

# Traveling in Japan in 2024: What You Can Expect

[Updated on January 14, 2024 – Advice below is current as of this date.]

## Here is a summary of the current Covid-related rules for Japan:

### GENERAL

- Effective May 8, 2023, the government of Japan officially reclassified COVID-19 from Class 2 disease (same as tuberculosis) to a Class 5 disease (in the same category as the seasonal flu). **This means the Covid-19 is now approached and managed in the same manner as are other Class 5 diseases such as the seasonal flu.**

### ENTERING JAPAN:

- Starting on May 8, 2023, proof of COVID-19 vaccination is NOT required to enter Japan; you may enter Japan whether you are vaccinated or not. Testing is NOT required for entry (so you do not need to be Covid negative in order to enter Japan). There are no quarantine/isolation rules in place upon entering Japan.

### TRAVELING IN JAPAN:

- With the reclassification of COVID-19 to Class 5, decisions on anti-coronavirus prevention measures are up to individuals and businesses.
- **Masking:** Throughout the pandemic, mask wearing has never been legally mandated in Japan. The Japanese government did, however, recommend the use of masks in certain situations, and compliance was generally a matter of social courtesy. **Effective March 13, 2023, mask-wearing is a matter of personal choice.** (Per the Ministry of Health: “Starting from 13 March 2023, the use of mask will depend on personal choices. Please remember to be understanding and respectful of personal choices not to force someone to wear or take off their masks.”) During your travels in Japan you will likely see people wearing masks, but note that mask-wearing was common prior to the pandemic as an allergy prevention as well as to prevent passing flus and common colds to others.
- **Quarantine:** The government has dropped quarantine requirements for those who test positive for Covid-19 or have been in close contact with an infected person.
- You may access public transportation, hotels, bars, restaurants, shops, museums, theaters, cinemas, stadiums, gyms, spas and other commercial facilities regardless of your vaccination status. Proof of COVID-19 vaccination is not required. Testing is NOT required to access businesses and services within Japan.

### RETURNING TO THE USA:

- Effective May 12, 2023, all travelers entering (or returning to) the USA do **NOT** need to be vaccinated against Covid-19 or have a negative Covid-19 test result. Masking in airports and on board US and Japanese air carriers (ANA and Japan Airlines) is NOT required.

### IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, PLEASE NOTE THAT:

- 1) We abide by the rules, regulations and laws put in place by the host country (whether related to COVID or otherwise). We **do not** create, impose, or enforce Covid-related rules, restrictions and protocols where none have been put in place by the host country. We do not treat “recommendations” as mandatory requirements, and where recommendations exist, it’s up to individuals to respond as a matter of personal choice.
- 2) Testing is NOT required while traveling in Japan. We do not carry, or provide Covid tests, and we do not require or recommend that you test while on the trip. In the event of a positive Covid test or a close contact with a person who is Covid positive, quarantine is no longer required. Testing is also not required in order to return to the USA, and all travelers (not only US citizens) may enter or return to the U.S. without vaccination against Covid19.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TOUR OPERATIONS?

- Since Covid restrictions and mitigations are no longer in force in Japan (particularly those related to vaccination, testing, and masking), we are again operating in pre-pandemic mode (i.e. as in 2019 and years prior).
- We will continue to respond to illnesses and injuries as we have pre-pandemic (2019 and prior years).

**If you are not comfortable traveling under the conditions described above, please do not book travel with us at this time.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Given the current prevalence of flight delays and cancellations, we strongly recommend arriving in Japan at least two days prior to the scheduled start of the trip. This provides you with a cushion in the event your flight(s) are delayed or cancelled. It also gives your luggage time to catch up with you in case it goes astray en route. Give yourself plenty of time to make flight connections. Embrace the long layover. Personally, we now allow a 4-5 hour connection time when booking flights abroad.**

**We recommend that you use “Visit Japan Web” (<https://vjw-lp.digital.go.jp/en/>) which is a new digital service that allows you to perform arrival procedures (immigration and customs) in advance of your arrival in Japan. It replaces the paper disembarkation card and customs declaration form. Using “Visit Japan Web” is not mandatory, but it will help speed your way through entry procedures. Use a smart phone to set up your “Visit Japan Web” account.**

**To make your journey to Kyoto, Japan as straightforward as possible we recommend flying into Osaka’s Kansai International Airport (airport code KIX).** United Airlines serves Kansai Airport nonstop from San Francisco, and Japan Airlines serves Kansai Airport nonstop from Los Angeles. Round trip economy class airfares range between \$1,000 and \$1,700 from U.S. west and east coast cities. From Kansai Airport, you can use Yasaka Taxi’s shared shuttle service to transfer to the door of the Karasuma Kyoto Hotel ([https://app.nearme.jp/en\\_us/airport-shuttle/](https://app.nearme.jp/en_us/airport-shuttle/)). Cost of the one-way transfer is 5,000 yen (about \$40); transfer time is about 1.5 hours. Alternatively, you can take the Haruka limited express train from the Kansai Airport to the main train station in Kyoto. Trains leave every 30 minutes. The cost for a one-way rail ticket is about 3,200 yen (about \$25); transfer time is 80 minutes. From the Kyoto rail station, you’ll need to hire a taxi to take you to the Karasuma Kyoto Hotel which is about one mile from the station.

**At the end of the trip, we recommend flying from Takamatsu to Tokyo Haneda Airport and then to the U.S.** You will spend the evening of November 21 in the city of Takamatsu on Shikoku island. The following day, take an airport shuttle bus from your Takamatsu hotel to the Takamatsu airport (1,000 yen, 50 minute transfer time). You can fly nonstop from there to Toyko’s Haneda Airport. Both Japan Airlines and ANA operate several flights a day from Takamatsu Airport (airport code TAK) to Toyko Haneda Airport (airport code HND). At Tokyo Haneda Airport, you can connect with a “same-day” flight back to the U.S. Flying from the U.S. into Kansai and returning to the U.S. from Takamatsu is known as an “open-jaw” itinerary. The cost for this open-jaw itinerary (i.e. arriving at Kansai Airport and departing from Takamatsu) is essentially the same as a round trip ticket to Osaka Kansai. The problem with using Kansai Airport for your return to the U.S. is that there is no convenient way to get from Takamatsu to Kansai Airport. Train transfers from Takamatsu to Kansai Airport are possible but involve at least two train changes en route.

**We strongly advise that you purchase a fully refundable airfare** to provide you with maximum flexibility in the event that unanticipated changes to travel rules or restrictions impact your ability to fly on your planned travel dates.

**Insurance.** We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance in order to protect your travel investment. We can provide a quotation for travel insurance from Allianz for you, if you desire.

**You should know that as of January 8, 2024, the US State Department has issued a “Exercise Normal Precautions” (Level 1) advisory for US citizens planning travel to Japan** (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/japan-travel-advisory.html>). **The US CDC has removed its specific Covid-19 advisory for Japan. There are no “Travel Health Notices” currently in effect for Japan** (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/japan>). **The Covid-19 public health emergency in the USA ended on May 11, 2023.** Note that these are just advisories issued by the US government to US citizens; however, you are free to travel to Japan, if you desire.

**Remember that contracting a respiratory illness while traveling**—whether it be influenza or the common cold (which can be caused by rhinoviruses, enteroviruses, and other human coronaviruses)—was a risk before the Covid-19 pandemic and will be a risk after the pandemic. Please come prepared for this possibility and bring along your favorite cold/flu remedies.

I have read the information **on the above two (2) pages** and understand these conditions for traveling to and in Japan.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_