

# West Coast Force Trip to Japan

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Do I need an entry visa or just my passport?** You do not need an entry visa for Japan but you do need your passport.

**Any tips for traveling abroad?** Yes there are some good ones on this page of the State Department website: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips\\_1232.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html). Some additional links are available here: <http://sbtravel.com/resources.html>.

**Do I need a lot of Yen?** The best plan is to change just some American money over to Yen so you are not carrying a lot of cash. Having traveler's checks is always a good idea. A credit card or debit card will be accepted just about everywhere we go at businesses and restaurants but let your card company know you will be using it in Japan. It is not easy to find an ATM that takes American bank ATM cards but there is usually at least one in major malls. The average ATM on the street does not usually take American ATM cards.

**When do I get my plane ticket?** Everyone has an e-ticket. You will only need your flight information and your passport. Everyone should check in at least 2 hours before the flight departs to get through security and meet at the gate.

**What is our flight schedule?** Our flight schedule is posted on the itinerary page of the [www.westcoastforce.com](http://www.westcoastforce.com) website.

**What should I pack?** See additional packing list, below. The average daytime high temperature in June is 81 degrees and the average low is 67 degrees. However, be ready for it to cool off at night. We will have some dress up activities, including some nights out. Be ready with some smart-casual outfits for when it's inappropriate to wear athletic gear at organized events like tours or dinners.

**When do I get my team gear?** We expect to be able to ship your luggage in time for you to receive it a few days before the trip starts. Anything not shipped will be available in Japan.

**What do I wear while we're traveling?** Please wear the team shirt, shorts and warm-ups we ship to you ahead of time. These are referred to in our dress code as Number Twos. There may be team activities once we're in Japan where we ask the entire team to all match there too.

**How many bags may I bring?** Three at most, including all luggage and a backpack! We are providing you with a sideline duffle bag and it is highly recommended you make do with a personal piece of luggage that has wheels, the team duffle bag and, perhaps, a personal backpack to round out your packing. Players using the airport departure points of LAX and SFO will share a larger bag that will hold lacrosse sticks. Information about when and where to meet to put your stick in this bag will be sent out to you. Everyone else will need to check their sticks themselves.

Limit yourself to the smallest possible wheeled personal luggage and you will be much happier during the trip. We transfer by Japan Railroad train and subway a number of times. The less you are hauling the better.

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**Do I need an adaptor to plug in electrical items?** Yes. You can get one at Radio Shack or an electronics store.

**Are we playing on grass or turf?** We are playing on a mix of fields that could be anything, including a compacted dirt/sand mix, natural grass and artificial surfaces. There is a good chance of rain so please bring your grass cleats.

**Do I need any vaccines?** The current travel advisory doesn't require it but if you want to check with your doctor for advice here that may be the best thing to do.

**Do I need goggles (WLAX)?** International rules (IFWLA) don't require goggles but the play in Japan is physical and very little is called. Players in the past have started games without their goggles and then come running over to get them at the first opportunity during play. You should at least have them with you.

**Are IFWLA rules of play different?** Yes. The main difference is playing 8 v. 8 in the scoring area. Some others include being able to check across the body when running even (you don't have to be a step ahead) and much more body contact allowed. This version of the game is much more physical. There will be very few times that an empty stick check, held cross or rough check will be called. Shooting space and 3 seconds were called only slightly more often.

**Do we stay with a different host family each of the nights of home-stay or the same family?** We assume you will be with the same host family for two nights in a row. However, if they're all lining up to host the Americans the JLA may spread the wealth. We'll find out when we get there.

**What is a good gift for me to get for my host family?** Anything you wrap up and present to them will be appreciated. Chocolate has been recommended by our contact. However, we have to think that anything from the USA that they don't normally get will be a good gift. This could be a t-shirt left over from fundraising efforts. It can be anything you present in an appreciative manner for being hosted.

**What about the international custom of exchanging gifts before each contest?** West Coast Force is providing stickers for the pre-game gift exchanges.

**Should I have anything else with me to give away?** You will be able to trade any of your issued gear for Japanese gear at anytime. It's a big deal for Japanese players to walk away with your gear and you will even be asked to sign it. But if you trade away all of it the first day you won't have a uniform to wear. Have some of your former team gear to trade the first stop.

**What etiquette do I need to know?** There are several points of etiquette covered in this document and on this website: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e622.html>.

**Will my phone work?** Most U.S. cell phones will not work but you might be able to swap your SIM card for a rented Japanese SIM card. Contact your carrier. Otherwise look at renting a phone from a company like Rentafone Japan at <http://www.rentafonejapan.com>.

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## Packing Suggestions

Since packing space is limited it's best to travel light. It can be hot in Japan but it is also the start of the rainy season so a storm could cool things off. Your issued warm-ups will be warm enough and will repel rain well enough for you to use them as rain gear in a pinch. Other than that light clothing will be best. You will have access to washing machines to do laundry at our accommodations. It really is a trip, though, where you can wear the same thing over and over again. An outfit for each day and night is not necessary. Mix and match tops and bottoms to create different outfits if you're worried about it.

### Money

It's difficult to suggest how much extra money everyone should bring since spending habits differ. At most you will need \$30 to \$50 per day and that's if you go to every paid admission tourist spot on the trip. But unless you are going to do a lot of unnecessary spending you can get away with a budget of \$25 per day for most days. A combination of some cash, US Dollars as well as Yen, traveler's checks, an ATM or debit card, and a credit card is best. Money can be exchanged at the airport and at most hotels.

### Clothes

1 pair of khaki or other type of dressier shorts.  
2 pair of additional shorts, can include your issued shorts.  
1 pair of nice long pants. An additional pair of jeans is okay.  
Assorted t-shirts & blouses and a comfortable dress and/or skirt.  
Multiple pairs of socks for competition days.  
Swimsuit.  
Comfortable shoes and your cleats.

**Dress Code Number Ones** – A “Smart Casual” combination of the above, but not jeans.

**Dress Code Number Twos** – Your issued blue short, red shirt and warm-ups.

Trading of lacrosse t-shirts and shorts is very popular custom among the foreign players so you should bring some additional gear to trade.

### Equipment

You will be given a sideline duffle bag, travel shorts, travel shirt, warm-ups and game uniform. However, you will need to bring any additional equipment you wear during a game. Please also bring two lacrosse balls with you.

### Additional Items

Personal medication, including allergy and Advil type products.  
Feminine products.  
Power converter.  
Reading material.  
Insect repellent.  
Sunscreen.  
Camera.

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## Helpful Japanese Etiquette Tips

### 1- Bowing

Bowing is probably the feature of Japanese etiquette that is best-known outside Japan. Bowing is considered extremely important in Japan, so much so that, although children normally begin learning how to bow from a very young age, companies commonly provide training to their employees in how to execute bows correctly.

Basic bows are performed with the back straight and the hands at the sides (boys and men) or clasped in the lap (girls and women), and with the eyes down. Bows originate at the waist. Generally, the longer and deeper the bow, the stronger the emotion and the respect expressed.

Bows can be generally divided into three main types: informal, formal, and very formal. Informal bows are made at about a fifteen degree angle and more formal bows at about thirty degrees. Very formal bows are deeper.

The etiquette surrounding bowing, including the length and depth of bow, and the appropriate response, is complex. For example, if the other person maintains his or her bow for longer than expected (generally about two or three seconds), it is polite to bow again, upon which one may receive another bow in return. This often leads to a long exchange of progressively lighter bows.

Generally speaking, an inferior bows longer, more deeply and more frequently than a superior. A superior addressing an inferior will generally only nod the head slightly, while some superiors may not bow at all and an inferior will bend forward slightly from the waist.

Bows of apology tend to be deeper and last longer than other types of bow. They tend to occur with frequency during the apology, generally at about 45 degrees with the head lowered and lasting for at least the count of three, sometimes longer. The depth, frequency and duration of the bow should increase with the sincerity of the apology and the severity of the offence. Bows of thanks follow the same pattern. In extreme cases a kneeling bow is performed; this bow is sometimes so deep that the forehead touches the floor. This is called *saikeirei*, literally "most respectful bow."

When dealing with non-Japanese people, many Japanese will [shake hands](#). Since many non-Japanese are familiar with the custom of bowing, this often leads to a combined bow and handshake which can be quite complicated to execute. Bows may be combined with handshakes or performed before or after shaking hands. Generally when bowing in close proximity, as necessitated when combining bowing and shaking hands, people turn slightly to one side (usually the left) to avoid bumping heads.

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## 2 - Eating and drinking

Meals in Japan traditionally begin with the phrase *itadakimasu* (literally, "I receive"). The phrase is similar to the phrase "bon appétit," but is used more frequently; in the case of some individuals, at every meal, though it has its origins in the Japanese religious system. It is said to express gratitude for all who had a part in preparing the food. When finished eating, Japanese use the phrase *gochisōsama deshita*.

It is considered polite to clear one's plate; children are especially encouraged to do so. It is impolite to pick out certain ingredients and leave the rest. One should chew with the mouth closed.

It is acceptable to lift soup and rice bowls to your mouth so that you don't spill food. It is also appropriate to slurp certain foods, especially [ramen](#) or [soba](#) noodles, though this is not practiced universally.

Rice is generally eaten plain or sometimes with [nori](#) (dried-pressed seaweed) or [furikake](#) (various seasonings). Pouring soy sauce onto plain white rice is not a Japanese custom, nor is it common to pour soy sauce directly over [sashimi](#) or [sushi](#). Instead, soy sauce is poured into a small dish that is provided, and the food dipped into the sauce. Furthermore, it is considered greedy and wasteful to pour an excessive amount of soy sauce into the small dish, of which many foreigners are not aware. When eating nigiri-zushi, one should dip the sushi topping side down into the sauce; leaving stray grains of rice floating in the sauce is considered uncouth.

It is still uncommon for Japanese people to eat while walking about. Some consider it rude to eat in public or on trains, but this is not a universally-held belief.

In Japanese restaurants, customers are given a rolled hand towel called *oshibori*. It is considered rude to use the towel to wipe one's face or neck; however, some people, usually men, do this at more informal restaurants.

When one uses tooth picks, it is etiquette for one to cover their mouth with the other hand. Blowing one's nose is considered rude in public, especially at a restaurant. It is polite for one to cover their nose with their hand, or excuse themselves to do it in the restroom.

## 3 - Chopsticks

There are many traditions surrounding the use of chopsticks. For example, it is considered particularly taboo to pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks, as this is how bones are handled by the family of the deceased after a cremation. Mismatched chopsticks should also not be used for the same reason. Similarly, chopsticks should not be stood up in a bowl of food, as the image recalls the burning of incense sticks standing up from tray containing sand, typically at funerals.

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## 4 - Visiting Someone's House (Important For Home Stays)

It is the custom in every Japanese household to take one's shoes off when entering the house. Sandal wearers should carry a pair of white socks to put over their bare feet or stockings, so that their bare feet will not touch the slippers that the host offers. The shoes are turned around so that the toe faces the door after taking them off. If during the winter time, a guest is wearing a coat or hat, the guest will take it off before the host opens the door. When the guest is leaving, he or she does not put on the coat or hat until the door has closed.

## 5 - Gifts and Gift Giving

Many people will ask a guest to open a gift, but if they do not, the Japanese will resist the urge to ask if they can open the gift. Since the act of accepting a gift can create a sense of unfulfilled obligation on the part of the receiver, gifts are sometimes refused, depending on the situation.

## 6 - Greetings

Greetings are considered to be of extreme importance in Japanese culture. Students in elementary and secondary schools are often admonished to deliver greetings with energy and vigor. A lazy greeting is regarded with the type of disdain that would accompany a limp handshake in parts of the West.

Simply walking off without saying anything is frowned upon. When parting, instead of saying goodbye, it is common to make a wish to meet again.

The most common greetings are *ohayō gozaimasu* or "good morning", used until about 11am but may be used at any time of day if it is the first occasion that day the two people have met; *konnichiwa* which is roughly equivalent to "good day" or "good afternoon" and is used until late afternoon; *konbanwa* or "good evening"; and *oyasuminasai* or "good night". Different forms of these greetings may be used depending on the relative social statuses of the speaker and the listener; see respectful language below.

## 7 – Hospitality (Important For Home Stays)

Since many Japanese [homes](#) are very small, entertaining is traditionally done at [restaurants](#) and other establishments. Entertaining at home is not unheard of, however, and hosts will often go to great lengths to be hospitable. Generally, as in many other cultures, the guest takes priority. He or she will be seated in the best place, served the best food and drinks, and generally deferred to. If staying overnight, the guest will also be offered the first bath, and the hosts may even give up their own beds.

Japanese hosts generally try for the ideal of being busy so the guest can relax. As opposed to Western hospitality styles where the host presents a relaxed front to the guests or may encourage guests to "make themselves at home" or "help themselves," Japanese hosts will often present a busy front to guests. The general aim is to cultivate the idea among guests that everything is being taken care of so that they may relax and be at ease.

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