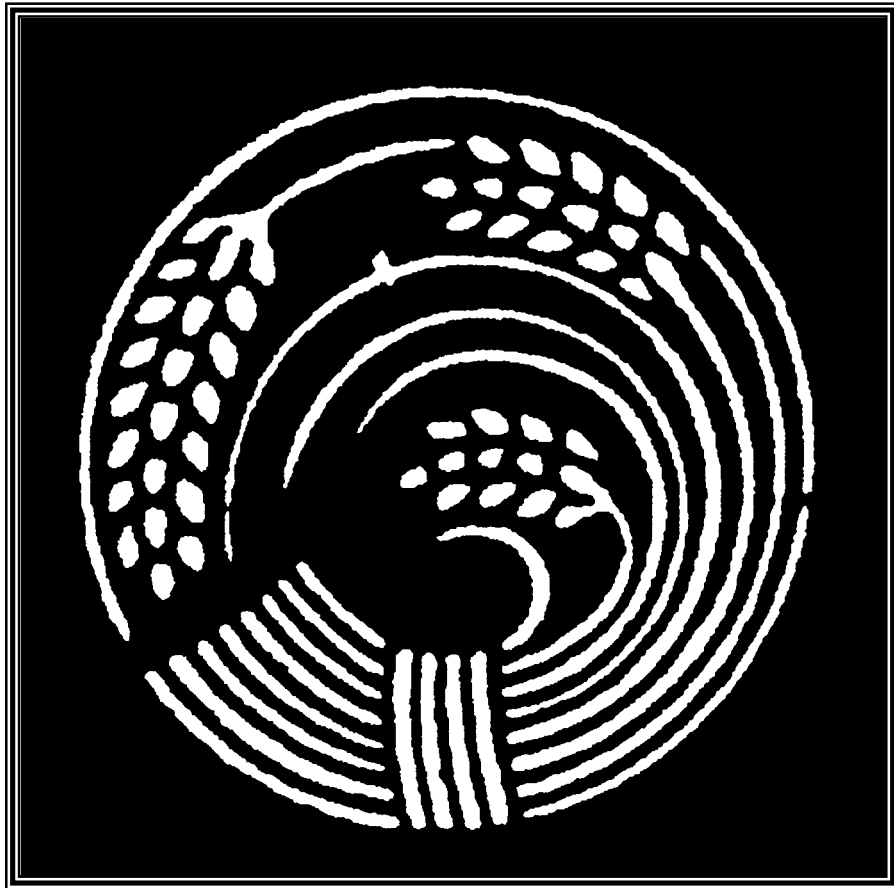


JET Programme Information Package



Manitoba / Saskatchewan
JET Alumni Association
Third Edition - May 1999

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Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to provide some information to those JET participants from the Manitoba and Saskatchewan regions. While you will receive many letters from the Embassy or Consulate General, there will be a number of questions that remain. The Manitoba-Saskatchewan JET Alumni have pooled their resources together to attempt answer the majority of those questions. It is our hope that this orientation package will help alleviate fears, and add to your excitement.

This resource was first produced in 1995 by the Manitoba-Saskatchewan JET Alumni. We would like to thank all of the contributors for their time and dedication to this project. As well, a special thank you must go out to the Ottawa JET Alumni, as we quite blatantly (!) used and copied a number of articles from their own orientation guide.

We hope that this guidebook will become a valuable piece of resource material to you, and we look forward to any suggestions you may have for future additions.

You are about to start on a fascinating voyage, on that, as Alumni, we all wish we could join you on!!

Gan Batte!!

This Edition

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A Message from the President

On behalf of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan JET Alumni Association, I would like to extend warm greetings and congratulations to all JET Participants. May you truly have a life-enriching experience in Japan. Having been through the Programme myself, and although I've already been back a number of years from Japan, the memories and friendships made continue to be influential. Virtually everything to do with my interests and professions pay homage to a relatively short, though infinitely happy part of my life.

I suppose that such an experience could have taken place anywhere without diminishing its impact. I do believe, however, that the tones and characteristics of such an experience are lent a unique quality due to where they had taken place. In other words, I am not sure I would necessarily feel the same profound degree of emotion had the setting – dare I say, the culture – been one closer to what is already familiar to me.

Japan, for all its contrasts and dichotomies, is unique. It is invariably a different cultural experience to the West: one that can leave an indelible impression, regardless of how it's perceived or interpreted. One common example of its contrasts for me was the sight, one day, of a Shinto priest, in full ceremonial garb – rendering him looking like something out of an illustrated text of the twelfth century – stopped at gas pump filling up his jet black Cadillac, complete with tail fins; whilst passersby dressed in contemporary styles seemed completely oblivious to the poetic irony of the scene.

Similar occurrences make up the colourful collage of my JET experience. Ones that I continue to look back on with fondness. It is not to say that everything about my experience was happy. I know now what it is like to be accorded celebrity status: to be feted and cheered, interviewed and published in the local town magazine; only to have others whisper and speculate behind your back. I now know what true helplessness feels like though one is wandering the seemingly familiar aisles of the local food shop looking for a simple box of tissues (I had initially picked up a box of, what I thought were, tissues and was on my way to the cashier stand when I suddenly stopped and

closely examined it. I never did buy that box of tissues, though this had more to do with the quirky and bemused looks I was getting from the female patrons, rather than for my ability to distinguish between a box of tissues and a box of.....tissues). I finally know what it is like to know me. For all its activity-filled nature, my time in Japan accorded me the opportunity to spend a lot of time on my own and not mind doing so. Towards the end of my three-year stay, I think I even preferred being by myself. This may not necessarily have made me any more new friends, but I think I became stronger for it; developing a high degree of independence that I continue to apply to my life.

I hope that this guidebook will start you off on what may potentially be a memorable, growth-inducing experience. In it are helpful hints on cultural differences, etiquette, professional conduct, the nature of your role as a JET Participant, and even travel tips. It will help to prepare you for departure: the various documentation processes you will have to go through, how and what to pack; mailing, housing, and general information on what to expect for your first few weeks and months in Japan. Read it thoroughly and refer to it continuously. It may not have all the right answers but hopefully it will help to formulate the right questions you can ask.

We, of the JET Alumni Association are at your service. Please do not hesitate to contact us at anytime. Remember, we have been there before. We know what it is like to go through periods of anxiety and excitement that an experience like this can bring.

Profound thanks to all those individuals responsible for putting this guidebook together, including Margot Cathcart, Valerie Dewson, Fran Bornn, Tracey Austford, and the indefatigable Leah Gowron, whose foresight, intelligence, hard work and charm have been the sparks that initiated its conception. For this Edition, special thanks go to Maria Prymak, Donna Bereziak, Gary Gervais, and Angela Neufeld for their contributions.

Kudos to all of you.

Tom Robles

Preparing to Go

Things to Send to Japan

Remember: You are only allowed two pieces of luggage for check-in, each bag not to exceed 32kg. The total dimensions (l + h + w) can not exceed 107 inches for the two bags or 62 inches for one bag. Excess baggage will be charged, so try to weigh your bags prior to arrival at the airport.

If you need to bring more (and many do), the safest and least expensive route is through Canada Post. Surface mail will take 4 to 6 weeks. Check with the post office for size and weight restrictions. One of the best ways discovered to ship things is in Rubbermaid-type containers (Rough Totes). The largest size that you can mail in is: 20kg (length + 2xwidth + 2xdepth = 78.7 inches / 2 metres). The containers also come in designer colours for the discerning shipper. To seal the container, poke a hole in the handles and run an electrician's tie (zip ties) through these holes. Finally, run wide duct tape around the lid and you have yourself a virtually waterproof container.

If you know your home or work address before you leave, send some packages a few weeks prior to your departure. Getting some goodies from home a week or two after you arrive in Japan will be a great spirit booster.

Things to ship:

- A portion of your *omiyage*
- Toiletries
- Clothes
- Shoes
- Seasonal clothing
- Books
- Exercise equipment
- Videos
- Sports/hobby stuff
- Household items
- Special foods
- Etc.

THE LESS YOU HAVE TO CARRY UPON ARRIVAL IN JAPAN, THE BETTER

A key factor to remember: If it makes you feel good, or you can't do without it, bring it.

An idea for packing items that family may send to you - instead of wasting weight and postage

on paper stuffing, consider popcorn as it fills in the spaces, provides a cushion, is light, and edible.

Clothing and Climate by Regions:

HOKKAIDO

One of the main advantages for Canadians living in Hokkaido is the similarity between the two regions (i.e. climate, geography, etc.). Summers in Hokkaido are pleasantly cool without the often-oppressive humidity of the more southerly Japanese islands. Unlike the rest of Japan, there is no rainy season and the precipitation is lower. Winters tend to be cold, especially in the central and northern regions where snowfall is heavy (but keep in mind that we live in a land where -30C is not uncommon, whereas in Japan the temperature has only ever dipped below -30 on three occasions).

As for clothing, people tend to dress more casually and comfortably than the southern regions of Japan. Bring a tracksuit! You do need winter gear (i.e. parka, boots, mitts, etc.). Winter clothing is available in Hokkaido, however, considering costs, size problems and the necessity of these items, it is best to ship your own clothes from Canada.

If you ski (downhill or cross-country), bring or ship your ski gear, as Hokkaido has an abundance of good ski areas at rates comparable to Canada's. Also, most schools in Hokkaido teach the students to ski . . . and you will be welcome at the ski trips.

TOHOKU

(Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Akita, Yamagata, Fukushima)

Spring is wet and cool, especially during rainy season. You will want to have rain gear (jacket and pants if possible). Spring is similar to Manitoba and your clothing here will be appropriate in Japan as well. The challenge is staying dry in the rain.

Summer is very hot and humid. It gets as hot as Tokyo, only for a shorter period of time. Light fabrics that are not tight fitting, and are made with natural fibers (cotton, silk, linen) are best. Shorts are fine for casual wear as long as they are not too short. Skirts are more comfortable

than pants for work. Men will definitely want short sleeves.

Fall is beautiful, although it can rain a lot due to the typhoons. Typical October clothing would be fine late into November. Light jackets and sweaters, pants, warmer skirts and long-sleeved shirts are necessary. The rain gear is useful once again.

Winter is not as cold as in Manitoba, although the humidity makes it feel that way. In the mountains, you will need boots, ski pants, long underwear, sweaters, etc. On the coast, the snow only lasts a day or so, so snow boots are less of a necessity. Heavy jackets, mitts, hats, etc. will be necessary in the coldest months. It will help if your boots are water-resistant.

No matter what the season, you will be required to dress professionally. For women, this usually means skirts or dresses; some schools are more informal and will allow pants or dress shorts. Men are generally required to wear shirts, ties, and often jackets. Be sure to take casual sports clothes so that you can participate in school clubs.

KANTO AND KANSAI
(Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Yamanashi, Nagano, Gifu, Shizuoka, Aichi, Mie, Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara, Wakayama)

The easiest way to know what to pack for these regions is to look at the seasons. Summer is hot and humid. Walking shorts and short-sleeved cotton shirts are good for work. Women will be able to wear walking shorts as long as they are professional looking. During the typhoon and rainy seasons, you will need good rain gear. Remember that chances are good that you will be riding your bike in the rain. Gore-Tex or similar rain gear is recommended, as the material is wind-proof, waterproof, and breathable. Traditional plastic rain gear will stick to you, and you will only end up wet on both sides. For fall and spring a polar fleece jacket and/or windbreaker will suffice. A winter ski jacket or wool coat can be comfortable as well. Long underwear is great for around the apartment.

For the most part, what you wear in Canada will be acceptable for teaching. The only thing absolutely unacceptable is jeans.

SHIKOKU, CHUGOKU, AND KYUSHU
(Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, Kochi, Tottori, Shimane, Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Oita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima)

July and August will be very hot and humid with very little breeze (30C to 38C). Your first month will consist of meetings, so appropriate business clothing is necessary. Dresses, pants, skirts, and dress shorts are good to wear. For men: short sleeved shirts and ties. All Japanese women wear pantyhose all summer, but you can probably get away with not wearing any. Be safe the first few days and then use your discretion.

In autumn, a light sweater or long sleeves are necessary. By December, you will need a light jacket. In the winter, there will not be any snow, but the weather will be quite damp, often with a cold wind from the ocean. Houses and schools are cold because they are unheated. The best bet is to layer clothes for school. Tights, long underwear, and turtlenecks are good. Boots are not necessary. In your home you will need to layer as well, so sweats are a great idea.

By spring you are back to warm weather clothing. By June, you are in the rainy season. The whole month will be wet and very humid. Rain gear including duck boots is a must.

OKINAWA

Unfortunately, no information from alumni was available for this region. The climate is tropical, so it will be a safe bet that you will not have to bring your ski jacket. However, you may travel to regions in Japan where this sort of clothing would be suitable. Think cool and natural fibers and you will do fine.

Note: Wherever you are headed, the best source of information on weather and clothing will be the CIR/ALT that you are replacing.



Cosmetics

Ladies: Stock up on certain cosmetics before you leave Canada. A vast array of lipsticks and nail polishes is available, in shades complimentary to Asian colouring. Foundations, powders, blushes, and eye shadows may be more difficult to locate. Shiseido is the #1 cosmetics company in Japan. They have an assortment of cleansers, toners, creams, etc. Perfumes are expensive and selection may be limited, even in larger centres. Stock up at duty free!

Gentlemen: aftershave and cologne are available, but again, selection is limited.

Toiletries

You do not have to worry too much about soap, shampoo or other hair care products. A variety of common brands is available at reasonable prices. However, if you are "addicted" to salon products, you will have to bring your supply from home. Home perm/colouring products are available, but geared to Asian hair. Keep this in mind and pack accordingly.

Bring or ship enough deodorant to last for the duration of your stay. Do not even bother trying to find any in Japan that will be suitable. But realize how much you use. One unnamed JET had to stay the full three years just to use up the initial supply that he brought with him.

Contact lens supplies are available in major centres, but even at that, the selection is limited. Bausch and Lomb is the #1 brand in Asia. Heat cleaning is still standard practice for Japanese lens wearers. It is probably best to ship what you will need.

Tampons and pads are readily available, although you will probably have some problem locating "super-absorbent" brands. Keep this in mind and pack accordingly.

Non-prescription birth control devices (foams, jellies, etc.) are available . . . but do you really want one of your conversations with your male, elderly supervisor to be about the Japanese to English translations for these products? For peace of mind, and the sake of personal privacy, bring what you need from home. Japanese condoms are good quality, but like with shoes,

you have to be concerned with size and may want to consider bringing a supply from Canada.

Sun tan lotions are available, but in limited SPF numbers and very expensive. If you are hooked on a certain brand, put an extra bottle in your "mail to Japan" box (es).

Omiyage

One of those Japanese words you'll be hearing before you leave. It literally means "a gift of respect." What and to whom you give these gifts is up to you. You will not be ostracized if you forget (or just don't) give out gifts. Although gift giving is important to the Japanese, they do not expect foreigners to follow this custom. However, giving gifts is a nice gesture and should help new arrivals get off on the right foot. Two important points to remember is that it is better if you wrap it and it's okay to buy the *omiyage* there if you didn't bring something with you.

The following is a list of some ideas for things to bring with you:

- Liquor (especially Canadian Rye Whiskey)
- Ties / tie pins
- Picture books of Canada/MB/SK
- Scenic calendars
- Native/Inuit crafts
- Chocolates/candies
- Wild rice
- Maple syrup (small bottles)
- Maple sugar candies/cookies
- Place mats
- Handkerchiefs
- Key chains
- Writing paper/cards
- Lapel pins
- Paper weights
- Fridge magnets
- Book marks
- Canadian anything (mugs, pens, pencils, shot glasses, hats, pins, T-shirts, playing cards, flags, erasers, etc.)
- Soap stone carvings
- Jade carvings
- New minted coins/pennies
- Flavoured coffee beans
- Postcards
- Postage stamps
- Kites
- Crafts

Unusual Things You Can Take

The sky's the limit when it comes to what you can take with you to Japan. Keep one very important factor in mind: all JETs are allowed only TWO suitcases and one carry-on bag for luggage. Small exceptions might be allowed for a notebook computer or a temperature/pressure sensitive musical instrument . . . but do not count on this. You must contact the Consulate of Japan in Edmonton and the airline to get any excess items approved.

JETs from the MB-SK region have, in previous years, shipped everything from snowboards to bassoons. Here's a list of unusual shippables, and how best to get them from here to there.

1) Musical Instruments:

The safest route is to bring musical instruments as part of your carry-on luggage. For cellos and string basses, you would be required to purchase a 1/2 fare ticket for the instrument. Wooden instruments can be damaged by changes in air pressure and temperature. Security x-rays have been known to cause wood-fiber damage (but usually only in third world countries where x-ray equipment may not be as advanced. Shipping by mail is impractical and unwise.

2) Electronic Equipment:

As you are heading into the land of electronic "wizardry" do not bother to bring much in the way of electronics with you. Prices and selection are great in Japan, and the voltage will not be a concern if the item is purchased in Japan.

If you are bringing a computer, make certain that you have the proper adapters. Outlets in Japan only have two prongs, so it may also be a good idea to have a plug converter that allows you to use a two-prong plug. Computers are available in most offices and schools, but are not as common as in North America. Chances are that your office computer will be in Japanese.

3) Photographic Equipment:

There is a good selection of cameras and associated equipment at decent prices in Japan. Film and film processing is often cheaper than in Canada. If you're looking for some equipment check out the area near Shinjuku station in Tokyo, especially Yodobashi Cameras. Camera film (high speed) can be damaged by x-rays, so ask to have your film hand checked. Carry

cameras and camcorders as part of your on-board luggage.

4) Sports Equipment:

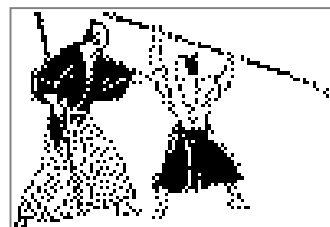
Most JET positions include access to a bicycle. . . the standard no-gear types, often with a basket and bell thrown in for good measure. It may not be a high-tech graphite mountain bike, but you'll come to like it (especially the basket when doing your grocery shopping). Mountain bikes, road bikes and racing bikes are readily available, although large sizes may have to be ordered. Bike shops in do not generally have a large show room displaying fancy bikes. But don't let their shabby appearances fool you. Any decent bike shop will be able to order any imaginable bike that you might want and have it in your hands within a few days. The reason you don't see good bikes in the shop is that custom ordering is the norm for top-end bikes. One Panasonic (yes, they make bikes too) racing bike offers various options that allow for over one million possible combinations!

So, should you take your bike with you? For most JETs the answer is no, as it's not worth cost of shipping. However, you can take a bike with you as one of your pieces of luggage. If you are into cycle touring (outside of the big cities, cycle touring is great in Japan), racing or have an expensive bike that you cannot live without, you may want to consider taking it with you.

Skis can be shipped or brought as one piece of your luggage allotment. They **MUST** be properly packaged (extra goodies can be stuffed in the bag). Skis are available in Japan, although the size selection for boots, poles and skis may be limited.

Specialty shoes in "*gaijin*" sizes are difficult to locate. Bring your hiking boots, board shoes, etc.

As for any other sporting equipment - if you are willing to pay the price, it will be available in Japan.



Japanese Customs and Excises

The following tax-free exemptions are permitted:

- ¥200,000 for personal use (includes camera equipment/electronics)
- Three 750ml bottles of alcohol / 400 cigarettes
- 56ml / 2 oz. of perfume

Duty free items "to follow" must be declared on entry. Items mailed without a customs declaration may be subject to duty, even if otherwise duty free. Contact the Consulate General of Japan and the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo for further information.

Starting-out Money In Japan

Until you receive your first pay in Japan (you will be paid monthly by direct deposit or in cash), you will need money for living expenses and perhaps some household related set-up costs. A representative from your host prefecture will give you a good idea of what to expect. Cash is the best way to take this money, as Japan is predominantly a cash society. Yen is available from any bank branch, but will need to be ordered in advance.

Traveler's cheques are another alternative, but it should be kept in mind that these will not necessarily be treated exactly like cash; instead, they may be cleared like a cheque. A bank would be required to do this and may charge a fee. Major hotels will be able to cash traveler's cheques.

If you have credit cards, this will be another means of having funds available to you. You can transfer funds into your credit card account, essentially giving yourself a prepaid line of credit. The more rural your situation, the more difficult it will be to rely on your credit card.

Limited use of your ATM card may also be possible in Japan, but do not rely on this exclusively . . . especially in the more rural areas.

Bank Accounts

You may want or need to have someone at home to handle your Canadian financial obligations, such as loan payments or other bills. For this purpose, you can designate a trusted individual to have limited power of attorney, or joint

accounts at your bank. These individuals will have the authority to draw and deposit money in specified accounts. Your bank will be able to advise you of specifics.

Keep in mind that anyone at anytime can make a deposit on your behalf into your account. You can also send deposits direct to your local bank branch. Alternatively, and more simply, if you have a chequing account you can send your Canadian cheques from Japan direct to payees and have someone in Canada make deposits on your behalf.

It will be far easier if you establish an automatic monthly withdrawal from an account in Canada to pay any loans, bills, car/mortgage payments, etc., that you will be maintaining while in Japan.

Medical Issues

Locating a doctor in Japan with a strong grasp of English may be difficult. Accept the fact that someone from your host institution may have to accompany you to the hospital (doctors usually operate out of small hospitals instead of offices), and possibly in the examining room. Remember that your co-worker will be as uncomfortable as you will be; relax, accept the situation and try to put this person at ease.

If you have an ongoing medical condition, or have recently had any medical complications prior to departure, bring along copies of pertinent information, x-rays, etc. The more material that you have to give the medical facility, the better off you will be.

According to the Pharmaceutical Society of Manitoba, it is virtually impossible to get a Manitoba prescription filled outside of the province, let alone Japan.

TAKE ALONG A SUITABLE SUPPLY OF ANY PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION THAT YOU CURRENTLY REQUIRE. As well, it would be wise to make arrangements for easy renewal for prescriptions.

Birth control pills fall into this category. Although birth control is now available in Japan, you would be best advised to not plan on getting it in Japan.

It is a good idea to have some familiar non-prescription medication with you (aspirin, cold

capsules, etc.) just for peace of mind. However, some over-the-counter medication can not be brought into Japan. See the JET guidebook for clarification.

No specific shots are required for Japan. Consult your doctor prior to departure to determine if you need any shots or malaria tablets. This will depend on where you plan to travel in Asia.

Contact the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers for a complete list of English speaking medical centres / doctors throughout the world. For a small donation, the association will provide you with an updated list of contacts. The address is:

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers
40 Regal Road
Guelph, ON N1K 1B5
(519) 836-836-0102

Dental care will have similar conditions to general medical care. A trip to the dentist can easily involve 6 to 10 x-rays, including full 360-degree headshots. A translator and copies of your dental records are advisable. Repairs to braces or retainers could be a challenge, especially in rural areas.



Photocopy Your Passport (and other important identification)

Your passport is your identification. It is very important that you take good care of it. In the event that it is lost, stolen, or destroyed, and must be replaced, it is much easier to do so if you have a copy of every page where there is information. Keep this in a place separate from that of your passport (e.g. your office desk drawer). Chances are that you won't need to use it, but if you do, you'll be thankful that you have it. You may also want to make copies of other identification as well as your credit cards and any prescriptions you may have. Having copies of these makes it much easier to replace them.

Canadian Auto Insurance

For those who owned a car prior to leaving for Japan, JETs returning to Canada may be faced with quite a surprise when you go to renew your Canadian auto insurance policy. If you cancelled your policy prior to departure, and then attempt to reinstate it upon your return, you may find that you have lost your former rating, and end up paying higher premiums. Beware!

You may be able to avoid this by taking the following actions:

- 1) You may want to explore having a family member or friend include your name on their insurance policy while you are away;
- 2) If you have a car while in Japan, get a letter verifying your living and driving in Japan before you leave, and your (hopefully) accident-free status during this time.

Arriving in Japan

Tokyo Orientation

This is going to be a crazy time. You're jet lagged, overwhelmed and it's so hot you want to die! It's the best! You have to attend all of the meetings, even if they are boring and totally irrelevant. You have to attend because 1) they take attendance and you'll be docked pay for not attending as well as being required to write a letter of apology to your host institution. Not a good way to start off. 2) This is not a paid vacation and it's expected that you will conduct yourselves as adults, which means going even if you'd rather be exploring.

JET Memo Books

If there is one thing you pick up at Tokyo Orientation, make sure it is this. **THIS BOOK IS YOUR BIBLE TO SURVIVAL IN JAPAN!** They are given out by CLAIR. You may have to track down their desk - DO IT.

AJET: What it's all about

Upon arrival at Narita Airport, you will see the smiling faces of dozens of AJET members. AJET is the national association of JET participants in Japan. Working alongside Mombusho, and CLAIR, AJET members help to coordinate the orientation week, work in organizing lectures and seminars at the mid-year conferences, and act as a link between the various embassies, the government administrations and JET participants. You will find that the majority of the seminars presented during the orientation week are by AJET members. AJET, at the end of your stay in Japan, will provide you with information concerning JETAA (JET Alumni Association).

Joining AJET (and JETAA) will enhance your time on the JET Programme, as you will have access to a vast resource of people experiencing, or having experienced, the same issues that you will face while in Japan. AJET coordinates a number of prefectural newsletters, yearly conferences and can be your primary link to other JETs in Japan.

While you may be uncertain about spending the small amount of yen to join, the rewards you will

reap with your membership easily outweigh the small cost.

Canadian Diplomatic Representation in Japan

After you arrive in Japan, you should register with the Canadian Embassy. In the event of an emergency, it is important for the embassy to have a record of your whereabouts. The Embassy and Consulate General are also a good source of information and resources on Canada. The Embassy also has an audio-visual library from which materials can be borrowed. There are now Consulate Generals in Osaka, Fukuoka, and Nagoya. Unfortunately, an address for the Consulate in Nagoya is unavailable.

The addresses are as follows:

Embassy of Canada
Akasaka 7-3-38
Minato-ku
Tokyo 107
(03) 3408-2101

Consulate General of Canada
3 Shoho Building, 12F
2-2-3 Nishi-Shinsaibashi
Chuo-ku
Osaka 542
(06) 212-4910

Consulate General of Canada
Toyota Building, 9F
4-8-28 Watanabe-dori
Chuo-ku
Fukuoka-shi, Fukuoka-ken
(092) 752-6055

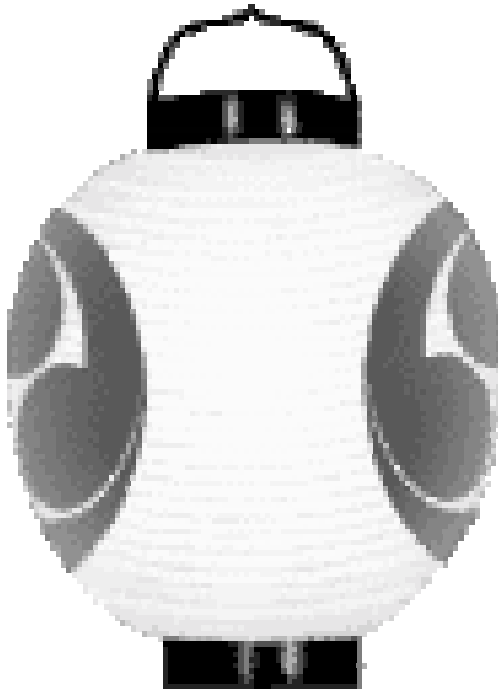
More Passport Photos

When you arrive at your host institution in Japan, you will have to go to the City Hall or appropriate government office to register as an "alien." To be issued your alien card, you will be required to produce two passport photos. It is cheaper to have them done in Canada, so when you get your photos taken for your passport, order a few extra shots.

Identification Papers

Your school or office will help you get your Alien Registration Card almost immediately upon arrival in your city/town. Known as the "gaijin" card, it must be carried with you at all times. It will be your primary source of identification in Japan. Other sources of identification will include your passport (there is no need to carry it with you at all times), an international driver's license (if you plan to drive in Japan), medical insurance papers, credit cards, youth hostel cards, etc. A number of these cards have to be obtained in Canada prior to departure.

A *hanko* (or *inkan*) and business cards will probably be supplied by your office or school. Inquire into both of these items if they have not been mentioned to you after your first week. The *hanko* will replace your signature on all official documents, bank forms, bill payments, etc.



Settling In

Replacing an ALT

There are both pros and cons to replacing an ALT. Whether the experience will be a good or a bad one, to a large extent, will depend on the person you are replacing.

If you are replacing a "Super JET," then you are in for a heck of a time for a while. Your school will expect you to basically just continue from where that person left off, not taking into account that your predecessor got to that point by the end of his/her stint . . . not at the beginning. You'll be expected to teach the same number of classes, in the same teaching style, be involved in the same number of clubs, and to some extent be the same person.

A precedent as to what an ALT should be and do has been set. If you are not capable of following in your predecessor's footsteps, just keep reminding your school/supervisor that you are just new to Japan (and likely even to teaching) and that you will need time to work up to that level. **DO NOT TAKE ON MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE.**

If your predecessor was not well liked, then you may have it just as tough. It may take your school a long time to warm up to you. You will have to work twice as hard to show that you are different from your predecessor before you are accepted.

Whether your predecessor was a "Super JET" or not, your school /office will have formed their own opinions on JETs, and on foreigners in general, based on their previous experiences.

The positive side of replacing another JET is that your school or office will be familiar with having a JET participant. Both staff and students will be more comfortable with a foreigner (perhaps less giggly). Your school will know what to do with you, and how to integrate you into the school system. You may be able to take an active part in lesson planning, and you should be able to expand upon the ideas of the previous JET(s).

Another advantage to replacing a JET is that there is a good chance of inheriting his/her Japanese friends. This is especially

advantageous if you live in rural Japan, as English speaking Japanese people are not so abundant.

A final point is that your predecessor has had a place to stay - whether it be a house or an apartment. Chances are that you will be staying in that same place. This eliminates the stress of locating accommodations and maybe paying key money. Your new "home" may come reasonably furnished. If not, your predecessor may be willing to sell you furniture, appliances, housewares, etc. In most cases, the price they ask for will be a good deal. If you think there may be a problem, you can wait until you get there or talk to other JETs. If you receive a letter or call with such an offer, act quickly. If you don't, chances are these items will be sold to renewing JETs in the area.

And so, you can see that replacing a JET has both its advantages and disadvantages. The best advice is to be sensitive to those around you and be yourself. Diplomacy is key and virtually any concern can be overcome.

Weather

The Japanese will try telling you that they have four seasons. It's a lie! They actually have six: summer (July-August), typhoon (September), fall (October-November), winter (December-February), spring (March-May), and rainy (June). Summer is hot, humid and you're going to want to sit in front of a fan and do absolutely nothing. Typhoon is wet, windy and you're going to learn to hate rain. However, there are some nice days in between the frequent typhoons. Fall is a truly wonderful time in Japan with pleasant temperatures and sunny skies. Winter is long, damp, and "cold." Sure the temperature isn't as bad as in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, but it's a damp cold. Once you're cold you never seem to warm up. Spring is the only season to out do fall in terms of beauty. The cherry blossoms are in full bloom, the weather is warming up, and koi (carp) streamers are everywhere. The rainy season is not six straight weeks of rain as some might have you believe. There can be some beautiful days in June, but be careful planning anything as the rain may come at any time and it may last for three or four days at a time. That brings you back to summer.

Congratulations, you just survived your first year in Japan!

Housing

Housing in Japan varies greatly. Apartments and houses are measured according to rooms. An example of this is: LDK (living room, dining room, and kitchen). Most Japanese homes have at least one room made of tatami mats. In fact, this is how rooms are measured. One tatami mat is 1.7m x .85m. Six, eight, or ten tatami mat rooms are common sizes.

ALT accommodation is dependent on your situation. Your housing may be a large house or an eight tatami mat room. Generally, junior high ALTs have more modern, but smaller homes. Senior high ALTs have larger, older accommodations. Prefectural ALTs (one-shots) also tend to have larger, older accommodations. The amount of rent you pay is dependent on your situation. Your rent could be nothing or as much as ¥80,000/month. On average, JH JETs tend to pay more, while SH and one-shots pay less. Location also plays a factor in your rent. Big city JETs will pay more than rural JETs.

Japanese homes are different in that the toilet tends to be in one room and the bathtub/sink are in another. All homes (apartments and houses) have balconies of some sort. This is where you hang your clothes out to dry (dryers are almost non-existent) and air out your futons. A word of warning: the neighbourhood ladies may watch to make sure your futons are hung out every 2-3 days.

Everything in Japan tends to be scaled down; this includes appliances. Fridges are twice the size of bar fridges and stoves only have two elements. The stoves tend to be gas, which means things cook faster, for those of you who are used to electric. One last thing on housing - most of you will not have central heating (Hokkaido is the exception). This means you will either be using kerosene space heaters, electric wall heaters, or a kotatsu (heated tables). One tip: If you use a kerosene heater and don't want to leave it on at night (not a great idea), get yourself an electric blanket or underpad that goes between your futon and bottom sheet. It will be the best 3 to 4000 yen that you spend on keeping warm.

Credit Cards

Canadian Visa, MasterCard, and occasionally American Express are accepted in Japan. You may get a questioning look or two because of your unusual card, but it should be accepted. The word "should" is not a guarantee. Japan is still primarily a cash-based society. Credit cards are becoming more common, but certainly are not accepted in all locales.

Take a look at the expiry date on your cards; should your credit cards expire while you are in Japan, you will have to get a special form prior to departure so that replacement cards will be mailed overseas. It will probably be easier to have them mailed to a family member and then forwarded to your Japanese address.

Medical Insurance

Japan has a national socialized health care system similar to Canada. JET participants are also covered by a comprehensive extended group health insurance plan. If for any reason you need to see a doctor, you will be charged a small percentage of the fee and then can recover these out-of-pocket expenses back by filing a claim on the group insurance coverage.

If for any reason you become seriously ill while in Japan and it becomes necessary to return to Canada, your health coverage under the Manitoba Health Services Commission will resume immediately upon your return. You may want to check into this before you leave, and a note will be put into your file. When you move, regardless of within Canada or leaving the country, your health care coverage continues for ninety days unless you are under a new health care program. When you return to take up permanent residency, your renewal with the provincial plan is effective immediately upon applying. There is no waiting period.

When you leave Japan following your contract, you may wish to explore purchasing travel insurance to cover you if you will be travelling for an extended period before returning to Canada. There are several packages available and most travel agents, either in Japan or Canada can give you information. However, your insurance in Japan covers you for a one-month period after finishing your contract or until you arrive back in Canada, whichever comes first.

Read your policy in Japan when you get it to see if you have adequate coverage for your needs.

Income Tax

Your JET Programme earnings are tax free! The tax treaty between Canada and Japan stipulates that income will be paid in Japan, and your JET Programme earnings, although they must be reported on your Canadian tax return, are not taxable in Canada. This means that in Japan your salary is increased above the standard monthly pay. This increase is immediately deducted to cover your Japanese tax. In other words, your host institution (employer) pays your Japanese national tax.

Canadian income tax forms are available from the Embassy in Tokyo, or you can have the forms sent from Canada. However, the Embassy will not supply tax advice. If you choose to complete your own return from Japan, you will of course need to have all appropriate receipts and documents forwarded from home. The Embassy will advise you as to the annual Yen/\$ exchange rate to be used on the return (or you can get the rate from the government web site). As well, the Embassy can provide information from Revenue Canada.

JET Programme earnings are reported as "other income" (FYI: line 104 of your return) and then deducted from taxable income under "additional deductions" (FYI: line 256 of your return). Completed returns are sent directly to the "Assessing Section, International Taxation Office" in Ottawa, with a brief letter explaining your participation on the JET Programme.

Remember: AJET dues are acceptable as a deduction as "Annual union, professional, or like dues." Keep your receipt if you choose to join.



Sending Money Back to Canada

The cheapest way to send money home is by means of a "*gaikoku kawase*" (international money order). The money order can be made out to someone in Canada. You will need to check with your local post office for charges. You fill in the forms and the post office sends it for you. It takes about three weeks to arrive at its destination as it goes via Ottawa.

Bank drafts can be sent, however they are more expensive. The advantage is that they are much quicker. Be aware that the regulations regarding money orders vary depending on the country of destination. The post office will likely have to check the manual the first time you try to send money home, so be prepared for some delay.

Note: Due to the banking reforms (Japan's Big Bang) in April 1998, the banking industry is changing rapidly due to foreign competition. So, different options may now be available. For example, Lloyd's Bank has introduced bank electronic transfers available from any bank in Japan. The cost is a little more than a postal money order, but cheaper than a normal bank transfer.

Mail from Home

Getting even a postcard or a flyer in the mail will become a big event for you in your daily life in Japan. While many will not be homesick, that little note from friends or family will make all the difference to your day. Emphasize to friends and family to keep in touch with you.

A video letter from home can do wonders for your spirit and you get to see the family. They too will enjoy a video letter from you to see you and how you live. One unnamed JET's video from Japan including a segment on how to properly use a Japanese-style toilet became a cult hit at home with family, friends, relatives, and neighbours!

Encourage your loved one's to send you small packages. Books, newspaper clippings, videotaped shows and movies or new recipes are all spirit lifters. Magazine subscriptions are great. Ignore the cost of having an overseas subscription and continue to receive your favourite magazines. Foreign magazines can

cost \$10 to \$15 each in Japan and are available only at a few English language bookstores.

Sexual Assault / Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any repeated comments, touch, looks or gestures that makes another person feel uncomfortable. Sexual harassment is a matter of power, not sex. It involves one person exerting subtle power or authority over another by way of sexual innuendoes to convey the threat. Sexual harassment can happen to men or women by either sex. Sexual harassment can occur from fellow JETs, JETs' spouses, teachers, principal, staff or a stranger. If this does occur to you when you are in Japan please tell someone. Silence will only make it worse.

Scenarios:

Touching, pinching, or jostling when you are in the subway does occur, especially in the evenings after the Japanese salary men are returning from work.

You can do a number of things:

- 1) Ignore the behaviour and hope that it will go away (the Japanese women usually do this);
- 2) Step on the offender's foot with your high heels and exert pressure;
- 3) Announce in a loud voice that there is a *sukebe* (pervert) present.

However, ultimately YOU have to decide to do what you feel is appropriate in the situation.

If you are accosted at a party (*enkai*) by a fellow teacher or principal, DO tell them their actions are inappropriate. You do not tolerate this kind of behaviour in Canada, so don't tolerate it in Japan. If they persist, move away from them and circulate the room or befriend a female teacher. The Japanese are quite curious about North Americans and their sexual habits, preferences and sexual activities. Again, tell them this is private information, which you do not want to discuss with them.

Social Do's and Don'ts

DON'T:

- Refuse a gift
- Give a plant as a gift
- Shake hands, unless the other person makes the first move
- Politely line up for trains or you may be squeezed out and miss the train
- Leave scraps in your bowl when you are a dinner guest
- Use the end of your *ohashi* (chopsticks) that you put in your mouth to serve yourself from the main plates
- Stick your chopsticks vertically in your bowl; lay them horizontally
- Get all soaped up and then jump into a Japanese bath; rinse first and then soak
- Wear toilet slippers outside the toilet room
- WEAR SHOES INSIDE A HOUSE, ESPECIALLY IN A TATAMI ROOM
- Blow your nose into your pocket handkerchief; use a tissue and try to leave the room first
- Wear inappropriate clothing: halter tops, short shorts, etc.

DO:

- Be careful expressing immense admiration over an object; it may well be given to you
- Always take a gift when meeting someone of higher status for the first time, or if you are a guest
- Remember to reciprocate gifts that you have received
- Always wrap gifts
- Give cut flowers, especially for someone cooking a meal for you
- Remove your shoes when entering most buildings
- Make noise when eating a noodle dish
- Line up for buses or taxis
- Try to use your Japanese, however good or bad it may be
- Remember to enjoy yourself

Driving in Japan

Don't be discouraged or nervous about driving in Japan. Due to the nature of insurance and license fees, a decent used car can be obtained at a very low price. The more rural you are, the more likely you will want a car. In the cities, a car may prove to be more of a liability.

It may take you a little while to get used to driving on the other side of the road from the other side of the car. In many areas, most of the roads will make you feel like you are driving on back lanes. If you feel the urge to get a car, don't be in a hurry; be a passenger for a while and ride a bike on the streets to get a feel for the roads.

Navigating can be challenging until you become comfortable with recognizing *kanji*; you cannot rely on highway signs having a *romaji* label included, although most major roads do. Some maps are available with place names in both scripts.

Your own vehicle can help you make the most of your vacation time. Extensive ferry links throughout the country connect all the islands. Having a car really help you get off the beaten track. Gas and car insurance, however, are substantially more expensive than in Canada.

For your first year in Japan, a current Manitoba driver's license is valid along with a current International Driver's License. This must be obtained before departure from the Manitoba Motor League. If you remain in Japan for a second year, it will be necessary to obtain a Japanese driver's license. Your host institution or prefectural CIR will be able to help in this matter.

Note: Although Custom's Canada will allow you to bring a car back into Canada tax and duty free if it was owned for more than six months before coming back, Transport Canada requires that cars meet American safety standards to be admitted. Effectively this means that you cannot bring a car back with you. If the car has a sticker stating that it meets American safety standards, you might be able to do it, but it is unlikely that a car bought in Japan would have that sticker.

Foreign Food Stores

Craving Kraft dinner, a Labatt's Blue, or a ring of garlic sausage? When the "homesick for a taste of . . ." blues hits, it is possible to track down a variety of western foodstuffs in Japan if you have access to a major cities.

Tokyo:

Kinokuniya Foods - located at the end of Omotesando in Harajuku, the two-story store beckons the expatriate with delicacies from around the world. It is an excellent source for cheeses, spices, canned goods, and pastries.

National Azabu - located in Hiroo (Minami-Azabu) just down the hill from Sacred Heart International School, and the subway stop in Hiroo. As there is a large population of western foreigners in the area, there are varieties of shops catering to foreign tastes. The National Azabu store is a good source for meats, dry goods, liquor, beer, and baking supplies. The second level has a good drug store (especially for hair care products) and card shop.



Dating In Japan

North American Women and Japanese Men
It is a rare occurrence for foreign women to date Japanese men, but it does happen. The Japanese men involved usually have very good English skills (a must if you want to go beyond drawing and pantomime), but there will be times when he will have no idea of what you are saying because of the words used or the cultural context. No matter how liberated your Japanese fellow is, he has been raised in a society in which dotes on him and caters to his every need. Be aware of this.

In North America, dating in pairs is common place. This is not the reality in Japan. Large groups of young eligibles go out together "en group." Only for betrothed pairs accompanied, often by a chaperon, are "separate" dates acceptable. Thus, casual dating is not commonplace and what you consider, as friendship may be in his mind a potential marriage partner.

Foreigners in Japan are not a daily occurrence unless you reside in a large urban center. As a mixed couple, be prepared for people to stare and even point at you. This may be quite frustrating for your partner since he actually knows what they are saying. Take note: signs of affection in public such as holding hands and kissing are not commonplace.

Typically, Japanese mothers are not excited at the prospects of a foreign daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law, it is feared, will not know how to take care of her little boy (he may be 29!). Worse yet, you may even have to live with your in-laws due to housing/space shortages.

All in all, dating a Japanese man gives one insight into family life and the societal pressure that exist for all parties involved.

Precautions:

You are in a foreign country, and therefore stand out and attract attention. You do not understand the culture or customs, so be aware. Japan is a relatively safe country, and people are usually helpful and kind, but do not put yourself at risk, i.e. getting into cars with strangers by yourself. Do not travel late at night by yourself (especially if female) to nightclub areas or remote spots. Remember you wouldn't walk down Main Street Winnipeg at night, so don't do it there either.

Teaching and Your Job

School Situations

There are basically three different school situations: high school (grade 10-12); junior high (grade 7-9); and one-shots. HS ALTs tend to go to a different school each day of the week, whereas JH ALTs tend to go to the same school for a block of time (one week to one month) before rotating to a new school. One shots, as the name suggests, go to different schools on no particular schedule.

JH ALTs are employed by a board of education in a city, town, or village. HS ALTs are employed by the prefectural governments and are assigned to a base school. One shots are also employed by the prefectural government but are assigned to a prefectural office.

Although these are the basic set-ups for the various positions, other situations are possible. With the increase in the numbers of participants on the JET Programme, there are more small towns hiring their own JET. In these situations, it is common for the JET to visit elementary schools and kindergartens as well as JH schools.

No matter where you are placed the students will all be responsible for cleaning the school. The students will also be actively involved with a club, a sports club, cultural club, or academic club. Junior High ALTs will be expected to eat the school lunch provided at the school and may be required to eat with the students. The lunches are provided by the school, but you will have to pay for them. Senior High ALTs must bring their own lunches and can eat with the students or in the teacher's room.

For the most part, you will only be required to work Monday through Friday. However, occasionally you will be asked to go in on a Saturday or a Sunday. In which case you will be given a day off during the week.

ESL Teaching Material

The most often quoted suggestion is to "pack a sense of humour and a positive attitude." So, try to find space in your bag for these items, as they will prove to be your best material.

For the most part, the JET participant is replacing an ALT. As such, you will also inherit their teaching material. A large bundle or tow of teaching hints will be presented to each ALT at the orientation meetings in Tokyo. With this in mind, the best advice is to NOT worry about rushing out and buying a ton of ESL material. What you can collect is an assortment of "Canadiana" material, as this will prove useful for your introductions, various displays, or simply as icebreakers.

Suggestions:

- Map(s) of Canada and your province
- Almanacs
- Flags
- Recordings of Canadian music
- Words to the national anthem
- Pictures, postcards, slides, videos of Canadian scenery, homes, clothes, etc.
- Canadian travel brochures
- Pins, pins, and more pins
- A sample of Canadian coins and bills
- Photos of family and friends
- Yearbooks
- Videos of TV shows (Sesame Street, Christmas specials, kids' movies)
- Canadian magazines
- Canadian/Native folk tales
- Samples of Native art
- Stamps
- A sheaf of wheat
- Tourist brochures from Canada, Manitoba, Saskatchewan in Japanese

If You Must Buy Something

As mentioned, it truly isn't necessary to stock up on teaching material prior to departure. However, if you will sleep easier with a few books packed in your suitcases, the following places are recommended as sources of material:

- Department of Education Library
Rob Fletcher Building
- University of Manitoba Bookstore
Fort Garry campus
- Manitoba Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre - 180 McPhillips
- Teachers' Store at Portage Place Shopping Centre

Quite possibly, the best source of reference material will be available to you after you have become settled into your working environment. The publishing houses in Japan have been extremely generous in shipping out sample books (at no cost) to ALTs. All it requires is the patience to write a dozen or so letters requesting English language tests and resource material. One Winnipeg ALT received over 200 manuals, books, worksheets, etc. during the course of a year. You will get a better response if the return address is to a school or Board of Education office. The following is a list of publishing houses in Japan:

Oxford University Press
Enshu Building, 3-3-3 Otsuka
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 102

Prentice Hall Regents of Japan
6-1-25 Kojimachi
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102

Cambridge University Press
c/o United Publishers Service Ltd.
Kenkyu-sha Building
9, Kanda Surugadai 2-chome
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Japan
Ichibancho Central Building
22-1, Ichibancho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102

Filmscan/Lingual House
Dorumi Yoyogi #1107
1-57-2 Yoyogi
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151

Harper & Row/Newby House
Shin-Nichibo Building
1-2-1 Sarugakucho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101

Seido Language Institute
12-6 Funado-cho
Ashiya-shi, Hyogo 659

Longman Penguin Japan Co., Ltd.
2-12-9 Kanda Jimbucho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101

International Learning Systems
Matsuoka Central Building 8F
1-7-1 Nishishinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160

Macmillan Language House
Shibaura 3-7-508
Minato-ku, Tokyo 108

Self-Introductions

Having to do self-introductions are common and take many forms. Any visual or audio aids that you have will be useful.

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Nothing is truer with regards to your self-introduction. Bring photos of your home and family. Some people have had great success with mini videos. The VCRs in Japan are the same system (NTSC) as in North America. About 15 minutes is a good length for a self-introduction. Remember to speak slowly and use simple, basic English.



Travel

Travelling in Japan

Train

Trains are the most accessible and convenient forms of public transportation in Japan. They are quite user friendly, even for the newcomer to Japan. Here's a rough guide to reading timetables to get you started:

1. Find your departure and destination stations on the map. Along that line, there will be two page numbers - one going in each direction.
2. Find the page number for the direction that you want to go.
3. Locate the departure station, to the right of it will be all the possible train times for departure - not arrival.
4. Check the times for the train that meets your schedule. Make sure that the time indicated beside your destination station. If there is no time, then the train doesn't stop there (i.e. express train does not stop at that local stop).
5. If your trip is longer, repeat this until each leg of your trip is determined.

Airplane

Travelling by plane can actually be cheaper than the train in Japan. Discount fares up to 50% off regular fare are offered by the domestic airlines if tickets are purchased 28 days or more in advance. Lesser discounts are available for tickets purchased one, two or three weeks prior to departure. The airlines (ANA, JAL, and JAS) publish a monthly timetable of flights that list flight times and discounts available. These booklets can be picked up for free from any travel agent and many train stations.

Ferries

Most JETs have no need to take ferries. However, for some JETs it may be part of their daily commute. There is an extensive ferry system connecting various parts of Japan (and even a few to Korea and China). Ferries are generally the cheapest forms of public transportation (Apparently, tolls on bridges are higher than necessary in order to keep the passenger ferry services in business).

Timetables for the major ferry lines are included in the nation-wide train timetables (the telephone book like publication put out monthly by JTB). For smaller local ferries, you will have to get someone in your town to help you out.

The ferries can be noisy and uncomfortable, but are recommended nonetheless. There are a number of overnight ferries connecting Kyushu and Shikoku to the Kansai area. What better way to feel like you're really experiencing Japan than to sleep in a crowded room full of snoring locals?

Buses

Buses are numerous in Japan, but a little more challenging to figure out. Most local buses have a system whereby you pay according to the distance traveled when you exit.

Long haul buses are an option to the train. If you live a fair distance from Tokyo find out if your town or one nearby has an overnight bus. These buses can be quite comfortable. There are two aisles, so that there are three seats across resulting in all the seats being singles. No worries about someone falling asleep on your shoulder. In addition the seats recline and are heated. You're supplied with a blanket, headphones, and slippers as well as free coffee and tea. It's still a bus, but it's about as comfortable as it could possibly be and the cost is cheaper than the train or plane.

Car

Renting a car in Japan is a little expensive, but something to consider if you want to get off the beaten track or have a group of people to share costs. You'll need an international driver's license when renting and you'll need someone to help you if your Japanese is minimal.

Bicycle

If you're a little adventurous, a great way to see Japan is by bicycle. Once you're out of the big cities, traveling by bicycle is relatively easy. The roads are well maintained and motorists are generally accommodating of cyclists. You can take your bicycle on the train for a small fee if you put it in a bicycle bag (a futon cover is sufficient). There are a few good guidebooks on cycling in Japan that outline some excellent routes.

JET Alumni Recommended "Must See" Sights in Japan

Any guidebook will tell you of a thousand different sites in Japan that you have to visit. Time, money and location will determine how many you will actually visit. Listed below are a number of historical sites, national monuments, or just plain beautiful places that you should consider checking out. As recommended by a few of the Alumni in Manitoba:

Tohoku:

- Rikkuchu Coast - the entire coast of Iwate is spectacular
- Miyako
- Goishi Kaigen
- Hachimantai Park
- Lake Towada
- Hiraizumi: The Temple of Gold

Kanto:

- Nikko, especially when there is snow
- Kamakura: the Buddha and the Hydrangea Temple
- Tokyo: Shrine sales on Sundays, the rock-a-billy dancers in Harajuku on a Sunday, Ueno Park and the assorted museums there, Roppongi at night, window shopping in Ginza, Tokyo Dome, Sumo Tournaments, Electric Avenue in Akihabara

Kyoto:

(It would probably be easier to say the whole area)

- Arashiyama, Tenryu-ji, Kinkaku-ji, Ryoan-ji, Daitoku-ji, Kiyomizudera Temple, Rakusai Bamboo Park, Sanjusangendo, Kyoto Craft Museum

Nara

Himeji Castle

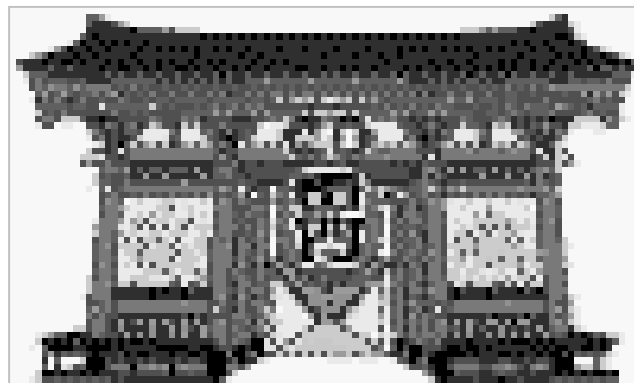
Osaka Castle

Hiroshima

Nagasaki

Seto Inland Sea

Sapporo Snow Festival



Japan Tourist Information

The Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) produces some of the best travel information of any country, and much is available in English. They have an office in Toronto, so contact them before you leave. The address is:

JNTO

165 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M5H 3B8
(416) 366-7140

Got the Travel Bug?

When you get the itch to start exploring Japan, the Japan National Tourist Organization comes to the rescue. There are two services that are very useful. One is the Tourist Information Centres located in Tokyo and Kyoto. They have an excellent variety of English travel literature for most locations in Japan.

Tokyo Office:

Kotani Building
6-6, Yurakucho 1-chome,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
Tel.: (03) 502-1461
Open from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Kyoto Office:

1st Fl., Kyoto Tower Bldg.
Higashi Shiokojicho
Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto
Tel.: (075) 371-5649
Open from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The other service is the Japan Travel Phone. It is an English language assistance and travel information line available toll free every day of the week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For western Japan call 0120-222-800. For eastern Japan call 0120-444-800. If you are in Tokyo or Kyoto, call the regular TIC numbers listed above. They will send you travel information for the cost of

mailing or answer questions from simple train departure times, to the most obscure inquiries.

The Jet Set: Frequent Flier Programs

To Tokyo and back is a long way. Frequent flier programs are available with most North American airlines and calculate points based on the number of miles traveled. Both Canadian Airlines and Air Canada have several international partner airlines with which travelers can add points to their frequent flier programs.

Give your card to the ticket agent before you get your boarding pass, and be sure to keep your boarding pass to verify your flights. The boarding passes should be sent to the company to ensure that your travel points will be awarded if you present your card when flying. Points must be rewarded within six months of the flight or they will be lost.

Re-entry Visas

The problem isn't leaving Japan, it's getting back in. It is necessary to obtain a re-entry visa from the local immigration office (often located in the capital city of the prefecture). You will need to bring your alien registration card and your passport. Spend the extra money and get a multiple re-entry visa, as it will allow you unlimited trips outside Japan in the course of one year. A single re-entry visa is only good once and costs about half the price of a multiple re-entry visa. The procedure is well explained in guidebooks for foreigners in your prefecture.

Dealing with your Celebrity / Ambassador Status:

Please remember that you are a guest in Japan. Even if you do not understand the culture, you should respect it and the rules that go along. Do not try to change someone's attitudes or views on foreigners. Show by example and action the kind of person that you are.

Get used to the celebrity status: It's possible that you will be on TV, in the newspapers, etc. Do not be embarrassed, as those around you are merely showing their excitement in having you as a part of the community.

You are a cultural ambassador. Never forget that you are representing Canada as well as your personal culture/beliefs/ideas. You will quite likely come up against a number of stereotypes. It will help out considerably if you learn to be

patient and explain that your ways/actions/ideas are YOURS and not the entire population of Canada's. Relax, laugh when you can and enjoy all the great events ahead of you.



Cultural Adaptation: Dealing with Cultural Shock

The following is intended to give you some food for thought as you enter into the JET Programme. It has been adapted from "Absorbing Culture Shock," Intercultural Communicating, Language Research Center, Brigham Young Univ., 1977; and "What is Culture Shock," unsourced from the 1991 Perth, Australia JET Alumni Association handbook Preparing for Your JET Experience.

Is it possible to fit in everywhere - to be an "international"? Are there people who can ignore their own culture and adapt completely to other ways of life? It is doubtful. Each of us has attitudes, emotions, prejudices, habits and mannerisms that are as much a product of our culture as is the language we speak or the beliefs we accept and react to regularly.

Essentially culture shock refers to our reaction to being in a totally new social environment. The reaction is inevitable, but the type and degree of the reaction will vary widely from person to person. Culture shock does not strike suddenly - it accumulates slowly and comes from the general experience of continually encountering new ways of acting and believing. One of the triggers of culture shock identified by researchers that is particularly relevant to JETs is "being continually put into positions in which you are expected to function with maximum skill and speed but where rules have not been adequately explained."

An intercultural experience is a potent and personal teacher; it forces you into realizations about others and about yourself. Indeed, the greatest "shock" may not be in the encounter with a different culture but in the recognition of how your own culture has shaped you and what you do.

It is generally agreed that the "culture shock cycle" consists of four stages, with two low points. These occur irrespective of how long you spend in the foreign country. Note too that the second dip is likely to be a little more severe than the first one!

These four stages are as follows:

1. Initial euphoria - everything is new, fascinating and after all not so very "different";
2. Irritability and hostility - the difference become more apparent and are a source of frustration;
3. Gradual adjustment - you begin to feel more comfortable and less isolated and your sense of humour returns;
4. Adaptation - finally you become bicultural, able to appreciate aspects of both cultures and generally enjoying your life in the host culture.

Generally, people react in one of two ways to a new culture. They either:

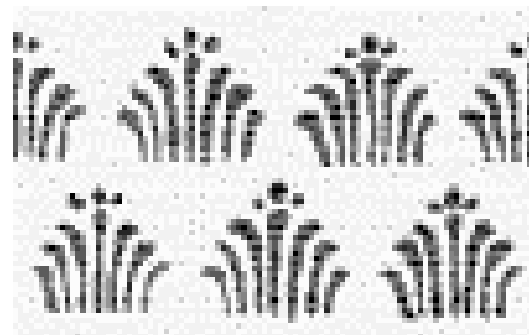
- i. Cling tenaciously to their own culture, or
- ii. "Go native", abandoning as much as possible of their own culture which has created the frustrations in the first place, and overly identify with local ways.

Realize that either way during this process that there is also an element of self-discovery and self-doubt. We are forced to re-evaluate our self as we swing between feelings of failure, defeat, achievement and adjustment.

Difficulty sleeping, adjusting and in feeling worthwhile, as well as irritability are all normal reactions. So, too, is the elation of learning to do things in a different way and the confidence that develops through overcoming the tension and conflict of a new cultural environment.

Suggested ways of countering this stress include:

- i. eating well,
- ii. exercising,
- iii. practicing some form of relaxation.



Studying Japanese

Japanese Language Study

Do not get all stressed out at the thought that you will have to master Japanese prior to your departure. It is quite conceivable that you could live and function in Japan for years with only a scant few phrases and key words under your belt. But, it will be much easier and definitely more advantageous if you know a bit more.

There is a Japanese course offered by the Consulate that runs for 8 weeks. It is free of charge at the Manitoba Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre.

There is a variety of private language study options. Contact the MJCCC or the U of Winnipeg or Manitoba summer ESL programs. There are a number of Japanese students at both campuses over the summer working in ESL programs. Some could be interested in tutoring Japanese in exchange for some English practice.

For the most part, do not be too concerned if you have yet to start studying prior to departure. CLAIR will provide all JETs with a Japanese language series, consisting of texts and audiotapes. The series is quite good, and will quickly help you learn the basics. NHK TV (similar to the CBC or PBS) usually offers a weekly language study program. Tape it. It's great!

Do try to pick up a Berlitz phrase guide before you leave Canada. The book is compact and easily indexed to categories (e.g. clothes, numbers, weather, etc.). As well, a pocket dictionary is a must. *Martin's Concise Japanese Dictionary* is highly recommended and can be ordered from any of the better bookstores.

For the Serious Student

For those in the crowd that are hoping to gain a solid, working proficiency in Japanese while you are on the program, there is no end to the number of texts available. Kinokuniya bookstores in any of the major cities in Japan have a large section on language study. McNally Robinson, especially the Portage Place location, has been quite accommodating in the past when it came to

ordering texts from Japanese publishing companies.

The following lists of texts are highly recommended. ISBN numbers have been included wherever possible to facilitate ordering. Remember one key point when studying Japanese: actual practice in speaking, reading and comprehension will be constant and continual while you live in Japan. Only buy a text if you feel that it will truly help you out in your language study. *GAN BATTE!*

Recommended Japanese Language Texts

Japanese for Busy People (3 volumes)
Kodansha International Press
ISBN: 4-7700-1099-0 (vol.1)
4-7700-1884-3 (vol.2)
4-7700-1886-X (vol.3)

Japanese for Everyone
Gakken Press
ISBN: 0870408534

Let's Learn Hiragana/Katakana
Kodansha International Press
ISBN: 0870117092

A Guide to Writing Kanji and Kana (2 volumes)
W. Hadamitzky and M. Spahn
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804816859 (vol.1)
0804816857 (vol.2)

The Complete Japanese Verb Guide
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 080481564X

Martin's Concise Japanese Dictionary
Samuel E. Martin
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804819122

A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar
Seiichi Makino and Michio Tsutsui
The Japan Times
ISBN: 4-7890-0454-6

The Nihongo Journal
ALC Press
¥650 per monthly issue

For fun:
Making Out in Japanese (2 volumes)
Todd and Erika Geers

Finding out More

Books on Japan

Every person who has lived in Japan could probably recommend a dozen books - all of which would be different from the next person's selections. The following is a list of books that are a good source of information, make good coffee table books, or will help you through your travels, trials, and triumphs. Most are available on an order basis from any of the better bookstores in Canada, or can be readily purchased in Japan.

Kinokuniya, particularly the Shinjuku branch in Tokyo, carries the largest selection of English books and magazines. A trip to the store during Orientation week in Tokyo is a must (if you can fit it in). You can also order books from any local bookstore.

The Best of Tokyo

Don Morton and Naoko Tsunoi
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804815569

What's What in Japanese Restaurants

Robb Satterwhite
ISBN: 0870118676

The Japan Experience: Coping and Beyond

T. Shibusawa and J. Norton
The Japan Times
ISBN: 789004457

The Japanese Today

Edwin O. Reischauer
ISBN: 0-674-47182-2

JTB Series:

Eating In Japan

ISBN: 4533004563

Living Japanese Style

ISBN: 4533013503

Japanese Characters

ISBN: 4533013597

COFFEE TABLE BOOKS

The Beauty of Japan

Gakken Press

ISBN: 4051513009

Introducing Tokyo

Gakken Press
ISBN: 477001306X

Kyoto: Seven Paths to the Heart of the City

Diane Durston
Matsumura Suiko Shoin
ISBN: 4838100949

Japanese Accents in Western Interiors

Peggy Landers Rao and Jean Mahoney
ISBN: 4079746822

At Home with Japanese Design

Peggy Landers Rao and Jean Mahoney
ISBN: 4079750617

HUMOUR

Gems of Japanized English

M. Kennrick
Yenbooks
ISBN: 0804815550

Japan: It's Not All Raw Fish

Don Maloney
Japan Times
ISBN: 4789000281

Son of Raw Fish

Don Maloney
Japan Times
ISBN: 4789000494

Max Danger: The Adventures of an Expat in Tokyo

Robert J. Collins
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804815313

More Max Danger: The Continuing Adventures of an Expat in Tokyo

Robert J. Collins
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804815704

COOKING

Quick and Easy Japanese Cuisine for Everyone
Yukiko Moriyama
ISBN: 4915249204

Japanese Cooking for Health and Fitness
Kiyoko Konishi
Gakken Press
ISBN: 4051513300

The Fine Art of Japanese Cooking
Hideo Dekura
Bay Books Cookery Collection
ISBN: 1863780793

The Book of Sushi
K. Omae and Y. Tachibana
ISBN: 4770013663

FOOD AND RECIPES

A Guide to Buying Food in Japan
Carolyn R. Krouse
Charles E. Tuttle Co.
ISBN: 0804815038

Reading Menus in Japanese Restaurants
Rory McGwire
ALC Press Inc.
ISBN: 4872340906

Quick and Easy Japanese Cooking for Everyone
Miyoko Sakai and Motoko Abe
The Japan Times
ISBN: 4789004961

Quick and Easy Japanese Cooking
Shufunotomo Co. Ltd.
ISBN: 4079754574

TRAVEL GUIDES

Japan - A Bilingual Atlas
Kodansha International
ISBN: 4770015364

Exploring Tohoku - A Guide to Japan's Back Country
Jan Brown with Yoko S. Kmetz
Weatherhill Inc.
ISBN: 0834801779

Useful Web Sites

Schauwecker's Guide to Japan (excellent)
www.japan-guide.com

Japanese information
www.askasia.org/gate_to_asia/gta_frame.htm

Discovering Japan through the Internet
www.cybercypher.com/japan

Japan Web Guide
www.gol.com/jguide

Japan Hotel Directory
www.tsuyaku.com/jhd/guide.htm

Japan
<http://as.orientation.com/>

AJR Newslink to Japanese Newspapers
<http://ajr.newslink.org/nonusajap.html>