

# Living in Tokyo



THE  
BRITISH SCHOOL  
IN TOKYO



## Living in Tokyo

Tokyo is an exciting place to live, It is a modern city with an extensive public transportation system but you're never far from the traditional. Tokyo is a city of modern delights and old world charms it's a sprawling metropolis of over 12 million inhabitants. Where small districts have their own local flavour and the large expatriate community is welcomed and integrated.



## Weather

Tokyo has four very distinct seasons; summers are hot and humid whilst winters are dry and cold with sunny blue skies the norm. Spring and autumn are usually warm and pleasant. With Nagano only about 1 hour from Tokyo, skiing in winter and hiking in summer are very popular pastimes.

## Tokyo Events

Japan has many traditional events that follow these seasonal changes. In spring you'll find people drinking and eating together under the beautiful cherry blossom trees that line most Japanese streets. In summer you can watch Fireworks and sample Japanese street food, which often line the streets at festivals and events during the warmer months. Autumn is a beautiful time to hike through the mountains that surround Tokyo and take in the beauty of the maple leaves as they change colour. Whilst in winter you might want to partake in the New Years Celebrations at various temples or just relax at home underneath a Kotatsu.

<http://www.gotokyo.org/en/index.html>

<http://www.timeout.com/tokyo>

## Sport is coming to town!

With the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympics in 2020, Tokyo is destined to be one of the hottest sporting destinations of the next few years. Along with the annual Tokyo marathon, Sumo tournaments, J-league and baseball competitions it means that any sports fan would enjoy Tokyo year round.

<http://www.2020games.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/>



## Personal safety

Tokyo is rightly regarded as one of the safest cities in the world. Violent crime is very rare and people are generally very courteous and polite. Naturally people have to be sensible if heading out for the night, but with members of the public ready to help and koban (police boxes) spread all over the city, there is generally very little to worry about.



## Groceries

Supermarkets are smaller and more local than is now the norm in the UK, however they tend to stay open all hours and, along with the ubiquitous convenience store chains such as 7-Eleven, provide most of your grocery shopping needs. Department stores carry more imported goods and there are a number of specialist import stores springing up, such as Seijo-Ishii, so Marmite and baked beans are now easy to get hold of.

## Cost of living

Tokyo often tops the lists of 'most expensive city in the world' and this can be true, if you try to live the "ex-pat lifestyle". Buying imported goods from international supermarkets is expensive, however shopping locally is no more expensive, and often cheaper, than buying back home. Utility bills and transport costs are reasonable and not subject to steep rises every year, indeed with inflation close to zero prices have remained stable for a number of years.

## Eating out

Tokyo has more 3-starred Michelin restaurants than any other city in the world; it also has some of the cheapest local noodle shops you can find – and, of course, everything in between. There was a time when eating out in Tokyo meant either Japanese or high-end western dining, however now Tokyo is a culinary melting pot with Asian, Western and African places increasingly popular. Even good quality fish n' chips are now easy to come by for anyone missing home. And don't worry if you can't read the menu, most places have photos or even models of all their dishes in the window.

<http://www.menu-tokyo.jp/index.php?lang=en>



## Language

Like most languages, it's easy to learn the basics but it takes work to master. To make travelling easier station names are

漢字

かん じ  
Kan - ji

written in all four common scripts; English, the phonetic scripts of Hiragana and Katakana and Chinese Kanji characters, so just by moving around

the city you begin to recognise sounds and symbols. Even though English is widely spoken (study is compulsory at school) learning just a little of the language will make life easier and your stay a lot more rewarding.



## Leisure

There is a great variety of leisure activities to suit everyone in Tokyo. Sports facilities and clubs abound, with gyms, expat rugby, football and cricket teams, a myriad of martial arts and many more. Further afield onsens (hot springs), hiking, skiing and surfing are popular pastimes. Cultural pursuits are also popular, from language classes to kimono lessons, calligraphy and traditional flower arranging (ikebana) widely accessible. Cinema films are all dubbed into English and Tokyo regularly hosts world class concerts and art exhibitions.

## Getting around

Public transport in Tokyo is fast, cheap and efficient, although very busy during rush hour. Trains and subways run from early morning until around midnight and cover all areas of the city. Navigation is easy with signs in English and Japanese. With the roads so crowded, taxis can often be slow and expensive in comparison to public transport.

[http://www.jreast.co.jp/E/downloads/pdf/tokyo\\_map\\_e.pdf](http://www.jreast.co.jp/E/downloads/pdf/tokyo_map_e.pdf)

## Travel

Tokyo is the central hub for transport in Japan. The iconic bullet trains (Shinkansen in Japanese) all start from Tokyo and can whisk you in a matter of hours to all parts of the country. Japan could be described as a country built on its railway system, so extensive is the network, and it provides the perfect way to explore the islands of the archipelago.

Narita and Haneda airports are also very convenient for exploring the Asia-Pacific region, with culture-, activity- and beach-based holidays cheap and easy to get to.

| Destination       | Flight time (approx.) |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Seoul             | 1 hour 30 minutes     |
| Beijing           | 2 hours 30 minutes    |
| Hong Kong         | 3 hours 30 minutes    |
| Cebu, Philippines | 4 hours               |
| Bangkok           | 6 hours               |
| Bali              | 7 hours               |
| Hawaii            | 7 hours 30 minutes    |
| Sydney            | 9 hours               |
| Los Angeles       | 10 hours              |
| London            | 12 hours              |

## Health

Tokyo has excellent dental and medical facilities, including a number dedicated to serving the expatriate population. Major hospitals have English speaking staff and most signs are bi-lingual. Western medicines are generally available though it is a good idea to check before arrival; prescription medicines can be brought into Japan with the appropriate documentation.

## Currency

Japan uses the Yen (JPY) as its currency. All major currencies are easily exchanged in banks in Tokyo, including travellers' cheques. Western credit cards are readily accepted throughout the city.



## Accommodation

BST provides all overseas-hired teachers with accommodation when they arrive in Japan. White goods, including air-conditioners, are provided, along with basic furnishings, beds & linen and crockery & cutlery. BST apartments are about 30 minutes from either campus and in neighbourhoods with shops, supermarkets, transport links and other facilities. Please note that apartments in Tokyo are generally not pet friendly so cats and dogs would need to be left in the UK.

## Earthquakes

Seismic activity is a fact of life in Tokyo and Japan as a whole. BST is very well prepared for an earthquake – the buildings comply with the highest construction standards, students and staff drill regularly, the school has very detailed emergency response plans and equipment in various storage areas in and near the campuses.