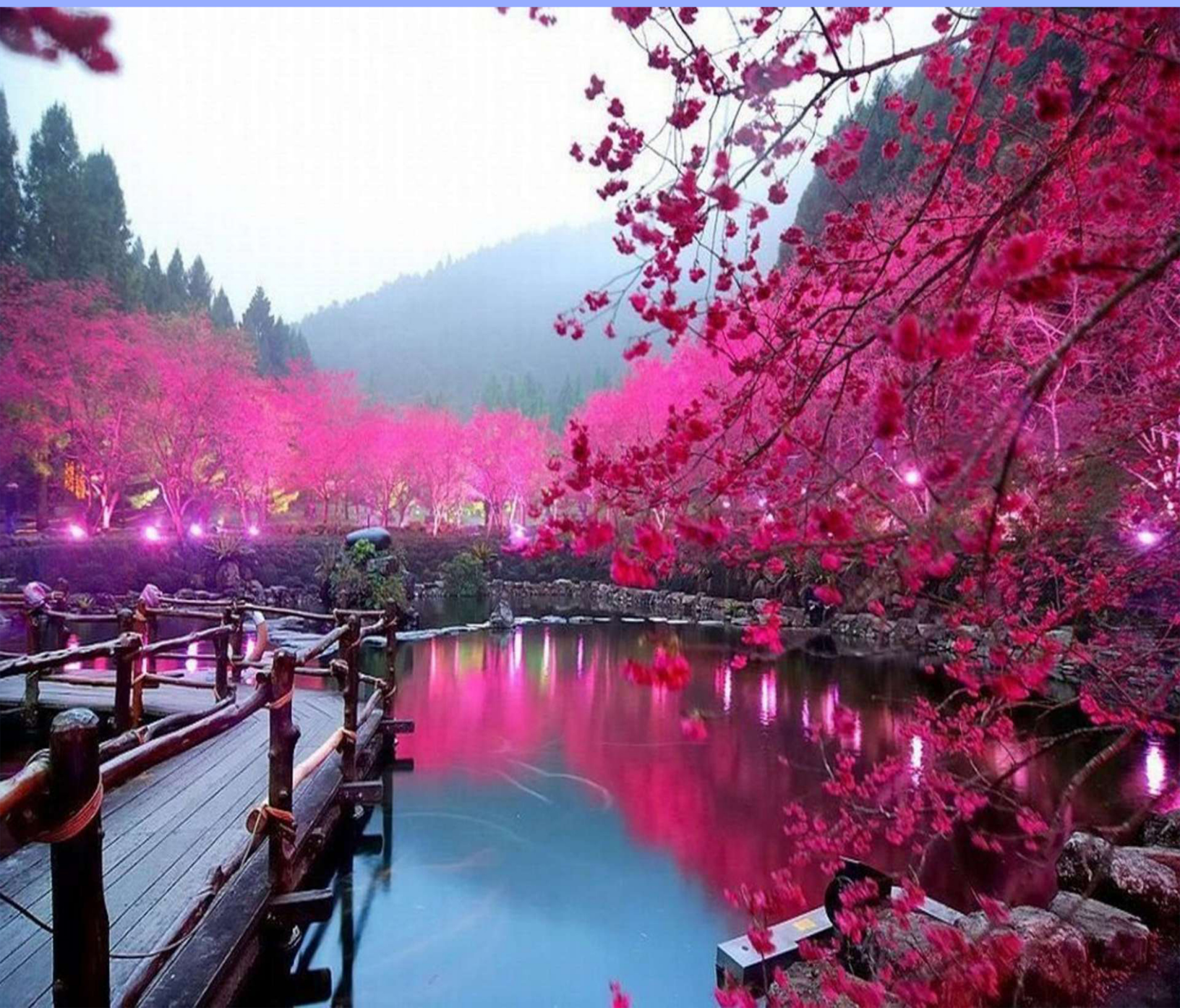


*5 Major Tips for Spending Less Money and
Enjoying More of*

JAPAN



***5 Major Tips for
Spending Less
Money and Enjoying
More of Japan***

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Jet Set for Less to Japan

Subscribe to [Airfare Watchdog](#)

*You can ask for daily or weekly notifications for the lowest fares to Tokyo or Osaka.
Or anywhere else in the world.*

Take Off to Japan: The Land of the Rising Sun



Look up flights at [hipmunk.com](#)

Travel between late autumn and early spring for the biggest savings.

(Also known as low season.)

Avoid Golden Week, which starts April 29 and ends May 5.

Summer travel to Japan can also be pricey (and super humid!)

New Year is a huge holiday in Japan. Businesses slow down or close their doors beginning late December. Airline companies hike up their airfares until a few days after January 1.

Flashbacks of Old Japan at Tokyo's Haneda Airport



Good news: Cherry blossoms bloom from late March through April in Japan. Sometimes the trees bloom as late as early May in the northernmost island of Hokkaido. So you can plan your trip accordingly...keeping in mind that Mother Nature is not always 100% predictable.

At hipmunk, the cute chipmunk will direct you to the airline's site once you find the time and price that suits you. And allow you to easily get your air miles!

[H.I.S. Travel](#) specializes in low airfares in all classes of service to Japan. (They can also help with tours and hotels.)

Hotel Happiness

Property is prime in cosmopolitan centers. Don't expect supersized rooms. (More spacious rooms are available outside the cities.) Having my own shower and restroom and space are important. But, if you don't mind community living, by all means, check out:

Youth hostels

Capsule hotels

Lodgings in Tokyo's Akihabara, mecca of electronics, anime and manga

Sweet dreams on futon and pillows at a Japanese-style B & B (minshuku.)



Minshuku are similar to Bed & Breakfasts. Like B & Bs abroad, the lodging costs and locations run the gamut.

[Toyoko Inn](#) is technically a businessman's hotel. The rooms are extremely small. However, it's not a capsule. Also, you get your own restroom and shower. Plus, a hearty (and delicious) Japanese-style breakfast. [Here's a guide](#) to the size of the beds and rooms.

A Japanese business hotel is ideal for those on a budget



[MyStays Hotels](#) are definitely a cut above Toyoko Inn. The rooms are reasonable...especially if you stay during the "low season." (Referenced above.)

[Rakuten](#) will give you the option to check out a variety of hotels with various amenities and prices.

Five-star ryokan (high-end B & Bs) offer beautiful Japanese gardens, rooms and gourmet food!



Of course, you can always call the Marriott, Hilton and Holiday Inn. Again, a chain hotel room in Tokyo can be smaller and more expensive than its cousin in a smaller city. If you want a taste of home, the Marriott does a fine job at providing excellent English speakers and scrambled eggs you'd find in the US.

Savoring the Scenery vs. Speeding on the Bullet Train

The age-old question in Life and Travel: How do I make the best use of my time? It's definitely worth pondering. Staying in one spot can be rewarding. Really getting to know a town can be enriching and educational. Speeding through the country, consuming culture can also be a stellar experience.

Want to cover as much of Japan as possible?
You need a [Japan Rail Pass](#).

A Japan Rail Pass is a must if traveling to more than one town.



[About Japan Rail Pass](#)
[Useful Tips](#)

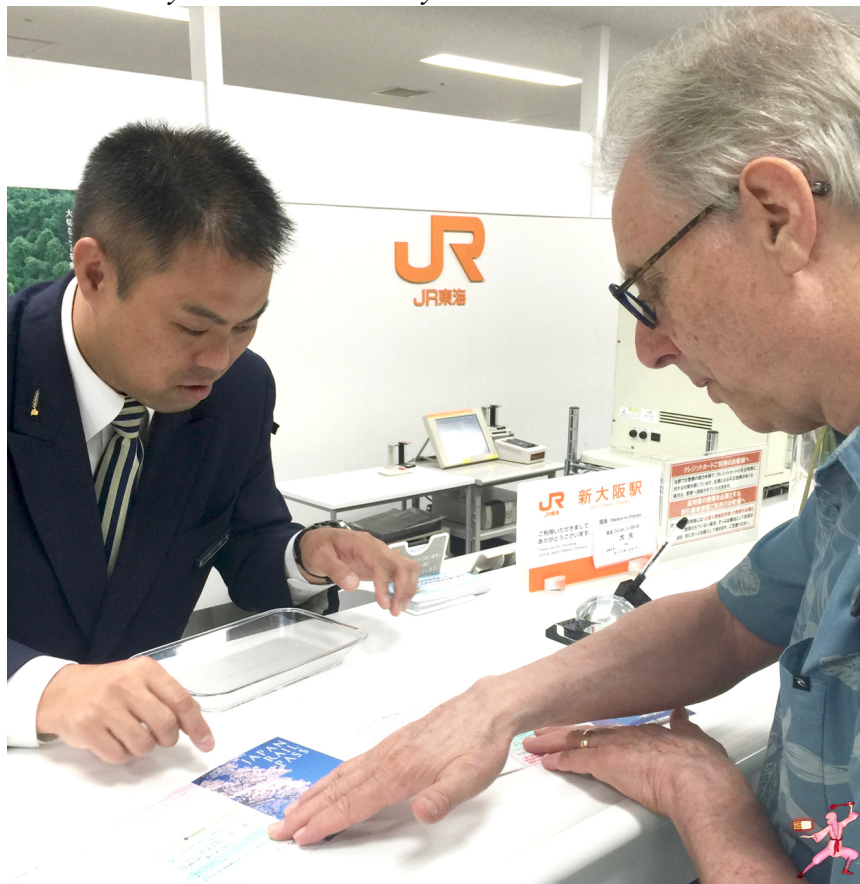
Want to stay in one town?

Do not get the Japan Rail Pass.

Note: If you plan to go to two towns or cities. A [Japan Rail Pass could still save you beaucoup yen.](#)

The Japan Railway has tracks and routes all over the country. A Japan Rail Pass lets you use the pass on both local and long distance train rides. Bullet train (Shinkansen) travel is a luxurious expenditure for many Japanese. Shinkansen (bullet train) prices are drastically reduced *if* you have a Japan Rail Pass. Of course, the more places you go, the more savings.

Friendly assistance is always available at train stations.



Note: There are places where you'll need to take a private line. The additional costs are usually nominal.

Another convenience of the Japan Rail Pass: You don't have to deal with correct coins or bills. You simply show your pass to the stationmasters (usually at the sides of the ticket wickets.)

The Suica card makes travel around Tokyo super efficient and easy.



Yet another handy dandy travel perk are cards like Suica¹, Icosa² and Pasm³. Think of the cards like preloaded debit cards. They are easily purchased at your nearest train station. Locals use them all the time. Touch the card at the ticket wicket, at a vending machine, a convenience store or restaurant.

1. [Suica](#) (Tokyo)
2. [Icosa](#) (Osaka)
3. [Pasm](#) (private lines in Tokyo)

For other districts in Japan, [click the link here](#).

Also, the [Kansai One Pass](#) is an Icosa card that allows for discounts at some tourist sites in the following areas:

Kyoto Prefecture. Kyoto.

Osaka Prefecture. Osaka.

Nara Prefecture. Nara

Hyogo Prefecture. Kinosaki.

Shiga Prefecture. Hikone. (A castle town at the shores of Lake Biwa.)

Wakayama Prefecture. Mount Koya (One of the most revered and sacred temples belonging to the Buddhist religion.)

Mie Prefecture. Ise Shima (Home to one of Japan's 3 most sacred Shinto shrines.)

Of course, there are places you'll definitely need cash. And I do mean cash. As sophisticated as Japan is, credit cards are not always welcome. You'll find this is even truer the farther you travel away from the cities.

Peace for the Mind and Pocketbook

Awe-inspiring beauty is available at Japanese parks, temples and shrines from less than 10 dollars to free.

In Hokkaido, [Tomita Farm](#) is open year round with resplendent beauty. The scenery is mostly snow in winter. However, in lavender season (generally late June through August) the lands look as if magical fairies have arrived.

Summertime Sunflowers: Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido is breathtaking in any season.



If you're in Hokkaido, during the summer season, catch the free parade of sunflowers from late July through August at [Sunflower Hokuryu](#).

Summer is also a wonderful time to enjoy festivals and street fairs. (If you're not on the northern island of Hokkaido, daytime is best spent doing ac-attached activities.) The evening festivals and street fairs are wonderful opportunities for experiencing Japan like the locals. If you want to participate in the summer Obon festival dancing, look up "English obon dance instruction" on YouTube. It'll get you started on the basics of Japanese folk dancing.

In both [Kyoto](#) and Tokyo, entrances to the former and present Imperial Palace parks are free. The [Imperial Palace East Gardens in Tokyo](#) are open to the public. However, if you want to tour the Imperial Palace, an application needs to be filled out. You can find the [form here](#).

Kyoto's famous Fushimi Inari Shrine is where thousands of torii gates climb up the mountains



In Kyoto, entrance to [Fushimi Inari Shrine](#) is free. You may not recognize the name. You may have déjà vu though once you walk through the first of the thousands of torii gates. Fushimi Inari is the darling of Instagram. It also has several sub-shrines. One is dedicated to [successful test taking](#).

The Buddha blesses travelers and locals alike in this tranquil park - for free!



Tokyo's Harajuku – another Instagram favorite – is filled with high fashion and also fantastic history. [Meiji Shrine](#) is dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Meiji and his consort. The magic I felt on the grounds since I was a child has not changed. Warning: The grounds are packed on New Year's Day and during tourist seasons. You will, however, see gorgeous kimonos and decorations on January 1.

If you're in Nagoya, I highly recommend [Atsuta Shrine](#). The traffic of the bustling city subsides, serenity says hello.

Serenity is often free and only a few steps away from busy streets.



Note: 1000 Good Ambassador points is you bow before and after entering a torii gate. Also, do your best not to walk down the middle of the path. The center is reserved for the deities who inhabit the shrine.

Here are a few quick [shrine/temple purification pointers](#) from my friend Ryo Shimizu.

Top Chef Cuisine

1. Lunch like an Emperor or Empress

*No need for a Michelin starred restaurant;
spectacular sushi can be enjoyed almost anywhere in Japan.*



Royal or not, refined Japanese dining experiences are yours for the asking. Simply go to your establishment of choice at lunchtime. Prices spike at suppertime. The money savvy get their fill of haute cuisine during the noon hour. The 3 restaurants below are great places to lunch like an Emperor or Empress.

P.s. There are myriads of similar 3-Star Michelin-like Japanese restaurants, which are best for the budget at – you’ve got it – noon!

[Kyubey Sushi Ginza](#)



At nighttime the Ginza glitter neon envelops the senses.
During the day, the area bustles with business.
Step into Kyubey Ginza, and you'll discover serenity and spectacular sushi.

[Kikunoi Kyoto](#)

Famous for highlighting the seasons with Japanese haute cuisine called kaiseki ryori.
Kikunoi's prescribed parade of dishes is like seeing an exquisite art exhibition!

[Doujimahashin Osaka](#)

Sushi, kaiseki ryori and teppan-yaki (think Beni Hana iron grilling but even better) are served at Doujimahashin. This is a great place to go with a group. Everyone can sample a little of everything when everyone orders a different item. Even if it's a small group, you'll still see savings when you ask for the お勘定 at lunchtime.

Train stations are terrific places for tasty snacks.



Bountiful bowls of noodles bring smiles to travelers on the go!



2. *Timing is Everything*

Master the art of appearing at the right place at the right time. Dash downstairs of any department store before closing time. Your reward? Extravagant Japanese bento boxes will be yours at a discount. Sashimi and other food items with fragile shelf life also go on sale.

Note: By all means visit the newly opened Ginza 6. The rooftop offers an impressive view of Tokyo. However, seek elsewhere for your food if you are on a tight budget.

3. *Listen to the Poet, Robert Frost*

In his poem, *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost says, “I took the one less traveled by / And that has made all the difference.” Great advice for life AND paying less in Japan. Rather than duck into the tourist spots touted in guidebooks, why not try a mom-and-pop shop in a non-tourist area? Many restaurants have plastic replicas of their dishes on display. You can always point and use Google translator on your phone.

Follow the lead of kimono-clad cuties and find the best sweets shops in Japan.



4. *Circle the Sushi*

Remarkably fresh and scrumptious sushi is found on restaurants with conveyer belts in the center. The shops are called 回転寿司. Many restaurateurs are adding entertainment value by presenting the sushi on toy bullet trains and floating boats. The even better news is that the price is still lower than traditional sedate sushi shops.

Bonus: Get Japan Travel Happy Apps

WayGoApp.com

No internet required. For \$6.99 you have a lifetime translator that fits in your pocket!
Point the app at the Japanese text and you immediately get the English translation.

P.s. I noticed the translations are not detailed. However, it will give you a better understanding of what's written.

[Tokyo Handy Guide](#)

Also usable offline, this handy dandy app gives you maps of Tokyo and directions.



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