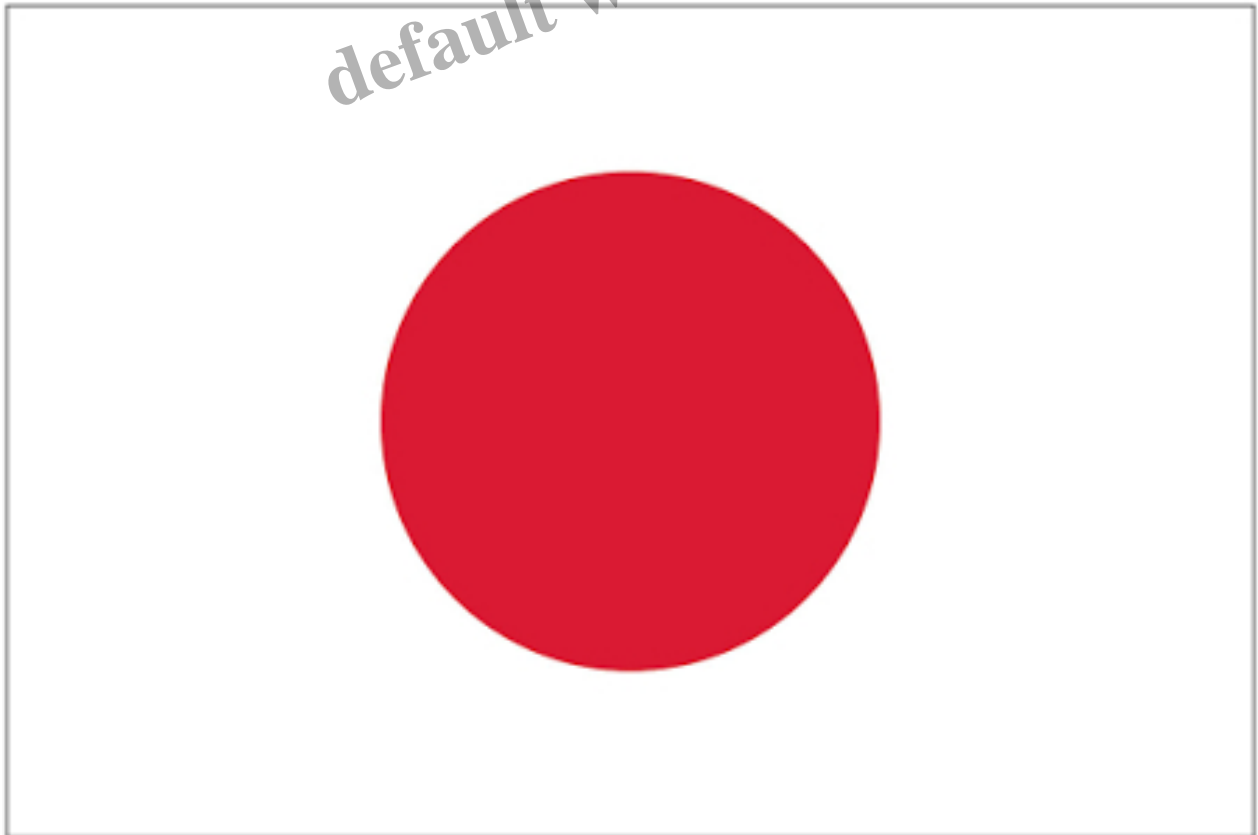




Japan Travel Guide

Description

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Japanese Flag

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“Life is not about how fast you run or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.”

“Life is not about how fast you run or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.” — Takeuchi Sei?

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Top Six Destinations In Japan

- **Tokyo** is a vibrant metropolis that seamlessly blends the ultramodern with the traditional. Visitors can explore iconic landmarks like the Tokyo Tower and Shibuya Crossing, enjoy world-class shopping in Harajuku, and experience cultural heritage in historic neighborhoods such as Asakusa. The city's diverse culinary scene and bustling nightlife also make it an unforgettable destination.
- **Kyoto** is renowned for its well-preserved temples, traditional wooden houses, and stunning gardens. As the former capital of Japan, it offers a glimpse into the country's rich history and culture, with highlights including the Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji) and the historic district of Gion. The seasonal beauty of cherry blossoms in spring and vibrant autumn leaves add to its charm.
- **Osaka** Osaka is known for its dynamic food scene and friendly atmosphere, often dubbed the "Kitchen of Japan." Visitors can indulge in local delicacies like takoyaki and okonomiyaki, while attractions like Universal Studios Japan and Osaka Castle offer entertainment and history. The city's lively nightlife in districts like Dotonbori makes it a must-visit for those seeking a vibrant urban experience.
- **Hiroshima** is a city of resilience and peace. It is famous for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which commemorates the victims of the atomic bombing in 1945. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum provides poignant insight into the city's history and the importance of peace. Nearby, the picturesque island of Miyajima, with its iconic floating torii gate, offers stunning views and cultural experiences.
- **Mount Fuji/Hakone Circuit** Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest peak, is a breathtaking sight and an iconic symbol of the country. The Hakone region, known for its hot springs and scenic views of the mountain, provides opportunities for hiking, outdoor activities, and relaxing in onsen (hot springs). The area also features attractions like the Hakone Open-Air Museum and Lake Ashi, perfect for enjoying nature.
- **Okinawa** is celebrated for its stunning beaches, unique culture, and vibrant marine life. The island offers a laid-back atmosphere, with opportunities for snorkeling, diving, and exploring the beautiful coral reefs. Rich in history, Okinawa features traditional Ryukyu architecture and cultural performances, making it a fascinating destination for those looking to experience Japan's diverse heritage.

Did you know?

Country Stats

- Here's a list of key facts about Japan:
- **Population:** Approximately 125 million
- **Area:** 377,975 square kilometers (145,937 square miles)
- **Capital City:** Tokyo
- **Official Language:** Japanese
- **Currency:** Japanese Yen (JPY)
- **Current Emperor:** Emperor Naruhito, who ascended to the throne on May 1, 2019.
- **US State Department Risk Level:** Level 1 (Exercise Normal Precautions)
- **Urban Population:** Approximately 91% of the population lives in urban areas.
- **Internet Penetration:** About 93% of the population uses the internet.
- **Public Transportation:** Japan has one of the most efficient public transportation systems in the world, including the famous Shinkansen (bullet trains).
- **Cultural Heritage Sites:** Japan has 25 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, showcasing its rich history and culture.
- **Workforce:** The labor force is around 67 million, with a high percentage employed in the services sector.
- **GDP per Capita:** About \$40,000 (varies by year)
- **Population by Race and Ethnicity:** Approximately 98.5% Ethnic Japanese, 0.5% Koreans, 0.4% Chinese, and 1.6% other ethnicities (including Brazilian Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and others).
- **Religion:** Shinto (about 79%) and Buddhism (about 66%) are the two predominant religions, often practiced concurrently; other religions, including Christianity, account for a smaller percentage of the population.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Around 2.6% (varies)
- **Electricity Generation:** Approximately 1,000 TWh (terawatt-hours) annually
- **Tourism:** Over 31 million international visitors in 2019
- **Protected Areas:** About 15% of land area
- **National Parks:** 34 national parks
- **Coastline:** Approximately 29,751 kilometers (18,486 miles)
- **Volcanoes:** Over 100 active volcanoes
- **Agriculture:** Key products include rice, vegetables, and fish
- **Education:** High literacy and education levels, compulsory education for 9 years
- **Imports:** Major imports include machinery, fossil fuels, and food
- **Exports:** Major exports include automobiles, electronics, and machinery
- **Life Expectancy:** Approximately 84 years. Japan has one of the highest percentages of elderly citizens, with about 28% of the population aged 65 or older.
- **Literacy Rate:** Nearly 100%

Fun Facts

- **Unique Vending Machines:** Japan has over 5 million vending machines offering everything from drinks and snacks to hot meals and even clothing.

- **Onsen Culture:** Japan is home to thousands of hot springs (onsen), with many public baths offering stunning views of nature.
- **Capsule Hotels:** Japan popularized capsule hotels, which provide compact sleeping pods—ideal for budget travelers and those seeking a unique experience.
- **Cherry Blossom Festivals:** The hanami (flower viewing) tradition celebrates the blooming of cherry blossoms each spring, attracting locals and tourists alike to parks and gardens.
- **Shinkansen (Bullet Trains):** Japan's bullet trains are known for their punctuality, reaching speeds of up to 320 km/h (200 mph) and connecting major cities efficiently.
- **Culinary Diversity:** Japan offers a wide range of delicious foods, including sushi, ramen, tempura, and kaiseki (multi-course meals), with regional specialties across the country.
- **Unique Fashion:** Areas like Harajuku in Tokyo are famous for their eclectic and vibrant street fashion, showcasing youth culture and creativity.
- **Neko Cafés:** Cat cafés are popular in Japan, allowing patrons to enjoy coffee while spending time with resident cats.
- **Cultural Festivals:** Japan hosts numerous traditional festivals (matsuri) throughout the year, featuring colorful parades, dance, and local food.
- **Mythical Creatures:** Japanese folklore is rich with mythical creatures like the kappa (water demon) and tengu (bird-like spirit), influencing art and literature.
- **Manga and Anime Culture:** Japan is the birthplace of manga (comic books) and anime (animated shows), with a massive global following and numerous conventions celebrating these art forms.
- **Traditional Tea Ceremony:** The Japanese tea ceremony (chanoyu) is a highly ritualized practice emphasizing harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility, often involving matcha (powdered green tea).
- **Unique Festivals:** The Kanamara Matsuri (Iron Penis Festival) in Kawasaki celebrates fertility and sexual health, featuring parades with large phallic symbols.
- **Robotics and Technology:** Japan is at the forefront of robotics, with robots being used in various sectors, from manufacturing to hospitality, showcasing a blend of innovation and tradition.
- **Kawaii Culture:** Japan is famous for its “kawaii” (cute) culture, which permeates fashion, design, and even behavior, with characters like Hello Kitty and Pokémon embodying this aesthetic and appealing to all ages.

Japan Map

Good to know before you go

Discovering Japan: A Blend of Tradition and Modernity

Japan is a captivating country where ancient traditions coexist with cutting-edge technology. From its bustling urban centers to its serene countryside, Japan offers visitors a diverse range of experiences that highlight its rich culture and natural beauty.

- **Tipping Culture**

In Japan, tipping is not customary and can even be considered rude in many contexts. Exceptional service is typically reflected in the quality of service itself rather than through gratuities. In restaurants, the bill usually does not include a service charge, and leaving a tip may confuse the staff. For other services, such as taxi rides or hotel staff, rounding up the fare is appreciated but not expected. While tipping is rare, the hospitality and service in Japan are exceptional, making each experience memorable without the need for additional rewards.

- **Traditional Attire**

Japan's traditional dress is a beautiful representation of its cultural heritage. Women often wear kimonos, which are vibrant, intricately designed garments typically made of silk, often adorned with floral patterns and tied with an obi (wide sash). Men traditionally wear hakama (pleated trousers) and a kimono, especially during formal occasions and festivals. While these outfits are primarily reserved for special events and ceremonies, modern Japanese fashion blends traditional elements with contemporary styles, showcasing creativity and cultural pride.

- **Public Transportation**

Japan is renowned for its exceptional public transportation system. The extensive network of trains, subways, and buses is known for its punctuality and efficiency. During our travels, we experienced smooth transfers and comfortable rides, making it easy to explore the country. While the heat of summer made us consider alternative transportation, the Uber service was equally efficient, with quick arrivals and clean vehicles enhancing our travel experience.

- **Quiet Please**

If there's one word to describe Japan, it's "quiet." The country's culture places a strong emphasis on respect and consideration for others, resulting in peaceful environments in public spaces.

- **Quality of Life**

Japan offers a high quality of life, driven by its stable economy, advanced healthcare system, and low crime rates. The Japanese enjoy a comprehensive public health system and have one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Education is highly valued, contributing to a literacy rate close to 100%. The emphasis on respect, community, and family ties strengthens social cohesion and overall well-being among residents.

- **Community and Hospitality**

Japanese culture places great importance on community and hospitality, known as "omotenashi." Visitors often feel warmly welcomed, whether in homes or establishments. It's common for hosts to go above and beyond to ensure guests have a pleasant experience, reflecting the cultural value of kindness and attention to detail.

- **Festivals and Events**

Japan celebrates a myriad of festivals throughout the year, showcasing its cultural richness. The cherry blossom season in spring attracts crowds to parks for hanami (flower viewing) picnics, while summer festivals feature vibrant fireworks displays and traditional dance. Autumn is

celebrated with harvest festivals, while winter brings beautiful illuminations and traditional New Year celebrations, offering unique experiences in every season.

- Culinary Delights

Japanese cuisine is celebrated for its freshness and presentation. Staples like sushi, ramen, and tempura reflect regional flavors and seasonal ingredients. Enjoying a traditional kaiseki meal, which consists of multiple courses, is a must-do for any food lover. Local specialties vary by region, from Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki to Hokkaido's fresh seafood. Tea, especially matcha, plays an essential role in daily life, often enjoyed during social gatherings.

- Dining etiquette

Japan is rooted in politeness and respect. When invited to someone's home, it's customary to bring a small gift, such as sweets or fruits. Punctuality is valued, and it's polite to arrive on time or slightly early. Before starting a meal, it's common to say "itadakimasu," expressing gratitude for the food. Meals are often enjoyed leisurely, with an emphasis on conversation and connection.

- Interactions with others

Japanese people are generally polite and reserved when interacting with strangers or non-family members. Respect and formality are key, often shown through gestures like bowing and using honorific language. In public settings, personal space and quiet behavior are highly valued to avoid disturbing others, reflecting the cultural emphasis on social harmony, or *wa*. People in Japan may seem indirect or avoid expressing strong opinions with unfamiliar people to maintain courtesy and avoid conflict. Building trust and familiarity can take time, but once established, interactions tend to be warm and sincere. Although initially formal, Japanese hospitality, known as *omotenashi*, ensures that guests feel welcome and well cared for, even in brief encounters.

- Toasting

When toasting, it's customary to raise your glass and say "kanpai," which means "cheers," while making eye contact with those present.

- Family Values

In Japan, family values are deeply rooted in respect, loyalty, and harmony. The family unit, or *kazoku*, traditionally emphasizes strong bonds and a hierarchical structure where older family members are highly respected. Japanese culture values collective well-being over individual interests, and members are often expected to contribute to maintaining peace within the household. Parents are typically devoted to guiding their children, emphasizing respect for authority, dedication to studies, and proper social conduct. Japan places a strong emphasis on social harmony and conformity. In modern times, family dynamics have evolved, with increasing diversity in family structures and growing acceptance of individual aspirations, yet respect for family remains a core principle.

- It is a VERY safe country.

Japan Essential Info

U.S. Consular Emergency

The 24-hour number from a U.S. Phone is 1-888-407-4747

Outside of U.S. 011-202-501-4444

The U.S. Embassy Tokyo
1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Phone: +81-3-3224-5000

Fax: +81-3-3224-5856

Website: [Japan-US Embassy](#)

Emergency Numbers

Police: 110

Fire and Ambulance: 119

Country Code

+81

Time Zone

UTC +9

Adaptors for Japan

Types A and B are the same as in the U.S. Voltage is 100 volts

Driving

Left side

[Japan National Tourism Organization \(JNTO\)](#) Official Website

Our favorite hotel during our time in Japan was the Imperial Hotel. Check out our review [here](#).

When to go to Japan



Imperial Palace Gardens, Tokyo

The best times to visit Japan, weather-wise, are generally during spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November). Spring, especially from late March to early April, is highly popular due to the famous cherry blossom season. Temperatures are mild, averaging between 10°C and 20°C (50°F to 68°F) across the country, making it comfortable for outdoor activities and sightseeing. The clear, sunny days and low humidity add to the pleasant atmosphere, though it's worth noting that popular spots can get crowded during this period. The cherry blossoms, or *sakura*, typically start blooming in the south and gradually move northward, making it easy to catch the flowers in various regions throughout spring.

Autumn, particularly from October to early December, is equally stunning with its vibrant red and orange foliage. This season is cooler than spring, with average temperatures around 15°C to 25°C (59°F to 77°F), depending on the location. The humidity levels drop significantly after the summer, and rainfall is generally minimal, allowing for comfortable travel. Many travelers also appreciate that autumn brings fewer crowds compared to cherry blossom season, making it easier to explore famous landmarks. However, September, which marks the beginning of autumn, is still within Japan's typhoon season, so visitors during this time should stay updated on weather forecasts.

Our Favorite Resources

This resource section contains some Amazon affiliate links. If you use these links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you!

Travel Books/Guides

Moon Japan: Plan Your Trip, Avoid the Crowds, and Experience the Real Japan (Travel Guide) Paperback – October 4, 2022; from the world's busiest intersection to the most serene hot springs, modernity, and tradition mingle in Japan. Experience the natural wonder and rich culture of a country unlike any other with *Moon Japan*. You will find flexible itineraries, top sights, outdoor adventures, local flavors, and honest insight in a full-color guide with beautiful photography. We love Moon Guides! [Click here to purchase.](#)

Our favorite websites

1. [Official Japan Tourism Office](#)
2. [U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs Japan Country Info](#)

We cannot encourage you enough to visit this website as you plan and prepare for your trip. The U.S. Federal Government addresses the safety, security, travel risk, entry, exit, visa documents mandates, emergency U.S. and Embassy contacts, health, local laws, exceptional circumstances, threats, traveler vulnerabilities, government warnings, and transportation in Japan. This is your best and most reliable

resource for all this critical info. Check back often before you go, as things can change quickly. Being prepared is essential in all travel, but especially internationally.

3. [The Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Japan Travelers Health Resource](#)

This CDC travel resource provides essential health info for your specific destination. Using their tool, you can determine which vaccines, medications, and health advice recommendations are needed for Andorra.

Our favorite apps

Google Maps: The app instantly displays all your travel options, restaurants, activities, and accommodations when you enter any address, landmark, or city. We have come to rely on it when using public transportation; it has been flawless in getting us on the right bus or metro. Find it on your App Store.

Duolingo-Language Lesson: Audio lessons that help improve your listening and speaking skills. Find it on your local App Store. The primary language in Costa Rica is Spanish.

Google Translate: We use this often to practice proper pronunciations of any language we encounter while traveling. As we always encourage, it is essential to learn the basics of greeting and thanking people in the local language. Google Translate was an easy app to use. If needed, you can enter text in English, and it will speak back in the language you need to aid in communicating with locals.

Do you have a favorite Japan travel resource? Share your favorites in the comments section at the bottom of this page or

[Email us](#)

Our Japan Photo Gallery

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有限会社 明 輝 風岡俊亜
西岡正義

林三和 八木 岡田健志 美枝子

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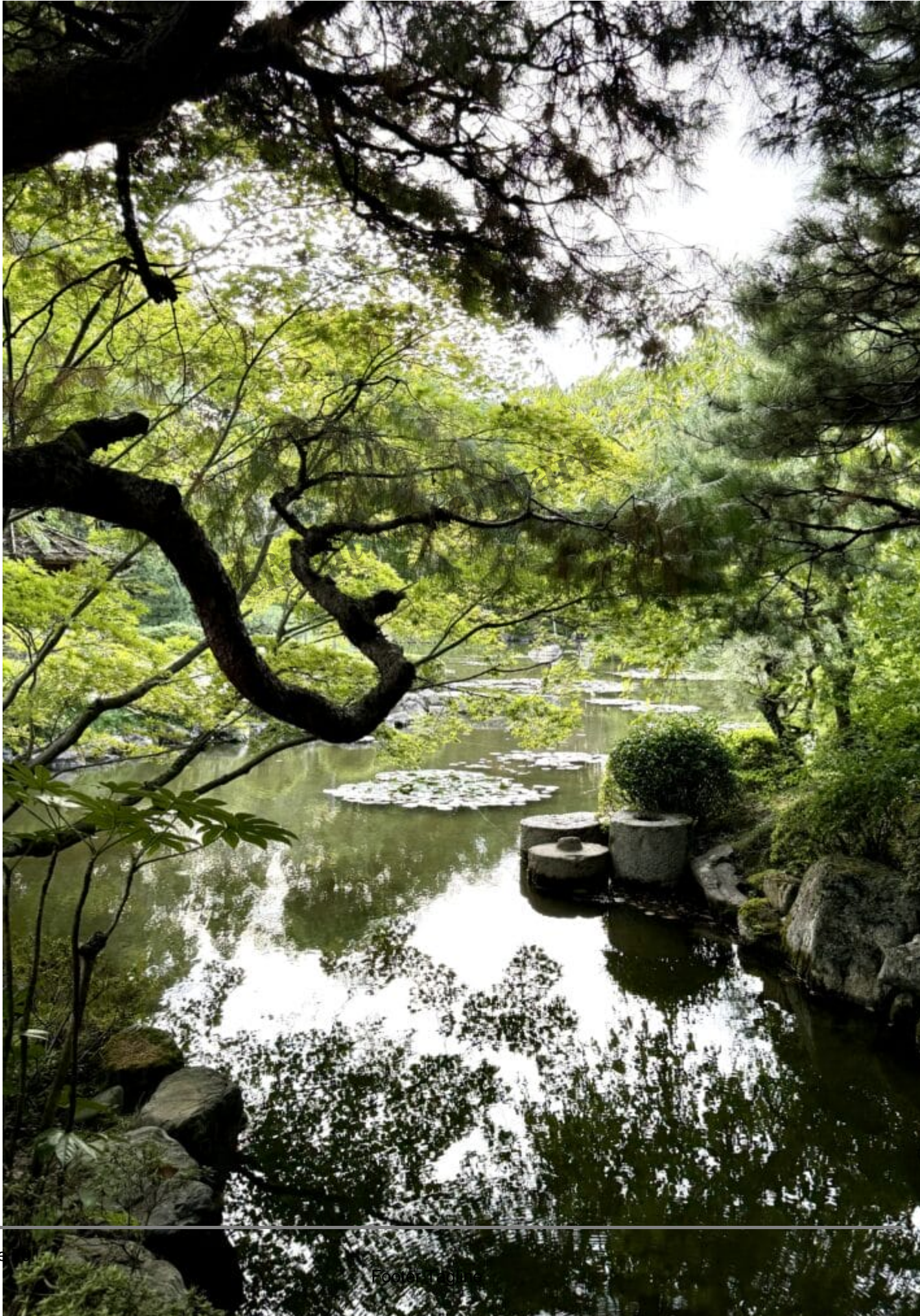
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contactwandererscompass-com