

# **Guide to Living and Studying in Japan**

**2011-2012**



**National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies**

## Introduction

This edition of the “GRIPS Guide to Living and Studying in Japan” was compiled by the Student Office. The handbook contains information on questions commonly asked by international students. Although everyone’s experience is unique, some experiences such as adjusting to a different lifestyle, experiencing some culture shock, feeling excited at times and lost at others, are probably similar for all foreigners in Japan. We have made an attempt to include the basic information, a newcomer needs to know. However, this guide is by no means comprehensive. After all, it is you who will have to discover, explore and experience “living in Japan” and this handbook is only attempting to help you settle down as quickly and smoothly as possible. Living and studying in Japan can be a very exciting and interesting experience but it is really up to you to make the most out of it. If you still need any further information or help, please do not hesitate to contact the Student Office, on any matter, any time.

If you have experienced anything you think would be worth sharing with fellow students or if you have any comments or suggestions to improve the contents of this guide please contact the Student Office.

## Immigration and Registration

### Foreign Resident Registration

When you arrive in Japan, you must register at your local municipal office by filling out an “Application for Foreign Resident Registration” form. You will receive help and further instructions from the GRIPS staff upon arrival in Japan. In about two weeks after registration, you will be issued a “Certificate of Alien Registration” Card (*gaikokujin toroku shomeisho*). You are required to carry your registration card with you anytime and to present it to immigration officers, police and other officials when requested. If there are any changes due to moving, marriage, etc. you should notify the office of the city or ward where you live and make an application to register the change within 14 days. When you leave the country without a re-entry permit, you must return your Certificate of Alien Registration Card to the immigration authorities at your port of departure.

### Accompanying Family Members

The family members of students residing in Japan are, in principle, eligible to accompany the student under the residence status of “dependent”. However, please think very carefully about bringing your family to Japan. Often students don’t realize the difficulties that can arise as a result of bringing their families here. In making your decision, please take into consideration that your family will most likely encounter great difficulty in communicating with neighbors and other local people and it may therefore not be easy to make friends and adapt to the new environment, especially when living in a private apartment. Also think about the amount of time you will be able to spend with them, how they will spend their time, how much they will miss home and other family members, and how unhappy they might be. In addition, having your family here may create economic problems for you. Housing and living expenses are considerably higher for a family than for single students and no additional allowance for family will be provided.

### Visa Support Family Members

If you still decide that you want to bring your family to Japan, you will need to obtain visa for your family members. GRIPS can assist you with inviting your dependent family members (only spouse and children) **only after your arrival in Japan**. Procedures may differ from country to country but in almost all cases you will need a Japanese guarantor to support your visa application. Please note that GRIPS will only provide visa support to students staying in Couple or Family accommodation. In principle, **GRIPS will not provide any support for visa applications to students staying in Single Rooms in Tokyo International Exchange Center or GRIPS International House**. Support for short-term tourist visa applications for family members will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Dependents staying in Japan for more than 90 days must apply for Foreign Resident Registration.

### Temporary Leave & Re-entry Permit

If you wish to leave and re-enter Japan during your authorized period of stay, you should obtain a re-entry permit at your local immigration office before leaving Japan. There are two types of re-entry permits, one that is valid for a single use and one that is valid for multiple re-entry. If you leave Japan without getting this permit, you may not be able to re-enter Japan. Also, do not forget to bring your Certificate of Alien Registration Card because

you will need to show it when you leave and re-enter the country. Furthermore, you are requested to inform the GRIPS' International Programs Team of your itinerary and leave contact details.

All matters concerning visa are dealt with by the Immigration Bureau which has several branch offices in and around Tokyo. Please consult the Student Office for further information.

#### **Tokyo Immigration Bureau**

**address:** 5-5-30 Konan, Minato-ku, Tokyo

**tel:** 03-5796-7111

**how to get there:** A 10-minute walk from Tennozu Isle Station

#### **Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau Saitama Branch Office**

**address:** 5-12-1 Saitama Second Legal Affairs

Joint Government Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

Shimo-ochiai, Chuo-ku, Saitama-shi

**tel:** 048-851-9671

**how to get there:** 10 minutes walk from the East exit of Yono-Honmachi Station, Saikyo Line

## **Housing**

GRIPS provides accommodation to newly enrolled students upon request. Students are housed in one of three facilities:

- (1) Tokyo International Exchange Center (TIEC) in the bayside area.
- (2) GRIPS International House (GRIPS IH) in Nakano, a convenient residential area in downtown Tokyo
- (3) Misato Housing Complex in Saitama prefecture, in the suburbs of Tokyo

The specific unit that a student is ultimately assigned to depends on his/her preferences as stated in the Pre-Arrival Questionnaire, which all students must complete and submit to us. Sometimes, however, we may be unable to accommodate your preferences. Due to limitations in available rooms at TIEC and GRIPS IH, we may implement a lottery to decide the allocation of housing units. Those who wish to live with their family will be assigned to the Misato facility (select "Family room" on the Pre-Arrival Questionnaire). If you do not need assistance from GRIPS regarding housing and will arrange accommodation in

Japan on your own, please provide necessary details/addresses on the Pre-Arrival Questionnaire.

**\*Important Note:** *Due to GRIPS' arrangements with the facility management, once you are assigned a unit at TIEC or GRIPS IH, you cannot change or transfer to a different unit during the period which is stated in your Permission of Residence, and the period is basically one year (This permission of Residence will be provided on the first day of your residing). Hence, it is very important that you consider your circumstances carefully before stating your preferences. This limit does not apply to Misato.*

#### **(1) Tokyo International Exchange Center (TIEC) in Tokyo Academic Park**

Tokyo Academic Park is located along the Tokyo Bay at a 45-minute commuting distance from the GRIPS campus in Roppongi. The complex is constructed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture and can accommodate 800 students and researchers affiliated to universities in the greater Tokyo area. GRIPS has been allocated a limited number of rooms in TIEC. **Almost all units for GRIPS students in TIEC are Single Rooms.**

#### **(2) GRIPS International House (GRIPS IH) in Nakano, Tokyo**

GRIPS International House (GRIPS IH) is a brand-new stylish studio-type accommodation that can house approximately forty-five international students and researchers and is the first accommodation by the school. A live-in English-speaking manager and two resident assistants provide daily 24-hour support. Located near JR-Nakano station, in a most convenient part of town, it is an easy commute of about 40 minutes to the campus. Nakano is near the world-famous downtown-area of Shinjuku, one of the liveliest places in Tokyo, packed with countless shopping, walking, dining, and entertainment options. For anyone eager to experience the real downtown Tokyo, Nakano-ward is an exciting place to be, with its unique mix of people of all ages and walks of life.

#### **(3) Misato Housing Complex (Misato Danchi) in Saitama Prefecture**

For those who wish to bring their family, the Misato housing complex (Misato danchi) is a great place to live. There is a GRIPS staff member residing in the Misato danchi, for round-the-clock care of international students. Though commuting time to GRIPS is longer

(around 70 minutes) accommodation is more spacious and cheaper than in downtown Tokyo.

Quite unlike the Tokyo metropolitan area, living in Misato is a unique experience. Attached to Misato station, you will find the brand new Lalaport shopping mall that boasts around 200 shops and restaurants. The mall is flanked by enormous IKEA and Costco stores. And there is a “Mega Don Quijote” discount store that sells everything from fresh to TVs at very reasonable prices.

Misato danchi is one of the largest apartment complexes in Japan. It consists of more than 130 apartment buildings spread out over almost 700,000-m<sup>2</sup> of land. It houses many facilities within the complex including two supermarkets, a 100-yen shop, liquor store, a meat shop, a fish market, a vegetable/fruits shop, a bicycle shop, a second-hand (recycle) store, a sweets shop, a pharmacy, a stationary store, a bank, a post office, a city hall branch office, police substation, a general hospital, kindergartens, daycare centers, and restaurants. Most of the doctors at the hospital speak English; one of the pediatricians is an especially fluent English speaker. There is even a mosque on the Misato danchi premises. The mosque also sells halal meat among other specialty goods. One can also purchase halal meat, spices, and other groceries at two specialty stores in Minami-Koshigaya, only three stations away by train.

### **Private Apartments**

Below is some information in case you would like to arrange your own accommodation. Apartments are usually one of three rooms with a bathroom and kitchen. The size of a room is measured in tatami mats (jo) or in its square meter equivalent (1 mat is approximately 1.55 square meters). The main factors determining the rent are the distance from central Tokyo and commuting convenience from the nearest station. The closer to downtown Tokyo and to railway stations the higher the rent. Apartments are usually rented through specialised real estate agents. As a rule, apartments in Japan are not furnished. You may, therefore need to buy the necessary furnishings. These days, there are many second-hand and discount stores where you can buy refrigerators, washing machines, furniture etc. at reasonable prices. Other sources are *sayonara* sales by foreigners leaving Japan (see the advertisements in the *Metropolis*, *Tokyo Journal* or *Tokyo Notice Board*) or fellow students leaving the country.

### **Signing the Contract**

Rental contracts usually require the co-signing of a guarantor (*hosho-nin*). When moving in, you should thoroughly check for utility problems or other damages and ask that they be fixed by the landlord or real estate agent, or make sure that the damages are recorded in writing. It is the custom in Japan to rent a house/apartment to a single tenant, and such a clause is usually included in the rental contract. It is, therefore, necessary to obtain permission for other people to live in a rented apartment.

### **Fees Required**

Various fees and deposits are required when renting real estate in Japan. These may include *tetsuke-kin* (holding deposit), *shiki-kin* (deposit), *rei-kin* (“thank-you” money), and *chukai-tesuryo* (real-estate agent’s fee). You may also be charged a monthly maintenance fee for the cleaning and lightning of corridors etc. Generally speaking, when signing a rental contract you will be expected to pay one-time fees and deposits and advance rent in an amount equivalent to 4-6 month’s rent.

Students for whom someone from GRIPS act as a guarantor will be required to sign up for the so-called ‘Comprehensive Renter’s Insurance for Foreign Students’. The insurance includes protection against both the tenant’s and guarantor’s legal liability for compensating the landlord for a fire-damaged apartment. The premium is about 5,000 yen for one year.

The rent for the following month is usually due at the end of the previous month so make sure you are not late in making payment. The usual practice is to have the rent automatically transferred from your bank account, but in some cases, the tenant may be asked to pay the landlord in person. You must give the landlord at least one month advance notice if you are moving out or if you would like to renew the contract. If prior notice is not given, the deposit may not be returned. Before you move out, you must restore the apartment to its original condition. It will be inspected by the landlord or real estate agent and damages to the property should be paid for.

### **Utilities**

Utilities such as electricity, gas, water and telephone are charged independent of the rent. These usage fees are paid to the respective service and utility companies. Bills for utilities can be paid at banks, post offices or convenience stores. You can also have the fees

automatically deducted from your bank account in which case you have to apply for automatic payment at the bank or post office where you have an account. Every month you will receive a receipt and notice stating the amount to be deducted for the next payment and the payment date. In some cases, utility bills should be paid to the landlord together with the rent.

Sometimes the real estate agent will take care of having the utilities turned on. You may, however, have to call the water, gas and telephone companies yourself. Representatives of each utility company may visit to check your appliances and have you fill out the necessary forms. Before you move out, you should notify the respective utility companies. They will come to check your meters and finalize your bills.

Should you wish to bring any electrical appliances, please remember that the frequency in the Tokyo area is 100 volts/50 hertz. Before using appliances, check if they can be used with the local current.

If you overload a circuit with too many appliances, the safety breaker switch will automatically cut off the electricity. If this happens, shut off or remove some of the appliances, then turn the breaker switch to its original position.

### **Garbage Disposal**

Each city, ward and town has its own rules with regard to the disposal of household garbage. In most places, these rules include four elements:

- Garbage sorting: garbage may need to be separated into various categories, including burnable garbage, non-burnable garbage, bottles, cans, large discarded items, chemical waste (e.g. batteries, spray cans), and newspapers/magazines;
- Garbage collection days: collection days and times are set for each category of garbage;
- Collection place: garbage collection places are also designated;
- Garbage disposal bags: the type of disposal bag may be specified.

Please ask your landlord or neighbors about the garbage disposal rules in practice in the area where you live, or contact the concerned section of your local ward or municipal office for further information.

## **Banking, Post and Telecommunications**

### **Receiving your Scholarship**

If you are to receive a scholarship, the monthly stipend will be paid into your bank or post office account. You should therefore open an account as soon as possible. Receivers of a YLP or *Monbukagakusho* scholarship should open an account at the Post Office while all other students will be requested to open an account at the Sumitomo Mitsui Bank. The Student Office will help you with opening a bank or post office account immediately after arriving in Japan.

### **Banks**

To open an account, you will need to bring your personal identification such as passport and Foreign Resident Registration Card, and fill out the necessary forms. You may be requested to bring your name stamp as well (see next section), although in case of foreign nationals, a signature is usually accepted. Generally, you will be asked to write your personal information and a four-digit secret number (*ansho bango*) to be used when carrying out transactions via Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). You will receive a bankbook, and a cash card will be sent to you between 10 days and 2 weeks after registration at the bank. The cash card can be used to withdraw cash from your account and make transfer payments through ATMs.

When you rent an apartment, there is a good chance you have to pay the rent via money transfer (*furikomi*). This can be quite complicated since instructions are usually written in Japanese only. You should, therefore, ask someone from the bank to show you how to operate the Automated Teller Machines when you open your account as this will save you much time and effort later.

Don't forget your secret number. If you input the wrong number 3 times the card becomes invalid. In this case you have to apply for a renewal at the branch where you opened the account. You can make withdrawals not only from the bank, which issued your cash card, but also from any bank in Japan, which is linked to the same on-line system, under a cooperative network system (BANCS). In this case, a handling fee of 105 yen may be charged for each withdrawal. Banking hours are usually from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on weekdays. These days, most ATMs are open until 9:00 p.m. but some

services may not be available in the evening hours and during weekends.

**Sumitomo Mitsui Bank (Roppongi Branch)**

6-1-21 Roppongi, Minato-ku

tel: 03-3403-6131

ATM: 8:00 ~ 23:00 (weekdays & weekends)

**Personal Seals**

Although signatures may be accepted for signing certain documents in Japan, it is often mandatory practice to use a personal seal or name stamp. A variety of names is used for such seals, the most common ones being *hanko* and *inkan*. The personal seal is applied to documents just as a signature would be. Personal seals must be used consistently. Once one seal is used at an institution, you will need to bring the same seal with you at the time of later transactions.

**Sending Money Overseas**

If you wish to send money overseas, it is usually cheapest and easiest to do it through the post office by using a Postal Money Order (*gaikoku yubin kawase*). The cost of a Postal Money Order depends on the amount you wish to send, with the commission starting at 2,500 yen. The money can be sent to a person's address or can be transferred directly to a person's bank account. At the Post Office, you just fill out the Postal Money Order form, pay the equivalent of the amount you would like to send in yen and the Post Office will take care of delivering the check or transferring the money to the recipient's bank account. Money can be sent to 189 countries, although the number of countries where money can be sent by telegraphic transfer is limited.

Banks provide three types of overseas remittance:

- Telegraphic Transfer;  
For telegraphic transfers, the customer requesting the transfer bears the cost. It is the fastest method of sending money.
- Airmail Remittance Transfer;  
For mail transfers, the notice of transfer is sent by air mail and is thus slower than telegraphic transfer.
- International Money Order;  
The bank issues a check for the requested amount and the customer mails it to the person concerned.

For more information concerning sending money overseas, contact the Customer Advisory

Office (in English), tel: 0120-085420, Monday through Friday, 8:30 – 18:00.

**Money transfer service**

The **Money Gram** transfer service and the **Western Union** money transfer service allow you to send and receive money from various participating agents throughout the world. The service is fast with money generally being sent within two hours, however, fees are higher than the Post Office. Identification with an attached photograph such as passport or foreign resident registration card is necessary to perform the transaction.

**Money Gram**

The Banco Itau S.A. (Marunouchi Center Building 1F, 1-6-1 Marunouchi Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

tel: 0120-4828-27

9:00-15:00 (Monday – Friday)

<http://www.moneygram.com/MGI/EN/JP/Market/Market.htm?CC=JP&LC=EN>

**Western Union**

ROPPONGI MONEY TRANSFER PLAZA  
4F Roppongi Amagi Building, 6-1-26 Roppongi Minato-ku, Tokyo

0034-800-400-733

10:00 - 19:00 (Monday - Sunday)

\*English service is available 24 hours a day.

<http://www.westernunion.com/info/homePage.asp?country=JP&origination=US>

**Post Office**

Besides handling letters and parcels, the post office (*yubinkyoku*) also offers banking (savings and financing), insurance and other services. In fact, the post office is the best place to go if you want to use your foreign credit, debit or ATM card. Unlike ATMs in most banks, those in the post offices now accept foreign Visa, Plus, Mastercard, Eurocard, Maestro, Cirrus, American Express, Diners and JCB cards. In addition, these ATMs offer visual and audible instructions in English. Post offices are generally open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (to 4:00 p.m. for banking and insurance services), Monday through Friday and are closed on weekends (some are open on Saturdays until 12.30 p.m.) and holidays. The Central Post Office next to Tokyo station is open 24 hrs.

**Roppongi Ekimae Post Office**

6-7-10 Roppongi, Minato-ku

tel: 03-5410-1371

ATM: 9:00 ~ 21:00 (weekdays)

9:00 ~ 17:00 (Sat & Sun)

**Roppongi Hills Post Office**

Roppongi Hills 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
6-10-1 Roppongi Minato-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3403-7055  
ATM: 9:00~17:00 (Weekdays)

**Nogizaka Ekimae Post Office**

7-3-7 Roppongi Minato-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3408-3540  
ATM: 9:00~17:30 (Weekdays)  
9:00~12:30 (Sat & Sun)

**Tokyo International Post Office**

2-3-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
International Mail Information  
tel: 03-3241-4891

**Parcel Delivery Services (*takuhaibin*)**

Delivers parcels cheap and fast to all areas of Japan. You can either take your parcel to a home delivery service agent or ask the company to come and pick it up. Most convenience stores act as agents for home delivery service companies.

If you are carrying a lot of luggage when arriving in Japan, it may be a good idea to have it sent to your new home address or to GRIPS through one of the many home parcel delivery services (e.g. ABC, GPA, KAMATAKI or NPS). Delivery service counters are located at the arrival floors in both terminals 1 and 2. The charge is around 2,000 yen per suitcase, but it may vary depending on size and weight. Your luggage will be delivered within 24 hours.

There are various ways to **send parcels overseas** but usually the cheapest way is to have it sent through the post office. Parcel post rates, size and weight restrictions and other information can be found at the Post Office Guide on the internet:

<http://www.post.japanpost.jp/english/index.html>

If you have a lot of **books or papers** to ship home, you can also use the cheaper 'Printed Matter in Special Mail Bags' service (also known as 'Book Bags'). The 'Book Bags' are handled at designated Post Offices only. Please note that there is no insurance attached to the 'Book Bags' service. For rates, please refer to:  
[http://www.post.japanpost.jp/int/service/s\\_print\\_ed\\_matter\\_en.html](http://www.post.japanpost.jp/int/service/s_print_ed_matter_en.html)

**Telephone**

Most Student Accommodations are equipped with a telephone line and (rental) telephone, but

private apartments are not. Due to deregulation and innovative technology, the telecommunications market in Japan is drastically changing these days and there are many options for you to choose from if you want to get a telephone subscription, either mobile or fixed. If you wish to install a (fixed) telephone through NTT, you must first purchase telephone subscription rights. This will cost you around 40,000 yen (excl. installation fee) if purchased directly from NTT, but can be bought cheaper second hand through real estate agents, electric appliance stores or from individuals leaving Japan.

In order to prevent you from being responsible for outstanding telephone calls made by the previous owner when buying a "second-hand" telephone line, you should verify that outstanding debts for both domestic and international telephone services have been paid and notify both domestic and international telephone companies of the change in ownership. When purchasing rights from someone else, you may also get the phone number from the person you dealt with. To get a new phone number, an application must be made to the telephone company.

To have a new telephone installed, go to the nearest NTT branch office. You must bring your Passport and Foreign Resident Registration Card. Telephone charges consist of the basic monthly charge, a call charge, and value-added charges such as for the use of a rental phone. For further information, contact NTT Information Service in English, tel: 0120-364463

A cheaper alternative may be getting a mobile phone. Japan is a leader in mobile phone technology and usage. There are now more mobile phone lines in Japan than conventional ones. Foreigners in Japan need to be registered residents, i.e. present their foreign resident registration card, in order to subscribe to mobile phone services. At present, **au** (<http://www.au.kddi.com/english/index.html>) and **Soft Bank** (<http://mb.softbank.jp/en/>) seems to be having the best deal for students.

**International Calls**

There are several ways to make international calls. As a result of deregulation and technological innovation in the telecommunications industry many companies that offer services for international calls at very competitive rates have entered the Japanese

telecom market. One of the most inexpensive and easy to use is Brastel, a Tokyo-based company providing 24-hour flat rate international calling services to more than 240 countries. You first need to order the free “Brastel Smart Phonecard” through their website ([www.brastel.com](http://www.brastel.com)). The card is (re)chargeable at convenience stores. The telecom market changes rapidly so please check the internet for the best deals and latest information.

Until you have found a better deal, you can use KDDI. To make an international call dial:  
001 - 010 - country code - local number

## Computers and Internet

Each student will be provided a laptop computer and a study desk in one of the study rooms in the GRIPS building. All computers have a broadband internet connection that can be freely used any time.

The rooms in the Tokyo International Exchange Center Residence Halls, as well as those in GRIPS International House are also equipped with a fast LAN internet connection that gives you unlimited and free access to the world wide web.

## Medical Services

### National Health Insurance

International students who will be in Japan for one year or longer must enroll in the National Health Insurance System (*kokumin kenko hoken*). Formalities are carried out by the municipal office of the region in which you live. Again, the Student Office will help you with signing up for the National Health Insurance System. You will have to make monthly (or 6-monthly, depending on where you live) payments of the insurance fee. Upon joining the National Health Insurance System you will receive a National Health Insurance Certificate. If you show your certificate at the reception desk when you receive medical treatment, you will need to pay only 30% of the incurred medical costs. Of this 30%, international students will be reimbursed 80% by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO). The reimbursement is available only for treatment covered by the Japanese Health Insurance Law.

You should submit an application (including receipts) for medical fee reimbursement at the GRIPS Student Office.

Dependents can also join the National Health Insurance System. Additional insurance fees must be paid for dependents. The National Health Insurance covers most medical care, dental care and medications. In the case of major medical expenses incurred as a result of hospitalization or otherwise, you may be eligible for a refund or loan from National Health Insurance to cover the excess amount as a Major Medical Expense.

If there is any change in name, address or family circumstances (e.g. childbirth), you must notify the National Health Insurance Section at your municipal office within 14 days of the change. You will need to bring your National Health Insurance Certificate and Foreign Resident Registration Card.

Please note that medical expenses incurred overseas are not covered by the National Health Insurance. If you are planning to travel abroad during your period of stay in Japan, you are strongly advised to get travel insurance (*kaigai ryokou hoken*) which can be obtained through travel agents or at the airport.

If you become ill or injure yourself and require hospitalisation, please contact the GRIPS Health Services Center immediately.

### GRIPS Health Services Center

GRIPS has established an in-house health clinic, located at the third floor of the GRIPS building. The clinic is staffed by Doctor Suzuki (internist/endocrinologist) and a public health nurse. The Clinic offers mainly health consultation and can provide basic medical examination such as measuring blood pressure, electrocardiogram, eye test etc and over-the-counter drugs. In case you need further examination or treatment, the doctor will introduce you to an appropriate medical clinic or hospital. In addition, GRIPS may be able to arrange an English-speaking counselor according to students' needs. The clinic is open Monday through Friday, 10:00 - 16:45. It is not necessary to make an appointment. For further details, check the Clinic's website at <http://www.grips.ac.jp/pstudents/health/center.html>.

### Medical Practitioners

Japan's medical institutions can be broadly divided into two categories: private clinics and

hospitals. About 60% of Japan's doctors are in private practice and the other 40% are employed in hospitals, universities, laboratories, clinics and companies. Most health care centers and clinics in Japan do not require appointments. Service is first come, first served. If you wish to avoid long waiting hours, you should go early to register at the reception desk. Specialists do not normally require patients to be referred by a general practitioner so you can go and see directly the type of doctor you need. In general, patients are not consistently seen by the same doctor. If there is a particular doctor you wish to see, you need to call in advance to make sure that he/she is available for your examination. On visiting the health care center, tell the reception desk the name of the doctor you wish to see so that they do not direct you to someone else. In most hospitals and some clinics you will have to pay an initial fee of 3,000 to 5,000 yen at your first visit. Tests and treatment are charged additionally.

In Japan, most doctors prescribe drugs that are covered by the national health insurance. You will normally pick up the prescribed drugs at the hospital pharmacy or at an outside pharmacy that is usually located within short distance of the medical facility that issued the prescription. The medicine will probably come in an envelope with directions as to when to take it written on it. Please bear in mind that, in principle, you cannot send prescription medications through the international mail, so if you are already taking some kind of medication you should arrange to bring ample quantity with you to Japan since it may be difficult to obtain.

#### **Public Health Care Centers**

Public Health Care Centers offer a wide range of services, including general health checks, regular checkups of various sorts, vaccinations, nutritional guidance, health consultations, and so on. The health care center also issues a "mother-and-child health book", organizes maternity classes and deals with health check-ups and vaccinations for infants, and check-ups for mothers after childbirth. People who live in the neighborhood of a particular public health center are entitled to the center's various services. A foreign national who has completed foreign resident registration procedure is entitled to the same services as any other local resident.

#### **Medical Services in Foreign Languages**

The majority of Japanese doctors can communicate in English to a limited extent. If

you wish to receive medical care in English or another language, you are advised to identify a hospital or clinic that provides foreign language services. The very comprehensive "Guide to Emergency Medical Treatment in Tokyo" with lots of addresses and information in English can be picked up for free at most municipal and ward offices in Tokyo. For free information about medical facilities that offer treatment in foreign languages and for information about the Japanese medical system you can also contact the following telephone information services:

- Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center "Himawari" (*Tokyo-to Hoken Iryo Joho Center*)  
2-44-1 Kabuki-cho, Shinjuku-ku  
tel: 03-5285-8181 (in English, Chinese, Korean, Thai and Spanish)  
9:00 – 20:00, weekdays
- AMDA International Medical Information Center  
tel: 03-5285-8088 (in English, Chinese, Korean, Thai and Spanish)  
9:00 – 17:00, weekdays

Students in GRIPS can get the information about medical institutes where English is available on the Clinic's website. Be aware that not all foreign doctors and international clinics accept Japanese national health insurance. Prices can be quite high so please check before you go and see a doctor!

Another useful contact may be the Foreign Residents Advisory Center. The Center gives advice on problems relating to medical care, legal matters and daily life. The Center is located at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building, 2-8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-8001

9:30 – 12:00 and 13:00 – 16:00

English Speaking (Monday to Friday)

tel: 03-5320-7744

Chinese Speaking (Tuesday & Friday)

tel: 03-5320-7776

French Speaking (Thursday)

tel: 03-5320-7755

Korean Speaking (Wednesday)

tel: 03-5320-7700

Spanish Speaking (Thursday)

tel: 03-5320-7730

## **Transportation**

Tokyo and its surrounding areas has one of the world's most highly developed transportation

systems. It is easy to use, even for foreigners, and an excellent bi-lingual route planner is available at the web:

<http://jorudan.co.jp/english/>  
<http://www.hyperdia.com/en/>

### **Tickets**

Tickets for local trains can be purchased from ticket vending machines. The fare from your station to other stations can be found on a fare table displayed above those machines. If you are unsure of the appropriate fare, just buy the cheapest ticket and pay the difference upon arrival at the Fare Adjustment Machines (*jido seisan-ki*) that are usually located near the exit booths.

**Prepaid cards** don't give you any discounts, but are very convenient as you do not always need to buy a ticket before riding a train. Prepaid cards can be purchased at vending machines. The two main types of prepaid cards are:

- **PASMO**

PASMO cards can be used on almost all trains and subways in the Tokyo area. A PASMO card is available for a 500 yen deposit, and the balance added on the card is automatically deducted for trains and buses. Since the PASMO card has smart card technology (or integrated circuit card) imbedded, you just hold the card by the top of the sensor at the train station gate (the card doesn't have to be taken out of the wallet). This makes the people flowing faster than before at the train station. You can also add commuter pass function to your PASMO card. PASMO has been evolving into an electric money system and can be used to pay for small purchases at an increasing number of kiosks, convenience stores, vending machines etc.

- **Suica**

Suica was the very first electronic pass card system, introduced by Japan Railways (JR). Originally it could be used on subway and private lines too and is thus very similar to the PASMO card.

### **Commuter Pass**

If you are often traveling between the same two places, e.g. commuting from your residence to the GRIPS campus in Roppongi, it is a good idea to get a commuter pass (*teikiken*) which is valid for a fixed period (one, three or six months) and is advantageous for its discount fare. If you are using different means of transport (e.g. bus, train and subway) operated by different companies you may have to buy a

separate commuter pass for each trajectory. Commuter passes can be purchased at the ticket counters after filling out an application form. There are two types of commuter passes, one for commuting to school (*tsugaku*) and one for commuting to work (*tsukin*). The student passes are substantially cheaper, but one needs an identification card from an educational institution to obtain one. The GRIPS Academic Support Team (AST) can provide you with a "Student Commuter Pass Issuance Card" which you should bring together with your Student ID Card when applying for a commuter pass. The commuter pass function can be added to your PASMO or Suica card.

### **Buses**

Commuter buses in Japan are broadly of two types: those one boards at the front and those one boards at the rear. In case of the former, there is usually a flat-fare system, and the fare is paid when you get on. In case of the latter, the fee depends on the distance traveled and one pays when getting off. Most buses in Tokyo are of the first type. For buses of the second type, found in Saitama and elsewhere, one boards at the rear and takes a numbered ticket from the machine inside the door. When reaching your destination, determine the fare by matching the number on your ticket with the number on the signboard (*unchin-hyo*) at the front of the bus. The price is written under the corresponding ticket number. As you get off, deposit the money into the fare box (*unchin bako*) located next to the driver. Buses are usually equipped with automatic money changing machines (*ryogae-ki*) located at the front of the bus. This machine accepts only 1000 yen bills and 500, 100 and 50 yen coins. You can also buy a bus card which comes in the denomination of 1000, 3000, and 5000 yen and has a value of 1100, 3360, and 5850 yen respectively. The card needs to be inserted in the ticket machine at the entrance while boarding and again when getting off at the front. The fare will be automatically deducted from your card.

### **Bicycles**

It may be a good idea to get a bicycle. Because roads are usually crowded, riding a bicycle is quite often a faster and cheaper alternative to using the bus, e.g. for commuting from your residence to the nearest station. However, please note that it is usually illegal to park your bicycle in front of stations. Illegally parked bicycles may be removed, and will be disposed of after two months if not reclaimed. There are usually bicycle parking lots available near the station

which charge around 200 yen a day. If you buy a new bicycle, you should apply for crime-prevention registration. This can be done at most bicycle shops. Registration fee is 525 yen. If you are riding a second-hand bicycle that is still registered in the name of the previous owner, you may face problems if you are stopped by the police, so be sure to have it re-registered in your name.

### Taxis

Taxis can be found at places on the sidewalk labeled “takushi noriba” (taxi stand), and taxis displaying the red “kusha” (cab for hire) sign can be stopped on the street by sticking your arm out. The rear door will open automatically, so simply get in and tell the driver your destination. There is no need to give the driver a tip. The taxi number, company name and driver’s name are displayed in front of the front passenger seat, so if by any chance you leave one of your possessions behind in a taxi, you can contact the taxi company. For journeys within the city limits, taxi fares are calculated based on both distance and time. The calculation is usually based on distance, however, if the car’s speed drops below 10 km per hour due to a traffic jam or a similar reason, the fare is calculated on the basis of time as well as distance. In most cities, there is a late-night surcharge (30%) for journeys between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Please note, that in case you need a taxi early in the morning (e.g. when going on a morning flight from Narita Airport) you should order a day in advance before 6 p.m.

## Emergencies

### Emergency Numbers

Numbers to call in case of an emergency (no city or area code needed):

**police (in case of accident or crime):** dial 110

**fire/ambulance (in case of fire or medical emergency):** dial 119

When making an emergency call, you should give your name and address and calmly and clearly state whether you are calling to report an accident (*jiko*), a fire (*kaji*), ask for emergency rescue (*kyujo*) or an ambulance (*kyukyusha*).

Each area has its own local police box (*koban*). It is a good idea to find out where your nearest

police box is, as this information will be useful in case of an emergency.

### Traffic Accidents

If you are involved in a traffic accident, in addition to calling the police by dialing 110, you must do the following:

- Ask the other person for his/her name, address, telephone number, license plate number and insurance company.
- If there are any witnesses, ask for their name and telephone number as well.

All students are strongly advised to sign up for the personal liability insurance offered through GRIPS. The insurance provides coverage of liability for causing accidental bodily injury to someone else or accidental loss or damage to someone else’s property during your stay in Japan. The insurance also covers the ‘rescuer’s expense’ in the case of the student’s death or the incurred expenses caused by unexpected accident or illness.

### Earthquakes

Japan is an earthquake-prone country. If you feel an earthquake, you should first turn off the gas and open a door or window to secure an escape exit should you need one, then get under a table or desk to protect yourself from falling objects. There is a higher risk of injury if you run outside during an earthquake. Stay inside, do not use elevators and try to remain calm. Turn on the radio or television and listen for tidal wave warnings and information.

To minimise damage should a severe earthquake strike, you are advised to do the following:

- Secure such furniture as dressers and bookshelves with metal braces so that they do not fall over. Do not place fragile or heavy objects on high shelves;
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy;
- Keep emergency supplies such as medical provisions, daily supplies, especially drinking water and emergency food, and valuables accessible. Keep your passport, Foreign Resident Registration Card, National Health Insurance Certificate etc. in a handy location as well;
- Make sure you have a portable radio, flashlight, batteries, and some cash ready at hand;
- Find out in advance the locations of evacuation sites and evacuation routes;
- Take time to participate in local disaster prevention drills.

## Climate

Though completely located in the temperate zone, Japan stretches nearly 2,500 km, covering about 20 degrees of latitude, from the far north to the southernmost islands, resulting in a climate that ranges from very cold winters in Hokkaido to subtropical in Okinawa. Japan has four distinct seasons. Summer in Tokyo is generally hot and humid, and lasts from June through to August. Winter is fairly mild and dryer, and stretches from December to February. The intervening Spring and Autumn months are the most pleasant in the year, particularly April to May and October to November. In June, the Rainy Season arrives when the archipelago becomes soggy for about a month. The typhoon season in August/September generally brings most of the years' rain in a few months, with periods of intense heavy rain and floods. The table below shows the monthly average temperatures (in degree Celsius) in Tokyo between 1981 and 2010.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Average High Temp.</i>	<i>Average Low Temp.</i>	<i>Average Humidity (%)</i>
January	9.9	2.5	49
February	10.4	2.9	50
March	13.3	5.6	55
April	18.8	10.7	60
May	22.8	15.4	65
June	25.5	19.1	72
July	29.4	23.0	73
August	31.1	24.5	71
September	27.2	21.1	71
October	21.8	15.4	66
November	16.9	9.9	59
December	12.4	5.1	52

## Dress Code

Although Tokyo enjoys a relatively mild winter compared to some other regions of Japan, you will need warm coats and sweaters to keep out the chill. Summer is hot and humid, so bring light clothes, thin shirts, and long sleeves if you need to cover up from the sun.

GRIPS does not have a dress code and welcomes the variety of appearance resulting from individual backgrounds, styles and choices.

However, you are advised to bring at least one formal suit or dress to be worn at special occasions such as the entrance and completion ceremony, receptions, meetings and other formal occasions.

You are also encouraged to bring a traditional dress costume from your culture, as well as anecdotes, songs, poems, and other evidence of your cultural heritage. You might also bring music or films about your country or region on CD, audio or videotapes. Since your colleagues will come from many different countries and cultures it will be a good opportunity to share, celebrate and understand the value of cultural diversity.

## Religion

An excellent source of information for Moslems is the Islamic Center Japan:

1-16-11, Ohara, Setagaya-ku,  
Tokyo 156-0041

tel: 03-3460-6169

fax: 03-3460-6105.

<http://www.islamcenter.or.jp/eng/index.html>

Their web site is comprehensive and contains among others a list of Halal food stores and Halal restaurants in Japan.

A large Roman Catholic Church can be found near Sophia University, very close to JR Yotsuya station, where an English Mass is held every Sunday at 12noon. The Franciscan Chapel Center in Roppongi has daily masses in English. Please check their website for further details <http://franciscanchapelcentertokyo.org/>. The famous Russian Orthodox Church, also known as Nikolai Cathedral, was established in 1891 and is located in Kanda, very close to Ochanomizu station. A Service is held every Sunday from 10am - 12.30pm in Japanese only.

## Education

School year starts in April in Japan. The basis of the Japanese education system is the 6-3-3-4 system:

6 years of elementary school,

3 years of junior high school,

3 years of senior high school, and

4 years of university.

Furthermore, there are 2 years of Master's degree and a minimum 3 years of Doctor's degree.

The nine years of education at elementary and junior high schools is compulsory and starts at age 6. A minimum 12 years of education is needed to get into a university. Preschool education is carried out at child-care center (from 6 months to 4 years old) and kindergarten (4 to 6 years of age). Students of junior and senior high schools must wear a school uniform. Both public (national or city-owned) and private schools are available. Expenses at the private schools may be higher than public ones.

### **School Entrance Procedure**

If the parents of a child with foreign nationality wish their child to enter a Japanese public elementary or junior high school, the parents must carry out the school entrance application procedure with regard to the education committee in the appropriate city, ward, town, or village after completing foreign resident registration. When approval has been received from the education committee, the child may attend a school in the area where he or she lives. Entrance to a senior high school is granted on the basis of an examination, providing that the child applying to enter the school has either graduated from a Japanese junior high school or completed 9 years of formal education in his or her own country.

Admittance to a child-care center and kindergarten is more difficult because of the limited capacity of such institutions. Generally, the children may only be admitted if both parents are full-time employed or full-time students. Even in such a case, there may be a lottery to select among qualified the candidates. A list of public and private child-care centers and kindergartens can be obtained from the municipal office of the ward, town, city or village that you live.

Notice that admittance to private child-care center and kindergartens, which are not approved by the local governments, may be easier. Some of these institutions may have poor quality services but some may give a very good quality service for very high school fees. Select these schools at your own risk.

For more information, contact the relevant section of the Board of Education of your local ward or municipal office.

## **Libraries**

There are numerous libraries in Japan, ranging from the National Diet Library, which holds the largest volume of books, to libraries operated by prefectures, cities, wards and towns. The main libraries in Tokyo are:

- National Diet Library, Toyko  
1-10-1 Nagato-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3581-2331
- Tokyo Central Metropolitan Library  
5-7-13 Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3442-8451
- International House of Japan Library  
11-16, Roppongi 5-chome, Minato-ku,  
Tokyo  
tel: 03-3470-3213

Foreign books and journals can be viewed at the following libraries in Tokyo:

- American Center Library  
1-10-5 Akasaka  
Minato-ku  
Tokyo  
tel: 03-3224-5292
- British Council Library  
1-2 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3235-8031
- Japan Russian Sources Library  
1-11-2 Kyodo, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3429-8239
- Library of the Asian Economics Research  
Institute  
42 Ichigaya-honmura-cho, Shinjuku-ku,  
Tokyo  
tel: 03-3353-4231
- Asia-Africa Library  
Asia-Africa Linguistic Institute, 5-14-16,  
Shikawa, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo  
tel: 0422-48-5515
- Oriental Library  
2-28-21 Honkomagome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3942-0121
- Public Information Office Library,  
Embassy of Canada  
7-3-38 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo  
tel: 03-3408-2101

## **National Holidays**

The following days have been designated as national holidays:

January 1                      New Year's Day  
2<sup>nd</sup> Mon. of Jan.              Coming of Age Day

February 11	National Foundation Day
March 20	Vernal Equinox Day*
April 29	Day of Showa
May 3	Constitution Memorial Day
May 4	Greenery Day
May 5	Children's Day
3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon. of July	Marine Day
3 <sup>rd</sup> week of Sep.	Respect for the Aged Day
September 22	Autumnal Equinox Day*
2 <sup>nd</sup> Mon. of Oct.	Health and Sports Day
November 3	Culture Day
November 23	Labor Thanksgiving Day
December 23	Emperor's Birthday

\*Date changes from year to year

When a national holiday falls on a Sunday, the following day will be a holiday. On Saturdays, Sundays and national holidays, banks, post offices and commercial companies are generally closed, but most department stores and shops are open.

Aside from national holidays, during the *Obon* period, a Buddhist holiday in the middle of August, many private offices and shops are closed. During the Year End/New Year's period, especially 1-3 January, most banks, private offices and shops are closed.

## Useful Phrases in Japanese

Good morning	<i>ohayo gozaimasu</i>
Good afternoon	<i>konnichi wa</i>
Good evening	<i>konban wa</i>
How are you?	<i>o-genki desu ka?</i>
Good bye	<i>Sayonara</i>
Excuse me	<i>Sumimasen</i>
I'm sorry	<i>Gomen nasai/ sumimasen</i>
Thank you	<i>arigato gozaimasu</i>
Thank you very much	<i>domo arigato gozaimasu</i>
It's my pleasure	<i>do itashimashite</i>
Please (when offering something)	<i>Dozo</i>
Please (when asking for something)	<i>onegai shimasu</i>
OK	<i>daijobu desu</i>
Yes	<i>Hai</i>
No	<i>Iie</i>
I don't understand	<i>Wakarimasen</i>
Please say it again more slowly	<i>mo ichido yukkuri itte kudasai</i>
My name is ....	<i>watashi wa .... desu</i>
What is your name?	<i>o-namae wa nan desu ka?</i>
Pleased to meet you	<i>dozo yoroshiku</i>
How do I get to .... ?	<i>.... e wa do ikeba iidesu ka?</i>
Where is the ....	<i>.... wa dochira desu ka?</i>
Do you have an English menu?	<i>eigo no menu wa arimasu ka?</i>
I'm a vegetarian.	<i>watashi wa vegetarian desu</i>
Help me!	<i>tasukete kudasai!</i>
Please give me a ....	<i>.... o kudasai</i>