



World Travel on A Budget: Destination Japan

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Japan on the cheap? It may sound like an oxymoron, but rest assured, you can still travel to Japan on budget without forgoing the amenities and experience. The grandeur and beauty of the country's great cities and countryside is an experience you'll never forget. With careful planning and a little know-how, it is easy to enjoy a budget-friendly vacation in Japan.

Save even more money (and earn cash back!) when shopping at [Splendor.com](#) for anything from hotels and flights to tickets for attractions and excursions. Splendor offers cash back rewards and great deals that help budget-minded travelers save on all of their needs when visiting Japan.

Here's how *you* can turn high-cost Japan into a budget travel destination.

Accommodations

If you're looking for budget travel options, it's wise to shop around online months ahead, as rates can fluctuate depending on demand, season, or even day of the week. Visit sites such as [Booking.com](#) (where Splendor members can receive 3% cash back) or [Priceline.com](#) (with 2% cash back) for spectacular deals on hotels. Some particularly reasonably priced sleeps are the [Juyoh Hotel](#) and the [Asakusa Central Hotel](#) in Tokyo, but there are many more to choose from in Tokyo and throughout Japan's major cities.

Hostels or Ryokans (Japanese-style guesthouses) are other budget-friendly alternatives for overnight accommodations. Or even consider staying in a B&B or renting an apartment if you plan to stay a week or more. You can find apartments to rent for less than \$100 per night. [LivingSocial](#) (4% cash back) and [Groupon](#) (5% cash back) often have deals on vacation packages to Tokyo as well.

Transportation

Transportation is one of the most expensive aspects of travel to and within Japan and will probably comprise the bulk of your expenses. There are numerous online search engines for finding cheap flights to Japan. Using a site like [CheapAir.com](#) (2% cash back for Splendor members) enables you to quickly search multiple sources and quickly find the best price.

Getting around the country in Japan's bullet train is comfortable and fast, but not cheap. Individual tickets can cost hundreds of dollars. To reduce your train costs, you might want to purchase a [Japan Rail \(JR\) pass](#), which are a much better deal than metro tickets. They're only for foreigners and *not* sold in Japan, but they can be purchased at the sales offices or agents of Japanese airlines and specific travel agencies. The train is also the best way to save money on transportation for those with limited time. [Bus passes](#) can be cheaper, but buses do take longer to get you from one place to another.

Local Cuisine

Food is surprisingly inexpensive in Japan, which is ideal for a budget vacation. There is an array of cheap local cuisine throughout the country. Unless you'll be dining at up-scale restaurants regularly, you don't really need to spend much money on food. You can easily find great items to keep you going throughout the day at convenience stores and delis (7-11, Family Mart, etc.). They're located on virtually every corner in major cities and towns and are usually open 24/7. They have noodles, freshly prepared meals and sandwiches for around 100 yen, or a little more than \$1 USD.

When you want something a little more substantial than fast food from convenience stores, sushi, the national dish, is served everywhere from casual pubs to gourmet restaurants. For about \$1 USD per plate, you can't beat the conveyor belt sushi, or sushi trains, for value. At these restaurants, sushi travels past your table on conveyor belts, and you can snap up whatever you want to eat. It's a must-do food experience and a great way to sample a variety of Japanese flavors and mingle with the locals. You can fill up on various sushi dishes for around \$15 USD. Japan is also filled with noodle bars serving Ramen, where dinner will only cost you a few hundred yen (1 yen = \$0.0098 USD).

Attractions

Another good thing about budget travel in Japan is that you'll hardly have to spend any money on attractions. There are many gardens, temples and parks that are free to the public. Tokyo, the crowded capital, is known for its neon skyscrapers, pop culture and shopping. In contrast, Kyoto offers Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, gardens and famed cherry blossoms in the spring.

Sightseeing in Tokyo is free entertainment that includes people watching and window shopping in bustling districts like Shinjuku, home to many of Tokyo's tallest buildings; Shibuya, a center for fashion and culture; Harajuku, Japan's center for youth street fashion with many trendy shops; and Ginza, Tokyo's most famous upscale shopping, dining and entertainment district featuring numerous department stores, boutiques, art galleries and cafes.

Other free attractions in Tokyo include notable sites like the city's oldest and most colorful temple, the [Sensoji Temple](#), the Meiji Shrine at [Meiji Jingu](#) and the [Tokyo Imperial Palace](#). For those with limited time, [Ueno Park](#) is a great area to visit with several museums and temples all in walking distance from one another. Oh, and who could forget the [cat cafes](#)?

In Kyoto, about two hours and twenty minutes from Tokyo on the bullet train, there are many impressive attractions that can be seen on a budget. One of the most beautiful sights in Kyoto is the world heritage site [Kinkaku-ji](#), or the Golden Pavilion, a Zen Buddhist temple with a gold-leaf facade set amongst landscaped gardens and a reflecting pond. The entrance fee for adults is around \$4 USD and \$3 for children. Another must-see is the 10,000 torii gates at the [Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine](#) complex. It is a famous Shinto shrine and one of the most iconic attractions in Kyoto.

About a 40-minute train ride from Kyoto is [Nara Park](#), a public park that features the Nara National Museum, ancient temples and free roaming tame deer that love to have their photo taken. There is no entrance fee here, and if you only have an afternoon in the area, must-sees include the [Todaiji Temple](#), which is the world's largest wooden building and houses the largest gilded bronze Buddha statue in the world. You can take the [Kyoto Kintetsu](#) train line to Nara for \$5-10 USD.

However, if you plan on seeing a handful of attractions throughout Japan, a [Grutt Pass](#) is a worthy purchase for added savings. Museums and certain attractions are not always free, so a Grutt Pass can be the best way to save money on temples, museums and other tourist sites.

There are ways to save money no matter where you travel. Although the country is notoriously expensive, you'd be surprised at how many ways there are to have a budget Japanese vacation without sacrificing fun. A visit to Japan is an experience like no other; high-rise-filled cities, imperial palaces, mountainous national parks and thousands of shrines and temples—don't let the pricey rumors stop you!

Plus, when you make your Japan travel reservations through [Splender.com](#), you can save even more money with its cash back and coupon offers. Search hundreds of stores and travel services for great deals. Use vendors like [Hotels.com](#), [Expedia.com](#) and [Cheap Tickets](#) to find flights, hotels and vacation packages, as well as other vendors such as [GiltCity](#) for deals on shopping, spa experiences, restaurants and entertainment. [Sign up today!](#)