

RESFEBER LOVES

1. Japan is famed for it's cuisine, but it ain't all sushi and rice. Izakaya is small varied dishes, like Tapas, that is just sublime. Izakaya restaurants are small and intimate, sometimes only seating as few as 8 people, so are not easy to get into. We highly recommend an Izakaya evening with a guide who will take you to the best spots and introduce you to Japan etiquette at these traditional restaurants.



2. Ryokan's are traditional Japanese Inn's that we would always recommend a night or two in. The rooms comprise of Tatami mat's, so no shoes are permitted, and your bed is a futon. At a Ryokan you'll dine, usually, in your room with freshly prepared dishes which are included in your room rate.



3. Dietary Requirements..... ok so Japan hasn't the best record when it comes to Dietary Requirements. Some of the older Ryokan's won't even take Vegetarian or Vegan requests as many dishes contain Daishi, which is fish sauce. Gluten intolerant? Then avoid Soy Sauce, although more restaurants are offering Gluten Free Soy Sauce on the side. We would definitely get a Katakana sign to show staff any intolerances you have.



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4. Shinkansen.... The BULLET TRAIN! Japan has an amazing public transport network, none more famous than the long nosed bullet trains. It's awesome being sat in the train watching the conductors come down the train, check tickets, bow to the carriage before moving on to the next one, as you hurtle at 200kph plus speeds through Japan. Really important tip! Japan offers 7 or 14 day Japan Rail Passes, so on your first day in Japan, get confirmed reservations on the trains for the duration of your trip. The trains can get busy, especially during public holidays, in fact if you travel during Golden or Silver week we would actually do single sector train tickets with a confirmed reservation instead of the Japan Rail pass otherwise you may find you could be stuck waiting for a train for hours, if not days.



5. Tokyo is ENORMOUS.... like sprawling!! It has a great underground system with an IC card which is a bit like an Oyster Card for London, except you can use it at selected vending machines and convenience stores too. Make sure you tap in and tap out of stations otherwise your card will be blocked or overcharged. This is common when using stations that comprise both underground and JR trains. I.e going from an underground to JR train without tapping out will result in your card being blocked. If in doubt, ask.



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6. Sakura..... Cherry Blossom, is THE most popular time to visit Japan. I mean, it is awesome seeing the Cherry Blossom's all over Japan. Japan has a long season from mid-March to Mid-May, but Japan is long and thin, so the seasons can be short in individual locations. For example Sapporo in the North generally see's Cherry Blossom in April/May whereas Fukuoka in the south see's cherry blossom in early to mid March and flowering seasons can vary year on year depending on weather and climate. As a rule of thumb mid to late March is a good time to visit and you should see some Cherry Blossom throughout your stay.



7. English is not widely spoken in Japan, and if you are not a Japanese speaker, you may find it difficult to communicate. There are apps that will translate menu's from Katakana to English.



8. Wifi is not common in Japan, some hotels have it and unless you want an eye-watering phone bill when you get home, we would definitely recommend a pocket WiFi package which you can rent. You can either collect at the airport or have it delivered to your hotel. You just need to simply drop it in a post box before you leave.



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9. Onsens are Hot Spring Baths and are common all over Japan. The best place to Onsen is in Hakone National Park. Onsens are typically, single sex, especially public ones and bathers are not permitted, so yep, get naked as you relax in the hot springs. If you aren't comfortable getting naked with strangers then you can hire onsens for private use, but this is more expensive.



10. Never EVER pour your own drink, it's considered the height of bad manners. The host pours the drinks at the table, and you in turn pour the hosts. The deeper the bow the more respect you are being shown or are showing.

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