

2020 COUNTRY OF STUDY-JAPAN (NIPPON)

Japan is an island country in East Asia. Located in the Pacific Ocean, Japan lies off the eastern coast of the continent of Asia and stretches from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and the Philippine Sea in the south. The kanji (Japanese writing characters) that make up Japan's name, mean "sun origin" and the country is often called the "Land of the Rising Sun". Japan is the world's 4th largest island country and is made up of 6,852 islands. The 5 main islands - Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and Okinawa make up about 97% of Japan's land mass.



About 73% of Japan is forested, mountainous and unsuitable for agricultural, industrial or residential use. As a result, the habitable zones, mainly located in coastal areas, have extremely high population densities. Japan's population of approximately 126 million people is the world's eleventh largest and 98.5% of the population are ethnic Japanese. 90.7% of people live in cities with 13.8 million people living in Tokyo, the capital of Japan. The Greater Tokyo Area is the most populous metropolitan area in the world with over 38 million people.

The islands of Japan are in a volcanic zone on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Off the coast of Japan is a triple junction where the North American Plate, the Pacific Plate and Philippine Sea Plate meets. Japan was originally attached to the eastern coast of the Eurasian Continent. The subducting plates pulled Japan eastward, opening up the Sea of Japan around 15 million years ago.

Japan has 108 active volcanoes. During the twentieth century several new volcanoes emerged including Myojin-sho off the Bayonnaise Rocks in the Pacific. Destructive earthquakes, often resulting in tsunami also occur several times each century. The 1923 Tokyo earthquake killed over 140,000 people. More recent quakes are the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake and the Tohoku earthquake-a 9.1 magnitude quake which



of March 11, 2011 was the most powerful quake ever to have hit Japan, and the fourth most powerful quake in the world. It triggered a large tsunami reaching heights of up to 40.5m in Miyako, Honshu, and in the Sendai area travelled at 700km/h for up to 10km inland. The residents of Sendai had only 8-10 minutes warning and more than 19,000 people were killed.

Mt Fuji located on Honshu is the highest volcano in Japan at 3,776.24m and is the second highest volcano of an island in Asia. It is an active stratovolcano that last erupted in 1707-1708. Mt. Fuji's exceptionally symmetrical cone, which is snow-capped for about 5 months a year, is commonly used as a symbol of Japan and is frequently depicted in art and photographs. It lies about 100km south west of Tokyo and is surrounded by four small cities-Gotemba, Fujiyoshida, Fujinomiya and Fuji. Mt Fuji is one of Japan's "Three Holy Mountains" along with Mt Tate and Mt Haku. It is also surrounded by five lakes and they all provide views of the mountain.



The climate of Japan is predominantly temperate but, varies greatly from north to south. The northernmost zone, Hokkaido, has a humid continental climate with long, cold winters and very warm



to cool summers. On Honshu's west coast, northwest winter winds bring heavy snowfall. In the summer, the region is cooler than the Pacific area. The Central Highland has a typical inland humid continental climate, with large temperature difference between summer and winter season. Winters are usually snowy. The Pacific coast features a humid subtropical climate that experiences milder

winters with occasional snowfall and hot, humid summers. The average winter temperature in Japan is 5.1C and the average summer temperature is 25.2C. The main rainy season begins in early May in Okinawa, and the rain front gradually moves north until reaching Hokkaido in late July. In late summer and early autumn, typhoons often bring heavy rain.

Tourism in Japan is one of Japan's promising businesses. Foreign visitors to Japan doubled in the last decade and reached 10 million people for the first time in 2013, led by an increase of Asian visitors. This increased to 19.73 million international tourists in 2015 and 24.03 million international tourists in 2016. Japan has 20 World Heritage Sites, including Himeji Castle, Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto and Nara. Other popular tourist attractions include Tokyo, Hiroshima, Mount Fuji, ski resorts such as Niseko in Hokkaido, Okinawa, riding the shinkansen and taking advantage of Japan's hotel and hot spring network.



The Japanese electronics and automotive manufacturing industries are well known throughout the world and the country's products account for a large share in the global market. Brands such as Fujifilm, Canon, Sony, Nintendo, Panasonic, Toyota, Nissan and Honda are internationally famous. It is estimated that 16% of the world's gold and 22% of the world's silver is contained in Japanese electronics.

The largest religion practised in Japan is Shinto-nearly 80% of the population. However, only a small percentage of these people identify themselves as "Shintoists". Shinto has 100,000 shrines and 78,890 priests. Buddhism first arrived in Japan in the 6th century; it was introduced in the year 538 or 552 from the kingdom of Baekje, in Korea. Christianity was first introduced into Japan by Jesuit missions starting in 1549. Today fewer than 1% - 2.3% are Christians, most of them living in the western part of the country, where the missionaries' activities were greatest during the 16th century. Islam in Japan is estimated to constitute about 80-90% of foreign-born migrants and their children, primarily from Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran. Other minority religions include Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Bahai Faith.

