

# Culture and History Worksheet

Here are some questions about the culture and history of Japan, questions that will provide you with the sort of information about everyday matters that are known by most people living there. Try to answer as many of them as you can before you leave and complete them at JCMU. (Thanks to L. Robert Kohls' book, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, for many of these questions).

We strongly encourage you to **find out as much information about these topics as you possibly can**: where adapting to another culture is concerned, it's very important to find out as much as you can about attitudes and beliefs, and about daily customs and practices.

1. Who are Japan's most important national heroes and heroines? Who are the most widely admired public figures today?
2. Are there other languages spoken besides Japanese? What are the political and social implications of language of usage?
3. What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? How long has the dominant religion been a force? To what extent does the religion continue to play an important role in the political and social life of the average Japanese?
4. What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
5. How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religion?
6. What are some of the prevailing attitudes towards divorce? Toward extra-marital relations? Toward homosexuality?
7. What is the attitude towards drinking?
8. Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are the customers expected to bargain? How is the bargaining conducted?
9. If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale (including such things as fruit or linen tablecloths), will the seller in the store or market think you are knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
10. How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends?

11. How long do people talk when they use the telephone? Do friends call each other frequently to chat? How do people feel about having other people make long-distance (overseas) calls from private house phones?
12. What foods are popular and how are they prepared?
13. What things are taboo in Japan?
14. What is the usual dress for women? For men? Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions? Do teenagers wear jeans?
15. What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
16. If you were invited to dinner, would you arrive early? On time? Late?
17. On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts from people? What kind of gifts would you exchange?
18. Do some flowers have a particular significance?
19. How do people greet one another? How do they leave one another? What do they say when they greet or leave one another?
20. What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities of adults? Teenagers?
21. What sports are popular?
22. What kinds of television programs are shown? What social purposes do they serve?
23. What is the normal work schedule?
24. What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
25. Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, pedestrians?
26. Is military training compulsory?
27. Are the largest circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude towards the United States?
28. Is education free? Compulsory?

Where are the important universities of Japan? If a university education is sought abroad, to what countries and universities do students go?