, small gifts of Japanese origin are very much appreciated. Gifts such as chopsticks, Japanese traditional folding fans, Japanese Ukioe, Japanese lacquer ware or Japanese ceramics are always very much appreciated. Also, many people appreciate a Japanese newspaper or Japanese money as souvenirs.
- Don't give gifts as a bribe. It is best to give a gift *after* a favor is done, *not* before.
- Wedding gift. Money is usually the best type of gift. \$100.00 in an envelope is adequate.
- Wedding anniversary gift. Champagne is always appropriate.
- Funeral gift. *DO NOT* give money. Flowers with a card are sufficient.
- Birthday gift. Again champagne is good. Also, money is appreciated. \$50.00 in an envelope is plenty.

Emergency:

- Always have the telephone of the Japanese Embassy with you.
- The emergency number in America is 911. Remember to speak slowly and clearly. *Don't panic*. Give the operator the telephone and address from where you are calling and the nature of the emergency.
- If you can't remember the emergency number dial "0" for the Operator. She will be able to help you. Remember, *speak slowly*.
- Never carry more than \$100 cash with you.
- If you encounter a thief, *don't resist*. Give him what he wants and usually he won't harm you.

Introductions:

- Always introduce the man to the lady. Never the lady to the man.
- When shaking hands grip firmly and look at the person's eyes.
- A man should always rise for an introduction.

General Information:

- Always address a person by their last name unless told to use their first name.
- When speaking always look at the person to whom you are talking.
- Americans also have *honne* and *tatemai*. Don't confuse "straight talk" for acting impolite.
- Always sign Traveler's Checks as soon as you purchase them.
- If you accidentally bump into somebody, say,
"Excuse me" or "I'm sorry."
- Don't put cash, passport or important papers into your checked luggage. Always keep these things with you in your carry-on baggage.
- When sightseeing and taking pictures if a stranger says he'll take your picture with your camera, politely decline. Say,
"That's OK, thank you."
- If you have a hard time understanding what people are talking about, say,
"English is very difficult for me. Could you speak a little slower, please?"
- After dark travel in groups of two or more. It is not wise to go out alone. Also, inform your host family or a friend where you are going and what time you will return.
- Be careful when drinking outside. In some places it is not allowed.
- American Sushi - for the most part - is not the same as Japanese Sushi. Don't expect the same taste. It is different - not as good.
- Don't use "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss" with a person's first name. Only with their last name.
- When shopping keep in mind that most of the time tax is not included in the price. It is added at the time of purchase.
- Taxis are hard to get in America.
- Public telephones are many times hard to find.
- When using public toilets make sure you flush it *FIRST*. If there is a paper toilet seat cover use it. If not, wipe the seat before you sit down.
- Don't use toilets in train stations or subways unless it is an emergency. They are usually very

dirty and sometimes dangerous.

- Toilets can be use in hotels, restaurants, gas stations (sometimes not very clean), public buildings like city halls, libraries, and hospitals.
- Now days many people think that all Japanese are rich. Therefore be careful not to wear expensive clothing or jewelry that will attract attention.
- Don't flash money, talk loud or be rude. Don't act arrogant or demanding.
- Don't expect Americans to write to you. They are usually too lazy to do so. This does not mean they don't like you. They just don't like to write letters.

General Information for Men:

- Don't wear white socks with suits.
- Don't do *tachishoben* in America. You could be put in jail.
- Don't try to "touch" women on the subways or trains.
- Don't have your wallet sticking out of your back pocket. Someone will steal it.
- When walking with a lady, a man should always walk on the outside of the pavement.
- Remember, "Ladies first."

General Information for Women:

- Don't wear stockings, socks and high heels together.
- Don't wear stockings with shorts.
- Don't wear high top-tennis shoes with stockings or skirts.
- Always zip your bag and carry it over your shoulder, zipper handle in front.
- Don't go to a man's apartment unless you know him very well. Take a friend if you do go.
- Don't smoke marijuana or drink alcohol with strangers.
- Don't wear a lot of jewelry. It attracts attention and could invite trouble.
- A necklace can be easily yanked and stolen.
- Take Japanese sanitary napkins with you. American sanitary napkins tend to be bigger and more uncomfortable.
- Don't accept rides or go anywhere with strangers.

Special Note:

This information is by no means complete. But if the above rules are adhered to your trip to America should be exciting, enjoyable and safe. Have a good - safe - trip!

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