

Outbound to Japan Travel Tips

These travel tips are designed to prepare you to get the most out of the 4-H outbound exchange to Japan and to prepare you for a lifetime of travel and enjoyment of the diverse cultures of the world. The information here is a result of the experiences and suggestions of travelers and delegates. In the words of a returning delegate: "Pay attention to orientation. You really do need to know this."

If the travel tips include information that contradicts something you have already learned, or if you have extra suggestions to add, please feel free to let us know. Same with questions. We love questions!

You may already be an experienced traveler or this Japan homestay may be one of your first international trips. Travel doesn't always go the way we plan, but with the right attitude, it can always be an adventure and a source of great memories and stories to tell when we arrive back home.

Tips for being a great world traveler

Be Nice-

You are representing yourself, your family, 4-H, your town, your state and your country. Someone may take their entire idea of Americans from their meeting with you. A positive attitude will spread to not only those around you, but smiling will help keep you feeling positive, as well. No matter the situation, you can choose to be positive. Being nice is also more effective when asking others for help.

Be Observant-

One fun part of traveling is seeing everything. Keep your eyes open and you will notice more and therefore enjoy more. Each culture has do's and don't's. The easiest way to know what to do is to watch others. Watching what other people do can also help you know where to go or help you notice something interesting to do, like watching a street performance.

Be Flexible-

Traveling means change. Sometimes it's unsettling when you aren't sure what happens next. Experienced travelers know that there is no point in

getting upset when plans have to be changed. Just find a way to enjoy the new plan. Sometimes it is a lot better than the old one!

Be Respectful-

Each culture has its own way of doing things. Disrespecting the cultural values of others by, for example, making negative comments or dressing inappropriately is offensive and sets us apart from them. When we are guests in another culture, respecting the culture and asking about the reasons behind cultural differences are a great way to learn. You will return home with a deeper understanding of that culture.

Be Thankful-

All travelers rely on others to help them: ticket agents, flight attendants, hotel staff, host families, restaurant workers, people who give you directions, store employees, etc. Thanking them for their assistance, even if you are paying for it, brightens their day and shows that you are an honorable person.

Be a Communicator-

Speak clearly, with no idioms or slang. People who have only studied English for a few years will not know phrases such as, "What's up?" or "This weather is messed up." and be really confused. Let people know how you are feeling, that you are enjoying the food, feeling sleepy, having fun, or if you need help. It's easy to become silent when you don't know the local language, but don't fall into that habit. It shuts out your new friends. Try to learn a new word every day, and communicate with gestures and your smile!

Be Healthy-

Travel is more fun when you are feeling well. Get enough sleep, drink lots of water, eat healthy food, wash your hands or use sanitizer, and if you are a somewhat picky eater, take vitamins.

Be Aware of Yourself-

Boredom and discomfort can be avoided if you think about what you will need in various situations. For example, if you bore easily and don't like airplane movies, you may want to bring some books or audio books for the jet ride to Japan. If you like to eat every hour or so, you might want to bring snacks for the plane, to eat between the airplane meals. If you know that you don't do well in heat, pack lightweight clothing. If you are cold on planes, bring a shawl or blanket. If you have trouble falling asleep, bring an iPod to

listen to. If you enjoy photography, bring an extra memory card for your camera. If you like to draw, bring a sketchbook. As you live your daily life at home, look at the things you use and think about whether you want to write those items on your packing list.

Be Open-

Travelers have great opportunities to try new foods, see new things, and to do activities they would never be able to do at home. Try as much as you can. You never know what you will like, and fully participating in a culture is the best way to learn about it. Notice similarities and differences to your own culture, but don't criticize or feel like you have to judge or choose one over another.

Be Prepared for a Bad Day-

Every experienced traveler knows that there will often be a day when they are in a bad mood. (We have bad days at home, too, of course.) Usually it's because we aren't feeling well or are tired. Sometimes we are experiencing a little culture shock from being in an unfamiliar situation. We know that these feelings will pass and that we will once again be ready to have fun. We can deal with this "bad day" by taking good care of ourselves and by writing our feelings in our journals. We can re-read the first pages of our journals to remind ourselves of the reasons we wanted to travel and the things we still want to do before we go home. Some people find that keeping busy and trying something new eliminates a bad mood, while others like to take it slow and rest.

Be Organized and Plan Ahead-

Travel drama can be avoided by thinking ahead and double-checking things. Read your exchange program materials. Before you leave for the airport, check again to be sure you have your passport and money. Don't pack at the last minute. Think about everything that you will need, and try to bring items that you will use often, and in more than one way.