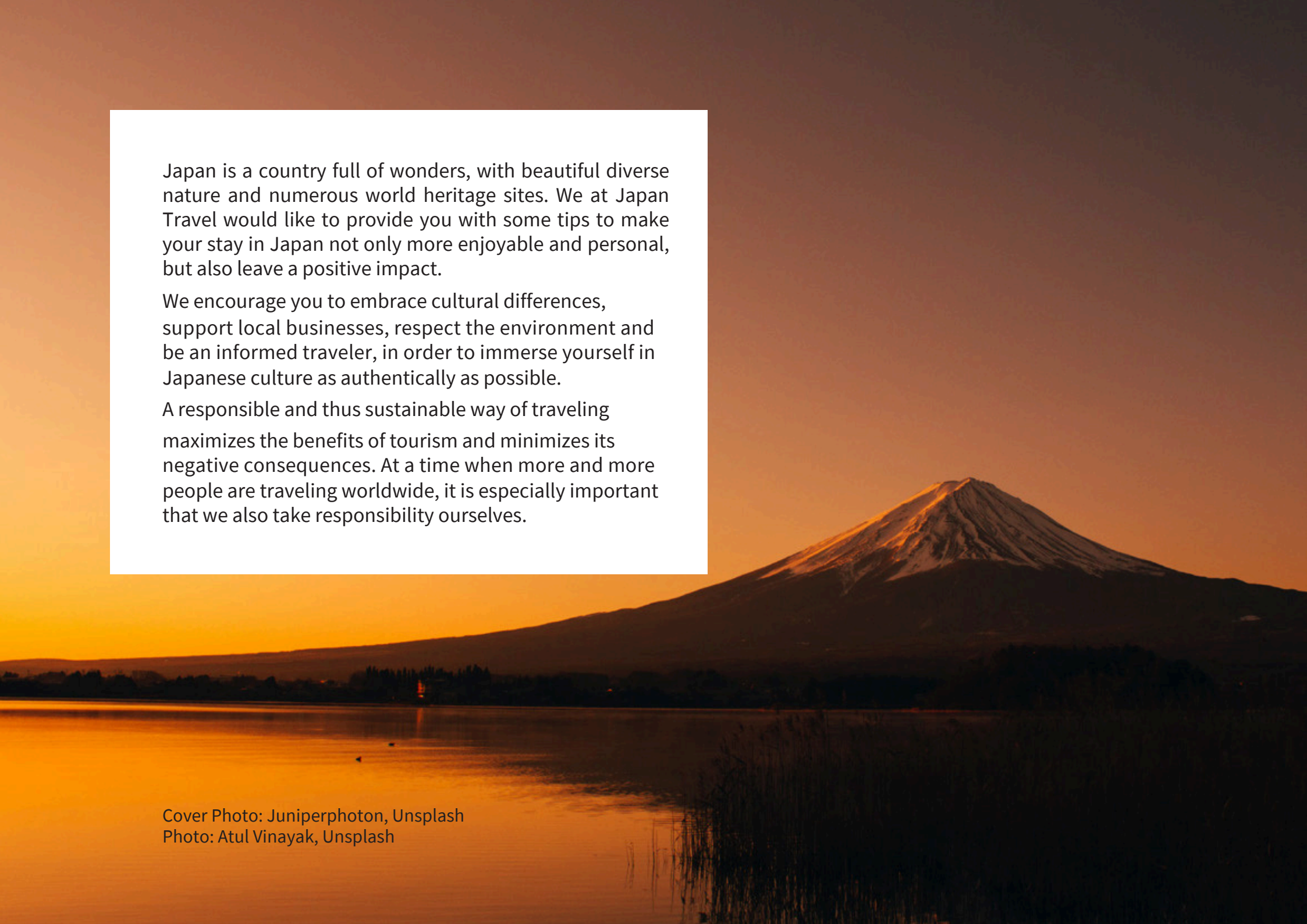


A photograph of a dense bamboo forest. The bamboo stalks are tall and thin, creating a vertical rhythm. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a dappled light effect. A larger, darker tree trunk is visible on the right side of the frame.

**Responsible
travel
in Japan**



Japan is a country full of wonders, with beautiful diverse nature and numerous world heritage sites. We at Japan Travel would like to provide you with some tips to make your stay in Japan not only more enjoyable and personal, but also leave a positive impact.

We encourage you to embrace cultural differences, support local businesses, respect the environment and be an informed traveler, in order to immerse yourself in Japanese culture as authentically as possible.

A responsible and thus sustainable way of traveling maximizes the benefits of tourism and minimizes its negative consequences. At a time when more and more people are traveling worldwide, it is especially important that we also take responsibility ourselves.

Cover Photo: Juniperphoton, Unsplash
Photo: Atul Vinayak, Unsplash

“What you do makes a difference. And you have to decide what difference you want to make.”

Jane Goodall



Photo: Ryoji Iwata, Unsplash

Respect cultural differences



Dive deeper into Japanese culture and respect cultural differences.

- Do you know, what makes your travel adventure in Japan even more exciting? Learning about local customs, traditions, culture and social conditions! The more you know about your destination, the better you will appreciate and understand it. You can find many detailed guides on the [Japan Travel](#) or the [JNTO](#) website. While Japan is a place for relaxation and adventure for you, it is also the beloved home of the people you visit. Therefore, explore mindfully.
- Experience and respect what makes Japan different and unique. Learning a bit about the culture before your trip, helps to understand the lives of people in Japan today. Traditional architecture is something that people in Japan are particularly proud of and want to preserve. That is why traditional accommodations (ryokan) are highly recommended. The [dining etiquette](#) is also sometimes quite special, and the religious aspects should be treated with the same respect as in your own country.

Photo: Yoshiki Yokoyama, Unsplash



- In Japan, a respectful way of greeting another individual is to bow slightly. Shaking hands is not very common.
- Try to learn a few words in the local language. People highly appreciate it, if you can say hello, goodbye or thank you. [Here](#) you will find some helpful words and phrases.
- Always ask politely before taking photographs of other people. Their privacy matters as much as yours. A shared memory has more value, and you can also send it to them as well. Also, Geisha (women who are trained in the traditional Japanese arts of music, dance and entertainment) in Kyoto are a common sight. Do not take their photo without permission, be respectful and do not get in their way.
- Japanese customer service is exceptional. “The customer is a god.” (in Japanese: Okyaku-sama ha kami-sama desu). Please treat staff and service providers with the same courtesy and respect.
- Many cultural sites like shrines, castles, even those in ruins, are sacred grounds, or UNESCO world heritage. Please be aware of this and act accordingly. For your own safety, please follow regular footpaths and the instructions on signs. Please do not take photos of the inside of the main shrine/temple building and during prayers.

Photo: Linus H. , Unsplash



Support the locals

Support local businesses, gain deeper knowledge during workshops, and slow down while enjoying Japan.

- Japan offers an incredible variety of local arts and crafts. From the famous daruma, which grants a wish, to washi paper, traditional knives, beautiful ceramics, lacquer art or chopsticks, you can take home a huge selection of souvenirs. Most of these crafts are handmade, which makes them even more special. Buying traditional crafts is a great way to support local communities and get a unique gift for yourself or your family and friends back home.
- If you are interested in a more practical experience, you can find a rich array of cultural workshops and classes in Japan. They are a great way to preserve and share the local culture and traditions in a respectful and engaging way. From learning the serene art of flower arrangement (Ikebana), calligraphy, Taiko drumming, dressing in a Kimono, folding paper (Origami) or joining a ceramics or cooking class – you can create your own unique memory or even your own lasting keepsake.

Photo: Clifford, Unsplash



- Slow down and take your time in less visited areas. This way, you can dive deeper into the local culture. Even in big cities, the surroundings change a lot if you are not just visiting the main hotspots.
- If you want to gain more background knowledge, local guides can share interesting facts with you and make your vacation even more special. They can also show you hidden spots and answer all your questions. Tipping is not the norm in Japan, but if you really love the guide's service, please feel free to tip them.
- Sushi, Okonomiyaki, Wagyu Beef, Ramen or Shabu Shabu are only a few examples of the delicious Japanese cuisine. There are many dishes to try for every taste and budget. With apps like [Happy Cow](#), you can quickly find vegan or vegetarian options that have less impact on the environment.
- If you want to enjoy the freshest food, it is best to visit the countryside. In the more remote areas, people tend to eat more farm-grown vegetables and fermented foods. By keeping delivery distances short for local and seasonal specialties ("from farm to table"), the environmental impact is reduced. The countryside of Japan has many hidden charms to offer.

Photo: Elijah M. Henderson, Unsplash



Respect the environment

Improve your environmental impact as much as possible and try to leave only your footprint behind.

- Reducing waste is an easy first step. Do not leave any garbage behind, no matter where you go. This is especially important when visiting national parks or rural areas. Even in cities, it is often hard to find waste bins here in Japan, so plan ahead.
- For minimizing single-use plastics, you can take your own reusable bags with you, instead of using plastic bags. Take refillable water bottles with you and try [MyMizu](#), a water refill app, that helps you find drinking fountains nearby and environmental-friendly stores, where you can refill drinking water for free. This significantly reduces plastic consumption and environmental pollution.
- You can also minimize your water and energy consumption by using the air-conditioning in your room sensibly. Ideally, turn it off when you leave your room. Also, turn off taps and switches when not in use. Furthermore, it is easy to choose to not have your towels and bed linen changed daily.

Photo: David Troeger, Unsplash



- Try to explore as much as possible by foot, by bike or via public transportation to minimize your carbon footprint. Another way to cut carbon emissions is to travel without too much luggage. The lighter you pack, the better for the environment.
- When hiking and exploring, stay on the beaten tracks. Japanese national parks have different categories of what is allowed and what is forbidden, so gather as much information as possible in advance.
- When spending time outdoors, please do not damage flora and fauna, and respect wildlife and their natural habitats, e.g., when snorkeling, do not touch coral formations, because this might hinder their growth. Also, cuts from corals might cause an infection.
- As for animal attractions, a rule of thumb is that animals should not be forced to perform unnaturally. The five freedoms of animal welfare are: Freedom from hunger and thirst, pain, discomfort, or distress, and freedom to express normal behavior.
- Wild animals should never be touched, not on land, or in water. It is not just against their natural behavior, but can also cause safety issues like a physical attack or infection. When watching wild animals it is critical not to scare them with bright lights (flashlight, camera flash etc.) or with loud noises like clapping or shouting.

Photo: Tiffany Chan, Unsplash



Souvenirs made from endangered species

Do not buy souvenirs made from species listed in the [CITES](#) treaty and [IUCN Red List](#), as well as cultural artifacts.

Common illegal souvenirs include the following:

- Ivory products such as jewelry, ornaments, and carvings
- Turtle/tortoise shell items (e.g jewelry and accessories)
- Bird feathers - especially for clients traveling to Okinawa
- Coral - especially for clients traveling to Okinawa
- Endangered Seashell Species - especially for clients traveling to Okinawa. Some species of seashells, particularly those from endangered marine species, are prohibited.
- Seahorses whether dried or used in decorations - especially for clients traveling to Okinawa
- Japanese snake wine (Habushu) which contains a venomous snake preserved in alcohol
- Shark fins often used in soups or as decorative items
- Whale products including meat, bone, and other by-products
- Products made from endangered marine life such as dolphin or whale bone carvings
- Antique items or artifacts when the export of such items is prohibited by Japanese law or international agreements
- Items made from protected plant species such as certain types of orchids or other rare flora
- Products from endangered wildlife such as certain types of leather or skins from protected animals



**Be an
informed
traveler**

Follow national laws while respecting human rights and customs.

- Observe national laws, regulations and human rights. We strongly oppose selling, promoting or advising about any commercial and sexual service, as well as any form of service including exploitation and harassment of children and adolescents.
- Even though child labor or child abuse is not a significant problem in Japan, it is critical to be aware of this issue. If you notice anything suspicious, please inform the nearest police station, or Japan Travel directly, so that we can pass on the information.
- Follow and respect the rules at religious sites. There is no strict dress code for visiting temples or shrines, and wearing casual clothing is fine.

If you have any more questions, e.g., about an activity, items you want to purchase or other topics relating to sustainability, [contact us directly](#) before your trip.

Photo: Jeremy Goldberg, Unsplash



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Photo: Gene Bratty , Unsplash