

AIFS



winter work

冬の仕事
JAPAN



Welcome & Introduction



Welcome!

Congratulations on your placement with **Winter Work Japan!**

You're about to experience something unforgettable! Whether you're heading to a ski resort in Hokkaido, the Japanese Alps, or a cozy mountain village, this season will be packed with adventure, cultural discovery, personal growth, and plenty of powder days.

This Handbook is your go-to guide to help you prepare, settle in, and make the most out of your time in Japan. It covers everything from pre-departure planning to cultural tips, workplace expectations, accommodation guidelines, and what to do in an emergency.

Think of it as your "survival kit" for living and working in Japan.

Program Overview

You're not just visiting Japan as a tourist; you're here to truly experience local life, contribute to the vibrant winter tourism industry, and immerse yourself in a culture that blends ancient traditions with ultra-modern convenience.

As a **Winter Work Japan participant**, you're joining a community of like-minded travellers from Australia and around the world who share your sense of adventure and curiosity. Whether you're working in guest services, food and beverage, ski operations, or another role, you'll get the chance to:

- o Build international work experience that stands out
- o Improve your Japanese language skills (or pick up the basics!)
- o Earn money to support your travels
- o Make lifelong friends from Japan and around the world
- o Enjoy world-class powder snow on your days off

Introduction



About AIFS

At AIFS, we're passionate about helping young travellers like you step outside your comfort zone and into incredible international experiences. For over 60 years, we have been the leading provider of cultural exchange for more than 1.6 million young people.

We're here to support you every step of the way - from the moment you sign up, through your first days on the ground, all the way until you're flying home with stories, friendships, and memories that will last a lifetime.

What you can expect from us

We know working overseas can feel daunting at times, but you're not doing it alone. We're excited to help you make this season the adventure of a lifetime!

Our support to you extends from before you go, when you arrive, and throughout the season.

This includes:

- Pre-departure guidance and preparation
- Assistance with visa and travel planning
- Orientation upon arrival
- Support with settling in
- 24/7 In-country support
- A friendly team you can contact with questions or concerns

Our Team



Meet “Kaz” (Kazuyo)

Operations Manager

Kaz has spent over 30 years working in the hotel and travel industry and knows it better than anyone! Having spent many years living in Australia, Kaz totally understands what it's like to live and work in a new country — the excitement, the challenges, and everything in between.

Kaz will be your go-to person during your placement.

Whether you're feeling homesick, need to find an English-speaking doctor, or just have a question about your job, she's always here to help. Kaz is warm, approachable, and loves making sure everyone feels supported and settled in their new adventure!

+81708571695

Mobile/ WhatsApp/ LINE



kmcdonald@aifs.com.au

Meet Taylah

Winter Work Specialist

Taylah knows first-hand what it's like to take the leap and embark on a cultural exchange solo, having started her own journey as an AIFS applicant back in 2018.

Seven years on, she uses her own experiences to support Winter Work applicants with empathy, insight, and genuine connection. Having been in your shoes, Taylah knows the mix of excitement and nerves that comes with the experience.

With her tried-and-tested knowledge, Taylah provides personalised guidance to help others navigate their own adventures abroad. She's passionate about making every exchange experience as rewarding and transformative as her own.



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Direct Office Line

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Your Visa

The Japanese Working Holiday Visa is a visa that allows young Australians the chance to live in Japan for up to twelve months while travelling, working, and experiencing Japanese culture. It is designed primarily as a cultural exchange opportunity, with the holiday aspect at its core and work permitted only as a way to supplement travel funds.

The Working Holiday Visa allows Australians to stay in Japan for up to twelve months. The visa is generally issued as a single-entry visa, meaning you can only enter once. However, if you plan to travel to another country and return during your stay, you can apply for a multiple-entry permit after arriving in Japan.

Working Holiday Visa holders are permitted to take up work while in Japan, but this is restricted to casual or temporary roles that help fund their stay. Employment in bars, nightclubs, gambling establishments, or any industry that may be considered harmful to public morals is strictly prohibited. In addition to working, you may also enrol in short courses or language study programs during your stay, making it a great chance to improve your Japanese language skills while exploring the country.

Rights and Responsibilities on a Working Holiday Visa

As a Working Holiday Visa holder, you will be able to work and travel in Japan for up to one year. You can work casually to help support your travel, you can study on a short-term basis, and you can apply for a re-entry permit if you wish to leave and return to Japan during your stay.

Alongside these rights come important responsibilities. You must enter Japan within twelve months of the visa being issued, and once you have secured accommodation, you are legally required to register your address at the local city or ward office within fourteen days. After registering, you will receive a residence card, which you must carry with you at all times.

Your purpose for being in Japan must remain consistent with the intent of the program. That means your stay should focus on cultural exchange, travel, and holidaying, with work only being a way to support yourself financially. The visa does not allow for permanent, long-term employment or work in industries that are considered inappropriate under Japanese law.

Respecting the rules and expectations of the visa ensures that you not only remain compliant with Japanese immigration law but also get the most from your time abroad.

Compulsory Insurance

Enrolment in health insurance is compulsory for anyone staying in Japan for more than three months – this includes Working Holiday Visa holders.

Japan's **National Health Insurance** (NHI) is a public health system supported by monthly contributions from members. It provides affordable access to medical care, covering approximately 70% of most medical costs. Members pay the remaining 30%.

Example: If a hospital bill is ¥10,000, you only pay ¥3,000 when you present your NHI card. If you are not enrolled, you must pay 100% of medical costs upfront.

Travel Insurance

While NHI is essential, it only covers medical treatment within Japan. It does not include travel disruptions, mountain rescue, stolen belongings, or emergency repatriation. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that Working Holiday Visa holders also purchase travel insurance before arriving in Japan. This combination provides complete protection — NHI for affordable healthcare in Japan, and travel insurance for emergencies and risks outside the healthcare system. Depending on your country of residence, you may be required to obtain travel insurance as part of your Working Holiday Visa application. Your local office will inform you of this requirement.

As a **Winter Work Japan** participant you have the option to purchase our World Class Coverage Plan, designed specifically for Winter Work Japan travellers. The World Class Coverage Plan (here on WCCP) provides coverage on items such as:

- Snow Sports Cover (including skiing and snowboarding)
- Accident and Sickness coverage
- Travel Disruption protection
- Emergency repatriation
- Personal Liability Coverage (required by most employers before issuing your staff season pass)

Please note, this information is general in nature and does not take into account your individual objectives, financial situation, or needs. Before purchasing, you should carefully read the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) and Target Market Determination (TMD) to ensure the cover is appropriate for you. Coverage limits, exclusions, and conditions apply.

The World Class Coverage Plan is issued by Cultural Insurance Services International and administered by American Institute for Foreign Study (Australia) Pty Ltd (AIFS) ABN 58 087 638 499.

Pre-Departure Essentials



Please carefully review and compare available travel insurance policies to ensure they select coverage that best meets your individual needs. Please note that most employers in Japan require that you hold a policy that includes an appropriate level of personal liability coverage, and it is your participant's responsibility to confirm that their chosen policy satisfies this requirement.

Standard travel insurance is often designed for short trips and may exclude higher-risk activities such as skiing or snowboarding. Because of this, you should look for a policy that specifically includes winter sports cover. This ensures that medical expenses from ski or snowboard injuries are covered, and it often extends to situations such as equipment loss or damage, mountain rescue, and even off-piste skiing if permitted by the insurer. Without this type of cover, you may find yourself paying the full cost of a rescue or treatment, even if you are already enrolled in Japan's National Health Insurance.

It is equally important to choose a long-stay or Working Holiday insurance policy rather than a standard holiday plan. Many basic travel insurance policies only cover trips of up to 30 or 90 days, which is not suitable for those working in Japan for several months. A long-stay policy is designed for people living abroad temporarily and offers continuous protection.

In addition to winter sports coverage, the policy should provide high medical and emergency limits, evacuation and repatriation coverage in case you need to return home urgently, and protection against trip cancellations, delays, or the loss and theft of belongings. When combined with Japan's National Health Insurance, which covers the majority of day-to-day medical expenses within Japan, a comprehensive travel insurance policy with winter sports and long-stay protection ensures that participants are fully safeguarded on and off the slopes.

What to Pack

Heading to Japan for the ski season is exciting, but packing for several months in the snow can feel overwhelming. The key is to bring what you'll actually use, keep things versatile, and remember that Japan has convenience stores, pharmacies, and affordable shops if you forget anything.

On the next page, you can find a breakdown of items you should consider packing before you depart, and items you may want to purchase after you have settled in.

Pre-Departure Essentials



Winter Clothing

Japanese ski resorts experience heavy snowfall and sub-zero temperatures, so warm, **waterproof clothing** is essential. Bring a good-quality winter jacket, snow pants, and plenty of thermal base layers. Wool socks, gloves, scarves, and beanies will keep you comfortable on and off the slopes. For footwear, pack sturdy waterproof boots with good grip, as icy paths are common.

Skis, Snowboards, and Other Equipment

If you own ski or snowboard equipment, you're welcome to bring it with you; however, please be aware that some airlines may charge additional fees for oversized or extra luggage. Equipment rentals are readily available in most resort towns, and some employers may even offer staff discounts.



Larger clothing sizes in Japan are limited so if you are tall, it is a good idea to buy the essentials before you leave home.

While new gear can be found in local stores, prices are often high, so second-hand equipment shops are well worth considering. If you plan to travel after your placement, remember to factor in the potential cost of shipping your equipment home. If you have time in Tokyo before heading to your placement, the **Kanda-Ogawamachi area** (between Jimbocho and Ochanomizu) is well known for its many ski and snowboard specialty stores. The Book-Off chain, located throughout Japan, is another good option, though stock and pricing can vary. Boarderline in Kutchan (near Niseko) is recommended for those travelling to Niseko, while Second Street Kawazoe in Sapporo is a great choice for those based in other Hokkaido resorts.

Day-to-Day Clothing

Outside of work and skiing, you'll want casual clothes for days off and socialising. Jeans, jumpers, t-shirts, and comfortable lounge wear are all useful. Remember that staff accommodation often has limited storage, so focus on versatile items you can layer. Indoor life in Japan is heated, so lighter clothes are still handy for inside. Don't forget a set of smart-casual clothes if you plan to go into town, travel, or attend staff events. Clothing sizes in Japan tend to run smaller, and larger sizes can sometimes be hard to find, so it's a good idea to bring along any essentials you might need.

Work Essentials

Most resorts provide staff uniforms for customer-facing roles, but it's worth packing plain black trousers, shirts, and comfortable shoes just in case. If you'll be working outdoors (e.g., lift operations), you may need extra thermal layers and durable gloves under your uniform. Always check what your employer provides before you go, so you don't overpack.

Pre-Departure Essentials



Toiletries & Health Items

Japan has excellent pharmacies and convenience stores, but you might not immediately find your preferred brands. Bring enough of any specific toiletries or medications you rely on. A basic first-aid kit with painkillers, band-aids, and cold remedies is also useful, as colds and flu are common in winter. Don't forget sunscreen and lip balm with SPF — the sun reflects strongly off the snow.

Purchasing items you may have forgotten to pack, or didn't pack to save space in your luggage, is easily attainable. Japan has **Uniqlo**, **Don Quijote**, and plenty of outdoor stores, so don't panic if you forget something. Pack smart, keep it practical, and remember that less is often more when you'll be living in shared accommodation.

Apps to Download Before Flying

To make your arrival and first weeks in Japan as smooth as possible, it's important to download key apps before you leave your home country. Many of these apps may require phone verification via SMS or email and setting them up ahead of time avoids delays or issues with overseas phone numbers.



Some apps may not be compatible with both iOS & Android. Check your app store before you depart!

Suica/ Pismo

These are the main prepaid transit cards for trains, buses, and even some shops. You can download the mobile version of Suica or Pismo on your phone before you arrive, link it to a payment method, and start using it immediately once in Japan.

If you are opting for our FREE Airport transfer, you will receive a physical Suica card with pre-loaded credit for your time in Tokyo.

WhatsApp/ Messenger/ Zoom

Useful for staying in touch with family and friends overseas. Having at least one international messaging app set up before you leave ensures you can communicate even if your Japanese SIM card isn't active yet.

LINE

This is Japan's most popular messaging app. It is used for contacting friends, coworkers, and sometimes your employer or program coordinators. Download it before you leave and verify your account while you still have access to your home phone number.

Flights & Travel



Tokyo has two main international airports: Narita (NRT) and Haneda (HND).

Haneda is closer to central Tokyo (about 30 minutes by train), while Narita is further away (about 60–90 minutes). Both airports are well-connected, but flights into Haneda usually mean shorter travel times into the city.

Your Winter Work Japan package includes a FREE airport transfer (by train) to your accommodation in Tokyo. If you are not using the pick-up service, you will need to travel independently via train or other public transport.

If you are travelling to the arrival accommodation independently, Japan's train network is fast, reliable, and the easiest way to reach central Tokyo.

From either airport, you can take express trains into Tokyo and then connect to local transport to the accommodation. Make sure you have a copy of the arrival accommodation address in both English and Japanese to show station staff if needed.

Working Holiday Visa holders must go through the **Residence/Long-Term Stay** line at immigration, not the Tourist line. Present your passport and Working Holiday Visa paperwork, and you will be issued your Residence Card (Zairyu Card), which is essential for living and working in Japan. Do not leave the airport without it.

Getting to the hostel from Haneda Airport

Take the Monorail to **Hamamatsucho Station**, then transfer to the JR line to Akihabara, and finally the Sobu line to **Iidabashi Station**.

Once at Iidabashi Station, the hostel is just a 3-minute walk from either the East or West Exit

Getting to the hostel from Narita Airport

Board the Narita Express at Narita Airport towards Tokyo Station. From Tokyo Station, take the JR Chuo Line to Ochanomizu Station, then transfer to the JR Sobu Line to **Iidabashi Station**.

Once at Iidabashi Station, the hostel is just a 3-minute walk from either the East or West Exit

Airport Transfer

Your Winter Work Japan package includes a FREE airport pick-up from Haneda Airport and transfer to your arrival accommodation in Tokyo. An AIFS representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with getting yourself checked in to your hostel.

As pick up times and dates are limited, please ensure you inform us at least 10 days prior to your scheduled arrival date of your flight details in advance, including arrival time, airline, and flight number.

Remember to:

- Keep your passport, visa paperwork and luggage with you during the transfer
- Wear comfortable shoes and be prepared for possible luggage handling on the train, including Tokyo transport systems famous stairs!

Once you have passed through the Residence / Long-Term Stay entry line at Haneda, a Winter Work Japan representative will be waiting to meet you, holding a sign with “Winter Work Japan”. Please keep an eye out for the sign.

There may be a group of AIFS travellers arriving at different times, so you may spend some time waiting for others before departure. We appreciate your patience during this process.

You will travel on the train from the airport to your accommodation in Tokyo. During this journey, we will:

- Show you how to purchase a single ticket if needed
- Explain how to use a Suica or Pasma card for travel
- Answer any questions you have about navigating the train system

Accommodation

Located in the heart of Tokyo, the HI Tokyo Central Youth Hostel is the starting point for your Winter Work Japan journey. Situated on the 18th and 19th floors of a skyscraper, the hostel offers unrivalled city views. It is just a five-minute walk from Iidabashi Station (JR Sobu Line) and within walking distance of major attractions, including the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Dome Stadium.

HI Tokyo Central Youth Hostel

18th Floor, Central Plaza 1-1 Kaguragashi, Tokyo,
162-0823, Japan

ph. +81-(0)3-3235-1107

Orientation

Attending the **Winter Work Japan** Arrival Orientation is an essential part of starting your Working Holiday experience in Japan. This session is designed to help you settle in smoothly, understand important procedures, and get ready for your time at the ski resort.

Topics Covered:

- Your accommodation
- Getting around: How to navigate local transport, and nearby facilities.
- Understand your work schedule, rules, and responsibilities.
- Guidance about National Health Insurance and local banking.
- Tips for staying safe, healthy, and connected while living in Japan.

Questions and Support:

- Ask questions about daily life, transport, or cultural differences.
- Receive personal support for any concerns or uncertainties before starting work.
- Get help with setting up essential apps, transport cards, and communication tools.
- Connect with other Winter Work Japan travellers, which helps build friendships and support networks.

Group Activities

There will be a number of group activities available for you to participate in and connect with other **Winter Work Japan** travellers. Participation in group activities is recommended, but not required.

You will be issued your arrival itinerary by email, 4 weeks prior to your orientation group's intended arrival. Be sure to note down when you have free time, group activities you would like to participate in and important information about entry and exit to the arrival accommodation.

Transferring to your Resort

After your Arrival Orientation in Tokyo, you will travel to your resort. Transfers may be arranged by your employer, but in some cases, you may need to travel independently using trains, buses, or shuttles. Always check your travel instructions carefully, plan your route in advance, and allow extra time for luggage and connections.

Our team can assist you in planning your travel from Tokyo to your placement during your orientation.

Make sure to:

- Confirm your travel details before leaving Tokyo, including departure time, train/bus routes, and luggage requirements.
- Carry important documents with you (passport, visa, arrival orientation materials, and accommodation address in Japanese and English).
- Keep emergency contacts handy, including your employer and local support team.

Being well-prepared ensures a smooth journey to your resort and helps reduce stress on your first day.

Staff Accommodation

Your placement will include staff accommodation, provided by your employer, often in shared rooms or dormitory-style settings. Living in staff housing is a great way to meet fellow travellers and integrate into the resort community.

Key points to remember:

- **Shared spaces**

Bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens are usually shared. Be respectful of noise and cleanliness.

- **Curfews and security**

Some resorts have set times when doors are locked; always check the rules and follow them.

- **Facilities**

Most accommodations provide heating, basic kitchen access, Wi-Fi (sometimes limited), and laundry facilities. Check what is available in advance.

- **Meals**

Some resorts include meals, while others may provide a kitchen for self-catering. Understand your meal plan and budget accordingly.

- **Cultural etiquette**

Japan's shared living spaces will normally have customs regarding shoes, quiet hours, and bathroom use. Observing these practices will help you maintain good relationships with roommates and your colleagues.

Staff Training

Training is essential to prepare you for your specific role at the resort. Training ensures you feel confident in your duties, reduces mistakes, and helps you adapt to the fast-paced environment of a ski resort. Always take notes and ask questions if you are unsure.

You may receive training in:

- **Safety procedures**

Ski lift operation, snow clearing, emergency protocols, and first aid basics.

- **Customer service**

Greeting guests, managing bookings, and providing assistance to international visitors.

- **Equipment handling**

Proper use of rental equipment, storage, or maintenance.

- **Workplace culture**

Understanding Japanese workplace norms, communication styles, and expectations.

- **Administrative tasks**

Using point-of-sale systems, logging hours, or following reporting procedures.

Tips for Success

Your attitude, reliability, and adaptability are key to having a successful placement. Japanese people place a high value on punctuality and you will find your Japanese colleagues will normally arrive on time or 5-10 minutes before the scheduled time. Arriving on time for shifts, meetings, and training demonstrates professionalism and an awareness of cultural norms.

Take the time to ask questions, take notes and watch what your Japanese colleagues do. If your manager is not a fluent English speaker, speak slowly and use plain language. Alternately try using a translation app if it is an important question you want to know. Clear communication will help avoid misunderstandings, and showing initiative by volunteering for tasks or helping coworkers is always appreciated.

Flexibility is important, as schedules and workloads may change due to weather or peak periods. Maintaining a healthy balance between work, rest, and social activities will help you stay energized and enjoy your experience. Participating in social activities and building friendships with fellow travellers will also enhance your season and provide a valuable support network.

Your Placement



Common Misunderstandings

It's normal to have some misconceptions when starting a winter season placement. For instance, staff accommodation is generally functional and shared rather than luxurious, so setting realistic expectations will help you settle in comfortably.

Many share houses are mothballed outside of the winter season, so you may expect some delays to WIFI. All accommodation should be well heated and have the basics, so if this is not the case, please make sure you raise it with your employer and if necessary, AIFS.

Work at a ski resort can be physically demanding, particularly during peak periods, with long hours and varying workloads, so preparation and pacing yourself are essential. You will often see Japanese front-line staff jogging to greet a guest quickly, or working at a pace that you may not be accustomed to at first. Cultural differences in the workplace, including communication styles and hierarchy, may be different from what you're used to. Observing local practices and asking questions politely will help you adapt quickly.

Approach your placement with a professional attitude, a willingness to learn, and a positive mindset. By being proactive, respectful, and adaptable, you will get the most out of your work experience while also enjoying the unique opportunities and culture Japan has to offer.

This placement is not just about earning money; it is a chance to develop new skills, make lifelong friendships, and create memories that will stay with you long after the season ends.

Need to speak with the team?

Your placement includes 24 hour in-country support, so we can help you at any time. Please do not hesitate to reach us. Please ensure you contact AIFS immediately in the event of any incident.

In an emergency, contact the local services in Japan first, then notify AIFS as soon as possible:

- 1. Police (警察 / Keisatsu): 110**
- 2. Fire & Ambulance (消防・救急 / Shōbō・Kyūkyū): 119**



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kmcdonald@aifs.com.au

Kaz will be your go-to person during your placement. Whether you're feeling homesick, need to find an English-speaking doctor, or just have a question about your job, she's always here to help.

Taxes and Fees

As a Working Holiday maker in Japan, it is important to understand the financial responsibilities that come with employment. Japan has a structured tax system, and being aware of your obligations will help you plan your finances and avoid unexpected deductions from your pay.

Income Tax

All workers in Japan, including Working Holiday makers, are required to pay income tax on earnings. Employers typically deduct this tax directly from your salary, so the amount you receive will already have income tax accounted for. The rate of income tax varies depending on your total earnings and the length of your stay, but you can expect a small percentage of your income to be deducted each pay period.

Resident Tax

If you are registered as a resident in Japan for more than one year, you may also be liable for resident tax. This is generally not a concern for most Working Holiday makers who stay less than a year, but it is something to be aware of if you plan to extend your visa or work for multiple seasons.

Insurance Contributions

Working Holiday makers may be enrolled in social insurance programs, such as National Health Insurance (NHI) or employee pension schemes, depending on their employer. Contributions are usually deducted automatically from your wages. For most seasonal placements, the focus will be on NHI, which provides affordable medical coverage while you are in Japan.

Employer Fees

Some employers may deduct small fees for uniforms, training, or staff meals, depending on the contract terms. These should always be clearly outlined in your employment contract. It is important to review your contract carefully and ask your employer to explain any deductions, so you fully understand your take-home pay.

Placement Changes

In rare circumstances, there may be issues that require AIFS to assist you. This could be due to related to your work, accommodation, operational challenges, or personal circumstances. In the first month it is expected that you are still learning the ropes so unless there are extenuating circumstances that cannot be addressed, we will normally not offer alternative placements.

Please make sure you contact AIFS' Operations Manager, Kaz McDonald immediately if you are having issues. Kaz' contact details can be found throughout the handbook.

If a placement change is required, AIFS will endeavour to find you alternative employment however this cannot be guaranteed. Please remember you will be required to cover your living costs as well as forward travel to your next employment.

Moving to Japan for your Working Holiday is an exciting adventure, but it also comes with new experiences, cultural differences, and opportunities to grow. Understanding life in Japan will help you adapt quickly, feel more comfortable, and enjoy your stay to the fullest.

Japan is a country of rich traditions, modern cities, and unique social norms. Daily life may feel very different from what you're used to, from public transport etiquette to dining practices. Taking time to observe and learn will make everyday tasks easier and more enjoyable.

Culture Shock

It's normal to experience culture shock when living in a new country. You may feel overwhelmed by language barriers, unfamiliar customs, or the pace of life. Give yourself time to adjust, connect with other travellers, and ask questions if you're unsure about anything. Most challenges can be overcome with patience, curiosity, and a positive attitude.

Etiquette and Social Norms

Respect and consideration are central to Japanese culture. Understanding social norms and customs will help you avoid misunderstandings and build positive relationships with coworkers, locals, and fellow travellers.

Key things to consider:

- **Politeness in communication**

Bowing, saying "please" and "thank you," and using polite language go a long way.

- **Public behaviour**

Keep your voice low on public transport, dispose of rubbish properly, and follow rules carefully.

- **Shoes and personal space**

Remove shoes when entering homes or certain indoor spaces and respect personal space in crowded areas.

Communication and Language

Japanese people may communicate indirectly and value harmony in conversations. Listening carefully, observing non-verbal cues, and asking polite clarifying questions can prevent miscommunication. Learning some basic Japanese phrases will make daily life easier and more enjoyable. Useful phrases include greetings, asking for directions, and simple expressions of thanks. To build your language skills, consider using apps, online courses, or phrasebooks before and during your stay.

Some essential phrases you should familiarise yourself are listed below - you will become a pro at beginner Japanese by the end of your Winter Work Japan placement!

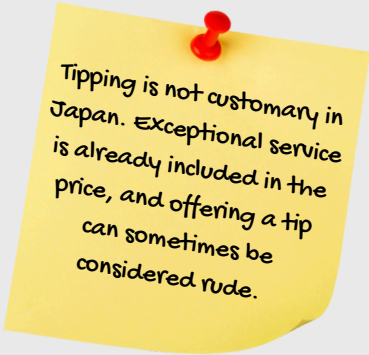
Hello	Konnichiwa	kon-nee-chee-wah
Good Morning	Ohayou Gozaimasu	oh-hah-yoh goh-zah-ee-mahss
Thank You	Airgatou Gozaimasu	ah-ree-gah-toh goh-zah-ee-mahss
Excuse Me/ Sorry	Sumimasen	soo-mee-mah-sen
Yes	Hai	like “high”
No	Iie	ee-eh
Where is...	Wa doko desu ka?	wah doh-koh dess kah?

Money

Japan uses the Japanese Yen (¥) as its currency.

Coins are available in 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, and 500 yen denominations, and banknotes come in 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000 yen. Prices are generally displayed clearly, and cash is widely preferred throughout the country.

While many places accept cards, having some cash on hand is essential, especially in smaller towns or rural areas. ATMs can be found at banks and convenience stores. Not all international cards work at every ATM, so using machines at 7-Eleven or Lawson stores is often the most reliable option for foreign cards.



Electricity

Electricity in Japan operates on a 100-volt system with a 2-pin plug configuration. This may differ from your home country, so you will need a plug adaptor.

Many countries use higher voltages (e.g., 220–240V), so some appliances from abroad may not work properly or could cause damage. Adaptors can be purchased from most travel shops, and electronics retailers such as BIC Camera in Japan carry a wide selection.

The table below is an easy guide to help you plan which appliances to bring with you in your travels or buy locally.

Appliance	Recommended Action
Phone Charger	Usually safe to use with an adaptor
Hair straightener	High wattage; consider buying locally
Camera Battery Charger	Usually safe to use with an adaptor
Electric Shaver	Usually safe to use with an adaptor
Curling Iron/ Styling tools	High wattage; consider buying locally
Laptop Charger	Usually safe to use with an adaptor

Public Transport

Japan's public transportation system is renowned worldwide for its efficiency, punctuality, and cleanliness. Trains, subways, and buses are the primary means of transportation in cities and towns.

It's important to know the rules of etiquette: keep your voice low, avoid phone calls on trains, and queue in an orderly fashion when waiting for transport. Most stations are well signposted in English, and apps like Google Maps or Hyperdia can help you plan routes.

A Suica or Pasma card is highly recommended, as it allows you to tap in and out of trains and buses without needing cash for each ride. If you wish to purchase single-trip tickets, you may be limited to using only cash.

Long Distance Travel

For travel between cities or regions, Japan offers fast and reliable trains, including the famous Shinkansen (bullet trains).

If travelling by bus is more economical, long-distance coaches are a convenient alternative. Always check schedules carefully, as trains and buses run on strict timetables, and be mindful of luggage space on public transport. If you are travelling with large suitcases, ensure you book a seat that includes luggage.

Convenience Stores

Convenience stores, or konbini, are a lifeline in Japan. They are open late, and often 24/7, offering ready-made meals, snacks, drinks, toiletries, and even basic medical supplies.

Many konbini also have ATMs that accept foreign cards, package delivery services, and ticket sales for events or transportation. While slightly more expensive than supermarkets, konbini are extremely convenient for quick meals or last-minute essentials.

Nightlife

Alcohol is a common part of Japanese social life, but it is important to understand the rules and legal responsibilities surrounding drinking.

The legal drinking age in Japan is 20 years old, and it is enforced.

Selling or providing alcohol to anyone under 20 is illegal, and there can be serious legal consequences for both the provider and the drinker.

Drinking during your placement is strictly prohibited. Being under the influence at work or during your assigned shifts can result in disciplinary action or even termination. Alcohol should never interfere with your duties, safety, or the safety of others, especially in physically demanding ski resort roles.

Remember, respecting these rules is not only a legal requirement but also essential for maintaining a professional and safe working environment

After Placement



Completing your ski season placement opens up the exciting opportunity to explore Japan or consider work and travel in other locations. Whether you plan to see nearby cities, travel further across the country, or simply relax before heading home, preparation is key.

Finding Additional Work

If you are wanting to continue to work in Japan, make sure you speak with the HR manager or your direct manager to let them know. Many hotels have connections with properties in summer locations and may be able to offer you an introduction.

There are also a number of handy places to look both online and in person:

- **[Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers](#)**

Located in Shinjuku, this walk-in centre can give advice on finding work. They also offer an online job board.

- Online websites such as **[Daijob](#)** or **[Work Japan](#)**.

- **[WWOOF Japan](#)** (VOLUNTEER)

Farm hosts offer 'WWOOFers' meals and accommodation, in exchange for WWOOFers doing work at their farm. This is a great way to experience life in rural Japan and save some money while travelling.

- **[Workaway](#)**

A membership-based option offering both paid and volunteer work.

After Placement



Exploring Japan

Where do we start! Japan has so much to offer besides some of the best snow in the world. Most travellers follow one of these routes:

Classic Route

Tokyo → Okutama/Hakone/Mt. Fuji → Kyoto → Osaka → Hiroshima

Off the Beaten Path

Nagano → Kanazawa → Takayama → Shikoku → Fukuoka

AIFS Recommendation

Head to Mt Mitake, an easy day trip from Tokyo in the beautiful Okutama area. Take the cable car to the top and stay overnight at the wonderful hostel. Rise early for sunrise over the mountains and a visit to the shrine at the top of the mountain.



AIFS Recommendation

Make sure you check out hidden gems like Shirakawago, a UNESCO world heritage site famous for their traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses.

Tropical Escape

Explore Okinawa and the Kerama Islands. While the main island of Okinawa has a large US military presence, it is very easy to head to the smaller islands such as [Tokashiki](#) [Zamami](#) , and [Aka](#).

You will be able to access reefs from the beach for some amazing snorkelling.



After Placement



A Hikers Heaven

Try Mt. Takao (near Tokyo) or Kamikochi in the Japanese Alps. Make note of operating hours and admission fees. Be sure to bring some cash if you intend on visiting temples or shrines along your hike. There are also options to climb Mt Yotei in Niseko – make sure you book it with a guide!



Try the Kumano Kodo 熊野古道

Pilgrimage trails through the southern Kansai region. The Kodo ("old ways") are a key part of the region's World Heritage designation and have been in use for over 1,000 years. They are the only pilgrimage routes besides the Camino de Santiago to be designated a World Heritage site.

Tour like Taylah

If you are in Osaka, I would highly recommend booking a tour that takes you to Nara Park to feed the deer (you will learn the origin of the saying Sayonara!) then to Fushimi Inari-taisha to see the Torii Gates and Arashiyama Bamboo Forest to see some of the most beautiful natural landscapes! Booking sites like Klook offer full packages including transport, transfers and even a history lesson!



You are always welcome to contact the Winter Work team for recommendations for travel, tours and must-do items wherever you are in Japan! Our team have lived and travelled in Japan for years, so we have built quite the list of recommendations!

Accommodation Options

Japan offers a variety of affordable accommodation options suitable for travellers on a budget. Hostels, capsule hotels, guesthouses, and business hotels are widely available and often centrally located, making it easy to access transport and attractions.

Booking in advance can help secure lower rates, especially in popular cities or during holiday periods. Using booking platforms, travel apps, or local guesthouse networks can help you find cost-effective places to stay while maximizing your travel experience.

Please keep in mind you will need to have your passport with you upon check-in for any accommodation you book in Japan.

Hostels/ Shared Accommodation

Your initial accommodation will be at Tokyo Central Youth Hostel HI. Check out their other locations by searching Hostelling International or looking on websites such as Hostel World. Also worth a look is K's House, Guest House An, or Book and Bed Tokyo (pictured).



Capsule Hotels

A pretty unique Japan experience located in the larger cities. Not for those who do not like small spaces! Capsule hotels are popular in Japan because they are affordable, convenient, and provide a unique accommodation experience. The unique, minimalist design caters to travelers who need a simple, clean place to sleep for the night without the cost of a standard hotel room.

After Placement



Ryokans and Minshuku

Traditional inns where you can experience a traditional style accommodation. Ryokan normally include dinner and breakfast and can get pricey. The cheaper option is a Minshuku which are often family-run, guesthouse-style lodgings in the owner's home. They can often give you the chance to witness Japanese family life first-hand. Remember rates for both Minshuku and Ryokan are by person.



Budget Options

Night trains or buses or manga cafés are fun, quirky and cheap options for those with a really tight budget!



Business Hotels

Chains such as Toyoko Inn are located next to stations and are great value for those travelling with a friend or couples.

Storing Luggage

If you plan to travel before returning home or extending your visa, you may not want to carry all of your belongings with you, particularly if you have skis or a snowboard/boots. Many resorts, train stations, and airports offer luggage storage services or coin lockers, allowing you to safely store your items while exploring. Large lockers fit a full backpack and are normally around ¥700 per day.

Large luggage domestic and international shipping services like Yamato Transport (TA-Q-BIN) are worth checking out as well as specialised international luggage shipper like [Ship Skis](#) which handles the entire process from Japan to your destination, including door-to-door pickup and delivery.

Extending your Visa

Some travellers may wish to extend their Working Holiday Visa to spend additional time in Japan. It is important to understand the rules and procedures to ensure compliance with immigration laws.

Depending on your nationality, your initial stay will be from 6 to 12 months. You should check your eligibility for renewal and if unsure, visit your nearest Immigration Bureau or contact your Embassy/Consulate in Japan for guidance.

Nationals of **Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Denmark, and Austria** are allowed to participate in the Working Holiday Programmes twice in lifetime

- two consecutive years of stay/two inconsecutive one-year stays in total for nationals of Canada and the United Kingdom, OR
- two inconsecutive one-year stays in total for nationals of New Zealand, Denmark and Austria).

Nationals of **Germany, Ireland, and Slovakia** are allowed to participate in the Working Holiday Programmes twice in lifetime (two inconsecutive one-year stays in total).

Nationals of **South Korea** are allowed to participate in the Working Holiday Programmes twice in lifetime (two inconsecutive one-year stays in total).

Nationals of **Australia** are allowed to participate in the Working Holiday Programmes once in a life time (valid for an initial stay of 6 months and can be extended in-country)

For details, please refer to the website of Japan Embassy or Consulate-General in your country.

When to Apply

You can submit your extension application as early as 3 months prior to when your visa expires (for visas with a duration of 6 months or more). Do not wait until the last minute. If your current visa expires even 1 day before you file for an extension, you become an illegal overstayer, so mark your calendar and start the process well in advance.

Busy periods at the immigration office are March–April and September–October (when many visas expire and new graduates/job changers apply), so applying early can save you long waiting times.

Where to Apply

Applications must be filed at the Regional Immigration Services Bureau (入国管理局) that has jurisdiction over your place of residence. In Tokyo, that's the Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau. If you live in a different region, you will go to the corresponding regional immigration office or branch for your prefecture.

Processing Time

Extensions typically take about 2 to 4 weeks for processing. In standard cases, you'll receive a postcard notification in the mail after submitting your application.

If you submit your extension application on time (before your current visa expires) and the immigration bureau has accepted your application, you are eligible to stay in Japan past your original expiration date while waiting for a decision. You automatically get a 2-month provisional extension from the original expiry date.

Important: This 2-month grace period is only valid inside Japan. If you need to travel outside Japan during this time, consult immigration in advance; leaving the country before the extension is granted could void your pending application.

Note that extending your stay is for continuing the same status/activity. If you need to switch to a different visa category (e.g., from Student to Work, or from Work to Spouse), that is a Change of Status of Residence, a different procedure.

Re-Entry Requirements

The Japanese Working Holiday Visa is a **single entry and single exit visa**. Leaving Japan and returning may invalidate your visa unknowingly.

If you plan to leave Japan temporarily and return while your visa is still valid, you must obtain a re-entry permit. This allows you to leave and come back without invalidating your visa. Make sure you apply for the appropriate re-entry permit before departing, and check whether your visa conditions allow multiple entries. Following these procedures carefully will prevent complications and ensure you can enjoy travel and extended stays legally and safely.

Frequently Asked Questions

Visa and Legal Obligations

Do I need to register locally in Japan?

Yes. Upon arrival, you must register your residence at the local ward office or city hall within 14 days of your arrival. This is also how you will enrol in National Health Insurance.

Can I work in multiple jobs or resorts?

Your contract will be with one employer for the season.

Do I need to pay taxes in Japan?

Yes. Income tax is automatically deducted from your wages. For stays under one year, you usually won't pay resident tax. See the "Taxes & Employment Fees" section for more details.

What types of work am I allowed to do on a Working Holiday Visa?

You can do most casual, seasonal, or temporary work, such as hospitality or retail. However, some industries are prohibited under Japanese law, including adult entertainment, gambling, and other restricted sectors. Always check with your program coordinator if you're unsure about a job.

Support from AIFS

How do I contact the Winter Work team after I arrive in Japan?

You can contact the Winter Work team via email, phone, or the messaging platform provided when you join the program. Always keep AIFS' Japan Operations Manager's, Kaz McDonald's contact details handy, especially for urgent questions about your placement, accommodation, or travel arrangements.

Who should I contact in an emergency?

In case of an emergency, dial 110 for police or 119 for fire/ambulance. After contacting local authorities, immediately notify AIFS' Japan Operations Manager's, Kaz McDonald.

AIFS is available to support you with medical emergencies, workplace incidents, or any urgent issues that may arise during your placement.

What kind of support can the AIFS Winter Work team provide?

We can help with:

- Medical or workplace emergencies
- Accommodation issues
- Clarifying employment or contract questions
- Travel or transport guidance

Frequently Asked Questions



How often do I need to check in with the Winter Work team?

Check-in requirements may vary depending on your placement. Typically, you should:

- Confirm your arrival at your placement
- Notify AIFS' Japan Operations Manager's, Kaz McDonald if your placement has changed
- Report any serious incidents or issues promptly

Regular communication ensures your safety, helps the team support you effectively, and keeps your placement running smoothly

Placement and Work

How many hours will I work per week?

Hours vary depending on the role and season, but expect 35–45 hours per week on average. Peak periods, like holidays, may require longer shifts.

Will I receive training before starting?

Yes. All employees will receive training tailored to their role, including safety procedures, equipment handling, and customer service expectations.

What happens if I don't get along with coworkers or supervisors?

Workplace conflicts are rare but can occur. Communicate politely, follow workplace rules, and reach out to your program coordinator if you need support.

Can my placement or role be changed after arrival?

In rare circumstances, changes may occur due to staffing needs. Your program coordinator will guide you and ensure a smooth transition.

Can I work in a different city after my placement?

Yes, you can work in another city as long as your visa is valid. You will need to arrange accommodation and confirm employment with the new employer. Keep in mind that you may need to register your residence at the local ward office if you move to a new city, and update your National Health Insurance or other official documents accordingly.

Do I need to notify Immigration if I change jobs or locations?

Yes. Moving to a new employer or relocating to a different city may require updating your information with the Immigration Bureau. This ensures your visa status remains valid and you comply with Japanese law. Your program coordinator can guide you through the process if needed.

Are there limits on how many hours I can work?

There are no strict hourly limits, but your employer must comply with Japanese labour laws, including minimum wage and rest periods. Peak periods at ski resorts may require longer shifts, but excessive overtime must follow legal guidelines.

Frequently Asked Questions



Workplace Concerns

What happens if I get fired or my employment is terminated?

Termination is rare, but it can happen if workplace rules are repeatedly broken, safety procedures are ignored, or performance expectations are not met. If your employment is terminated, your Winter Work coordinator will assist you in understanding your options, arranging safe accommodation if needed, and providing guidance on returning home or finding alternative work depending on the circumstances of your termination.

What is a formal warning, and how should I handle it?

A formal warning is usually issued when an employer identifies a problem with work performance, attendance, or behaviour. Treat it as an opportunity to improve. Respond professionally, clarify expectations with your supervisor, and ask your Winter Work coordinator for advice if you feel unsure about the warning. Document all communications for your records.

What should I do if I have issues with my employer, such as pay slips, overtime, or accommodation?

First, communicate politely and clearly with your employer to resolve the issue. If the problem persists or you feel uncomfortable addressing it alone, contact AIFS' Japan Operations Manager, Kaz McDonald immediately. Kaz can:

- Help clarify your contract and employment rights
- Mediate between you and your employer
- Ensure workplace rules are being followed

Can I leave a placement if I am unhappy or face serious issues?

Yes, but always speak with AIFS' Japan Operations Manager, Kaz McDonald before making any decisions. Leaving without notice may affect future employment opportunities. The team can help you explore alternatives, such as transferring to another resort, resolving the issue, or safely ending your placement.

Frequently Asked Questions



Daily Life

What is staff accommodation like?

Accommodation is usually shared dormitory-style housing. Rooms are functional, clean, and include basic facilities such as heating, laundry, and kitchens.

Are meals included?

Some resorts provide meals, while others give access to a kitchen so you can prepare your own food. Check your placement details in advance.

Can I live off-site?

Most people stay in staff accommodation. Off-site housing may be possible, but requires approval from your employer.

How do I get to work from my accommodation?

Resorts typically provide either walking access, shuttle buses, or detailed instructions for public transport.

What facilities are available in staff housing?

Expect basic amenities like Wi-Fi, kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry. Respect shared spaces and house rules.

Can I bring friends or visitors to staff accommodation?

Staff housing is for residents only. Guests are generally not allowed for safety, security, and privacy reasons. Some employers may have strict rules in place about bringing guests into staff accommodation; be sure to familiarise yourself with any rules.

Can I travel or leave the resort during my placement?

Yes, but you must ensure it does not interfere with work schedules. Always notify your supervisor if you plan to be away for personal travel.

Frequently Asked Questions

Money and Expenses

How much will I earn per hour?

Wages vary by resort and role, typically around ¥1,000–¥1,500 per hour for entry-level positions.

Are there deductions for accommodation, meals, or uniforms?

Small deductions may apply for staff meals, uniforms, or shared accommodation. These should be clearly stated in your employment contract.

How do I open a bank account in Japan?

You can open a bank account once registered at your local ward office. Bring your passport, residence card, and a Japanese phone number if possible.

How much should I budget for daily expenses?

Budget for meals, snacks, transport, and personal items. Convenience stores and supermarkets offer affordable options for daily living.

Do I need to pay for health insurance?

Yes. You must enrol in National Health Insurance, which helps reduce healthcare costs. See the “Insurance & Health” section for details.

Frequently Asked Questions



Health, Safety & Insurance

Do I need travel insurance in addition to NHI?

Yes. NHI covers medical costs in Japan but does not cover travel disruptions, mountain rescue, or lost property. Travel insurance provides additional protection.

What if I get sick or injured at work?

Report immediately to your supervisor. NHI will cover most medical costs, and your employer may also have specific reporting procedures. Keep receipts and documentation for insurance purposes.

Is drinking allowed during my placement?

Drinking during work hours or on-call shifts is strictly prohibited. The legal drinking age is 20 years old. Violating this may lead to disciplinary action.

What safety measures are in place at the resort?

Resorts follow strict safety procedures for lifts, equipment, and snow activities. Training covers these measures to ensure your safety.

Can I bring medication into Japan?

Yes, but there are strict rules. Only bring small personal quantities of prescription medications for personal use. Some common medications that are available in your home country may be considered controlled substances in Japan and require a yakkan shoumei (import certificate) from Japanese authorities.

- Prescription medications: Bring the original packaging, a doctor's note, and a copy of the prescription.
- Over-the-counter medications: Most common OTC medications are allowed, but always check restrictions, especially for cold or allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine.
- Controlled substances: Always check the official Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare website before traveling. Bringing prohibited medications without proper documentation can result in fines, confiscation, or legal action.

How can I prepare for medical needs while in Japan?

Carry your NHI card at all times. Know the location of nearby clinics or hospitals. Keep a small first-aid kit in your accommodation.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

Dial 110 for police and 119 for fire/ambulance. Notify your supervisor immediately if the emergency is work-related. Always know your location and emergency **contacts**.

Frequently Asked Questions

Travel and Leisure

How do I travel around Japan after my placement?

Use trains, buses, or budget flights. Luggage storage services and lockers are widely available at stations.

Are there discounts for staff?

Some resorts offer discounted lift passes or activities. Check with your employer.

Can I extend my stay after placement?

Visa extensions are not guaranteed. Check with your local Immigration Bureau before your current visa expires.

Where can I store my luggage while traveling?

Use coin lockers, luggage storage services at stations, or luggage forwarding options between cities or airports.

How can I meet other travellers or locals?

Staff housing, social events, and local festivals are great ways to meet others. Respect local customs and participate actively to make connections.

Culture and Language

Do I need to speak Japanese to work?

Not always, however, knowing basic phrases helps. Simple greetings, “thank you,” and polite expressions are appreciated.

How do I avoid cultural misunderstandings?

Observe local practices, ask politely if unsure, and follow workplace etiquette. Bowing, using polite language, and respecting hierarchy go a long way.

How do I deal with culture shock or homesickness?

Feeling overwhelmed is normal. Stay connected with fellow AIFS travellers, explore your surroundings, and give yourself time to adjust. Participating in group activities and learning about local customs can make adaptation easier.

What are some important Japanese etiquette rules I should know?

Removing shoes indoors when required, speaking quietly in public transport, waiting in line patiently and respecting personal space, and, being punctual for work and social commitments.