

Japan

Business Guide

Compiled by:

Swiss Business Hub Japan

Tokyo, April 2015

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

To enter Japan, a visa is not required for those who hold a Swiss or Liechtenstein passport and who will stay in Japan for no longer than 90 days for short-term business such as market surveys, business liaison, business talks, signing contracts and after-sale service for investment goods imported into Japan or other similar activities.

When entering Japan you should possess a fixed-date, confirmed return or onward journey ticket and necessary supporting documents which can serve as evidence of the purpose of the trip. Furthermore, a traveler may be asked to show evidence of sufficient funds for the proposed period of stay in the country.

A visa is required if the purpose of your stay is long-term residency or employment of other business activities. Please note, that there is no visa agreement regarding working holidays between Japan and Switzerland.

Young Professional Programme

The Government of Japan and the Swiss Federal Council established a programme concerning the exchange of young professionals who go to the other country for a limited period of time to take employment within the field of their previously acquired professional technology or knowledge, in the hope of familiarizing themselves with business, professional and technical practices in the country and improving their linguistic knowledge. The young professionals will be granted a permit for a temporary stay to take employment within their respective field, notwithstanding the situation in the labor markets.

For further information

Embassy of Japan in Switzerland

<http://www.ch.emb-japan.go.jp/> (General)

<http://www.ch.emb-japan.go.jp/de/visareise.html> (Visa)

http://www.ch.emb-japan.go.jp/documents/ryoji/de/new_immigration_procedures.pdf (New immigration procedures valid from August 2007)

Embassy of Switzerland in Japan

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/reps/asia/vjpn/embjpn.html> (General)

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/reps/asia/vjpn/rhjap.html> (Reisehinweise; in German, French and Italian)

Arrival and departure procedures at airports

Tokyo Narita: <http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/guide/step/index.html>

Tokyo Haneda: <http://www.haneda-airport.jp/inter/en/dept/>

Kansai (Osaka) <http://www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/route/index.html>

Transfer to city centres

Access to/from International Airports (Source: Japan National Tourist Organization)

Tokyo Narita: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/airport/naritaMap.html>

Tokyo Haneda: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/airport/hanedaAirport.html>

Kansai: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/airport/kansaiAirport.html>

Further information on essential travel info such as domestic transportation, accommodations, currency, map, weather, travel tips, events, culture, history, emergency, etc.

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/index.html> (English)

<http://www.jnto.de> (German)

www.tourisme-japon.fr (French)

<http://www.turismo-giappone.it> (Italian)

(Source: Japan National Tourist Organization)

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

Not many Japanese people are sufficiently fluent to conduct business in English. Even those who speak English often speak it with Japanese thinking background which can lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, it is recommendable to hire an interpreter who should also help you to read facial expressions, gestures and “real meanings” of yes and no. The [Swiss Business Hub Japan](#) gladly helps you to arrange an interpreter for your business meetings.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

January 1	New Year's Holiday
The 2 nd Monday of January	Coming of Age Day
February 11	National Foundation Day
March 20	Vernal Equinox Day
April 29	Showa Day
May 3	Constitution Memorial Day
May 4	Greenery Day
May 5	Children's Day
The 3 rd Monday of July	Marine Day
The 3 rd Monday of September	Respect for the Aged Day
September 23	Autumnal Equinox Day
The 2 nd Monday of October	Health and Sports Day
November 3	Culture Day
November 23	Labor Thanksgiving Day
December 23	The Emperor's Birthday

December 27 – January 5, April 29 – May 5, and August 10 – 15 are Japanese holiday periods. Those periods and a couple of days before and after each period should be avoided when travelling to Japan.

Further information for business hours and holidays in Japan:

http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/businesshours_holidays.html

(Source: Japan National Tourist Organization)

HEALTH AND INOCULATIONS

Drinking water

Tap water is safe to drink anywhere in Japan. Mineral water and other kind of soft drinks can be easily obtained from vending machines, convenience stores and other retail shops.

Hospitals

Medical systems and facilities in Japan have high standards, although the language could be a problem.

The staff at Tokyo Medical & Surgical Clinic, <http://www.tmsc.jp/emergencies.htm> is fluent in English and can be reached for emergencies at Tel: 03-3436-3028.

Further medical facilities with English and other foreign language-speaking staff:

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/emergency/list/hospital.html> (Source: Japan National Tourist Organization)

Emergency services: <http://japanhealthinfo.com/emergency-services/> (Source: Japan Healthcare Info)

Inoculations

There are no inoculations required for entering Japan from anywhere around the world.

TIME ZONE

The whole area of Japan operates in a single time zone, which is GMT + 9 hours. Japan does not have summer time, therefore, the time difference with Switzerland is +7 hours in summer and +8 hours in winter.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The voltage throughout Japan is 100 V which is different from North America (110 V) and Central Europe (220 V). Japanese electrical plugs have two pins and fit into North American outlets.

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/electricity.html>

METHODS OF PAYMENT

The currency in Japan is the Yen, designated as ¥

The exchange rate with Swiss Francs on March 15, 2015 was

100 Japanese Yen = 0.82909 Swiss Franc

100 Swiss Franc = 12'084.5 Japanese Yen

Since not all restaurants and shops accept credit cards, it is advisable to carry some Yen in cash. Further, many ATMs in Japan do not accept credit, debit and ATM cards, which are issued outside of Japan, therefore it is recommendable to change money for Japanese yen before coming to Japan or at the airport upon arrival. For rates, refer to the Tokyo Narita international airport's published rates:

http://www.narita-airport.or.jp/exchange_e/

For information on cash withdrawals at ATMs: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/money.html>

International ATM service at Japan Post Bank: http://www.jp-bank.japanpost.jp/en/ias/en_ias_index.html

Information on temporary suspension of Maestro cards issued outside Japan:
<http://www.mastercard.co.jp/personal/atm-notification.html#en> (Source: Master Card Japan)

TRANSPORTATION

For International airport access, domestic flights, railways, subways, busses, taxis and car rental please refer to <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/index.html>
(Source: Japan National Tourist Organization)

HOTELS

Japan has a great number of luxury as well as business hotels of international standards. A reservation should be made well in advance.

Information on hotels: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/accomodations/index.html>

Hotels where the airport limousine buses stop: <http://www.limousinebus.co.jp/en/hotelguide/index.html>

COMMUNICATION

The lack of free public Wi-Fi has been an issue for Japan. However, due to the recent tourism promotion campaign of Japan, free tourist only Wi-Fi access is becoming increasingly widespread. See how to connect in Eastern part of Japan <http://fleets.com/freewifi/index.html> (Source: NTT East), for Osaka <http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/wifi/> (Source: Osaka Government Bureau)

Free public Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly widespread in Japan

Internet access and free WiFi access: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/internet.html>

Mobile phone and Wi-Fi router rental at airports:

For those who arrive at Narita Terminal 1: http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/guide/service/list/svc_19_1.html#t1

For those who arrive at Narita Terminal 2: http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/guide/service/list/svc_19_1.html#t2

For those who arrive at Haneda: <http://www.haneda-airport.jp/inter/en/premises/service/internet.html>

For those who arrive at Kansai (Osaka): <http://www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/service/rental/>

BUSINESS HOURS

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays and National Holidays
Offices	09:00 – 17:00	Closed	Closed
Banks	09:00 – 15:00	Closed	Closed
Post Offices	09:00 – 17:00	Closed	Closed
Department Stores	10:00 – 20:00	10:00 – 20:00	10:00 – 20:00
Shops	10:00 – 20:00	10:00 – 20:00	10:00 – 20:00

Some shops and department stores in the city center are open until 21.00, sometimes until 22.00. Further, there are a lot of convenience store chains (Family Mart, 7/11, Lawson etc.) which are open around the clock and offer a variety of products for daily needs.

ADDRESSES AND OPENING HOURS OF EMBASSY AND CONSULATE

Embassy of Switzerland

5-9-12 Minami-Azabu

Minato-ku

Tokyo 106-8589, Japan

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/tokyo>

Tel.: (+81) 3 5449 8400

Fax: (+81) 3 3473 6090

Office hours

Monday-Friday 09:00-12:00

Saturday and Sunday closed

Honorary Consulate General of Switzerland in Osaka

Epson Osaka Bldg. 18 F

3-5-1 Bakuro-machi, Chuo-ku, Osaka 541-0059

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/japan/en/home/representations/honorary-consulate-general-osaka.html>

Tel.: +81 (0)6 4704 9100

Fax: +81 (0)6 4704 9500

The Honorary Consulate General of Switzerland in Osaka neither has fixed operating hours, nor treats usual consulate matters such as passport and visa applications.

INITIATING BUSINESS

If you consider Japan as your next target export market some market research is essential before trying to get hold of a list of potential distributors. Understanding your customers, competitors and the nature of distribution channels in Japan enables you to create the right requirement profile of your partner.

In Japan, personal contacts are very important. The Japanese people prefer to do business with someone they are properly introduced and/or meet face-to-face. Using a list of companies, trade directories etc. as a basis of cold calls does not usually work in Japan at all. Decision-making process in Japanese companies takes a lot more time than in Switzerland as the Japanese decide in a group. It is important to provide Japanese companies with detailed information on your company, product and proposal as well as how they can benefit from your offer.

Switzerland Global Enterprise/Swiss Business Hub Japan will gladly identify your potential business partners, actively promote your company as well as your product and escort you to the first business meeting to properly introduce you to your potential business partner or clients and to assist you in verbal and non-verbal communication. Contact: tok.sbhjapan@eda.admin.ch

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Dos and Don'ts

Meeting and greeting

A handshake is appropriate upon meeting. Some Japanese bow and shake hands. A bow shows respect and is appreciated by the Japanese. Foreigners should not attempt more than a slight bow to show courtesy, and should never bow in jest.

When introduced, give your name, title and your relationship to the person who is introducing you. To the Japanese, your exact position in the company and your association to a known person are very important.

Names and forms of address

Refer to Japanese men and women by their family names, followed by "san" – an example is "Suzuki-san". Do not address a person by his or her first name, unless specifically invited to do so. There is no distinction between gender and marital status with the "san" suffix. Never use "san" with your own name. Only use it when referring to someone else. Alternatively, address Japanese people in English using Mr., Mrs., and Miss or Ms. plus the family name.

Japanese traditionally say and write their family name first, followed by their first name. However, many Japanese who deal with Western business professionals use the Western name order. When in doubt, it is no problem to ask.

Corporate title and rank are very important. Persons with titles are addressed only by their title, such as buchô (department manager) or shachô (president). "San" is not used. For instance, the manager, whose last name is Tanaka, should be addressed as Tanaka buchô. Especially for senior executives, titles are used instead of the family name.

Business cards

The presentation of meishi, or business card, is an event that involves a certain amount of protocol. It takes place soon after you enter the meeting room. First introductions are made while exchanging business cards. Always take a substantial quantity with you. Bilingual business cards, with one side printed in Japanese and the other in English, are extremely helpful.

Cards should be presented individually with both hands with a slight bow. Individuals who are of lower rank or younger, or who are seeking something from the other party, offer their cards first.

Your business cards should clearly state your rank, as it shows who will be your negotiating counterpart. An academic title or degree is not included on your business card unless it is relevant to your job function. Having "Dipl.-Ing.", for example, put on your business card may cause confusion as the title on your card is to help your Japanese business counterpart classify your position within a group, i.e. your company.

Present your card with your name facing the recipient.

When you give your card, never distribute it onto the meeting desk, hand it individually to each person with both hands.

When you receive a card, study it carefully. Do not fold, write on it or immediately put it into your pocket, as this is considered a sign of disrespect.

Body Language

When the Japanese nod, it means they hear you, not that they agree with you or understand you. When you are listening to a Japanese person speaking, especially in English, you should nod your head to show you are listening and understanding. If you do not nod, the person you are talking with will be afraid you do not understand.

Notes:

- In Japan, a smile could mean happiness, amusement, confusion, embarrassment, even anger, sadness or nothing. It is important to interpret a smile in the proper context.
- Never sit with your ankle crossed over your knee. Sit upright with both feet on the floor.

- Avoid touching others and anything with your feet.
- People do not show much affection in public, such as hugging or shoulder slapping.

Dress

The Japanese dress well. Dress smartly for parties, even if an invitation says “casual” or “come as you are”. High-quality accessories and watches will be noticed too.

Men should not wear bright colors; dark suits and subtly colored shirts as well as ties are appropriate in most business situations.

Women should wear conservatively styled dresses or suits, with heels. Too much jewelry, low-cut dresses or heavy make-up is not encouraged. Especially, do not wear too much perfume. Avoid short or tight skirts as you may be requested to sit on the floor.

Shoes that slip on and off easily are helpful. They must be removed to go into private homes, many Japanese-style restaurants, and even some offices and meeting halls. Wearing old, worn-out socks will cause you great embarrassment when you have to take off your shoes.

Gifts

Gift giving also follows a strict protocol. The visitor is the one who offers gifts at the first meeting. The host may give your team gifts at the end of your series of meetings. Gifts are given and received with both hands, and presented humbly. Your gifts should be selected with care and wrapped appropriately.

Be aware that it is not proper to give a group gift only. Individual gifts should be given as well. Significant individual gifts should be given to the key people with whom you will be dealing. Bring a few extra gifts. The Japanese do business in groups, and more people may very well attend meetings than you have expected. Prepare smaller gifts for others with whom you may have dealings, such as junior members of the Japanese team or administrative assistants. Bring these in quantity.

In general, brand name products are preferable. A small, high-quality gift is better than a large, cheap one.

Wrapping a gift correctly is very important. Appearance counts as much as the contents. Have a gift professionally wrapped where you purchased it. Pastel-colored wrapping paper is preferred. Never use black paper.

Give and receive gifts with both hands and a slight bow. Japanese may ceremoniously refuse a gift before accepting it. Do not retract your gift when “refused” in such a manner. Gently insist on giving it until the recipient concedes. Do not boast about the gift you give. Thank the giver immediately to any gift you have received and follow up with a thank you note mailed out later.

Do not expect a gift to be opened in front of you. Tell the recipient "Please open it" if you would like it to be opened. Do not open your gift unless asked by the giver to do so, as this is considered greedy. You may ask the giver: "May I open it?" When opening a gift, never tear the wrapping paper. Wrapping paper is selected for its design, elegance and significance. It is considered good form to undo a package with care. You will not only preserve the paper but also show proper respect for the effort that went into making the paper, selecting it and wrapping your gift.

Be aware

When you are doing business with the Japanese it is often a matter of

- Common sense, do not worry too much about your counterpart being Japanese. They are not too different from you.
- Politeness, as with any other of the world's business persons.
- Sticking in there, for the longer term, and being prepared to wait for results.

Also

- Younger Japanese and those who are educated in the US or Europe may prefer being addressed by their first names, with or without "san", which you will be told.
- Quiet, dignified and modest behavior is essential to fit in with your Japanese hosts. The Japanese place tremendous value on non-verbal communication and consider a person's inability to decipher non-verbal cues as a lack of sensitivity.
- In Japan, silence is a natural and expected form of non-verbal communication. People are comfortable with less talk and longer periods of silence than Westerners are. If the silent person is the highest ranked Japanese executive at the meeting, it can be a good sign. By silently closing his eyes during the talks, he may well be communicating his approval of the negotiations.
- Do not use cloth handkerchiefs to blow your nose: Japanese consider them unsanitary. Use paper tissues instead. Do it as silently as possible.

SPECIAL FEATURES ON THE MARKET

Swiss Business Hub Japan co-publishes together with the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan the publication **JAPANMARKT**.

Up-to-date information on Japanese industry sectors and market features that need attention of Swiss exporters are available in German.

For the latest edition and archives: <http://www.japan.ahk.de/publikationen/japanmarkt/>

For further information and subscription: tok.sbhjapan@eda.admin.ch

FIRST STEP TO DO BUSINESS IN JAPAN

Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) offers customized solutions to support Swiss companies, especially small and medium-sized businesses with intention to expand their exports to Japan. S-GE works in cooperation with Swiss Business Hub Japan (SBHJ) and industry specialists to help Swiss exporters throughout the entire exporting process step-by-step.

Services include:

- Gaining initial assessment from local opinion leaders of a product's chances in Japan
- Gaining regulatory, legal and cultural knowledge about the product's market requirements
- Gaining knowledge of potential customer groups, their purchasing behavior, purchasing channels and expectations
- Gaining knowledge of national and international competitors and their market activities for the successful positioning of the product in Japan
- Supporting your specific sales activities
- Searching for possible distribution partners
- Setting up meetings with potential distribution partners as well as providing logistical support for traveling in Japan
- Assisting in the search for qualified staff
- Assisting in setting up business in Japan

To discuss your needs and identify the service(s) you will need to succeed in the complex Japanese market, please contact:

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