A visit to Japan



Mt. Fuji and cherry blossoms in spring

Japan is located in eastern Asia. It is a large group of islands (archipelago) that stretch from the Sea of Japan to the Pacific Ocean. Scenery in Japan is varied, with mountains, volcanoes and plains, all surrounded by the sea. Earthquakes are frequent in Japan. Earthquake tremors can shake buildings and houses, causing them to become damaged or destroyed. Despite this, there are many tall buildings in Japan. The highest building in Japan is the **Tokyo Sky Tree (2080 ft).** Architects and engineers make sure that the buildings can withstand earthquakes by being flexible. A building made out of concrete will crack under pressure. Buildings made with metals such steel are considered better because they can easily bend and are flexible. They can sway when hit by an earthquake but do not collapse as easily. In Japan, architects use concrete reinforced with steel to build tall structures. Many Japanese homes that are made from wood are no higher than two floors. This means when an earthquake strikes there will be less falling debris. In most Japanese homes, there is a mixture of traditional and modern furniture.

- In traditional homes, there are no beds, only **futons** (mattress) because the homes are small.
- The floors are covered with straw matting called **Tatami.**
- It is Japanese custom to take off your shoes when entering a home.
- In the rooms of these Japanese homes, **fusuma** are used as partitions, and are made from wood and paper.



Traditional Japanese house

- Modern Japanese homes have tiled floors and beds.

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- Japan has few natural resources. So the people manufacture goods that are exported all over the world. Such goods include cameras, computers, cellphones, radios and televisions as well as cars, heavy machinery, ships, lorries, steel, textiles, fish products and art objects.
- Manufacturing companies include: **Honda, Nissan, Toshiba, Toyota, Sony, Hitachi, Panasonic, Mitsubishi, Fujitsu, Canon, Suzuki, Mazda, Isuzu, Nintendo, Kawasaki, Yamaha**

- Japanese festivals include New Year's Day. Many Japanese families dress in their best clothes and meet to share a drink of sweet, spiced rice wine. The wine is said to destroy evil spirits and build up strength. Traditional New Year's Day foods have special meanings too:
- **rice cakes mean good fortune**
- **food made from seaweed is for happiness**
- **potatoes help to drive away evil spirits.**
- Children may receive small gifts, or envelopes containing money, from relatives and friends who call. Whenever people visit one another small gifts are exchange.
- Another festival is the **Iris Festival or Children's Day** celebrated
- on May 5th. In the past, boys in Japan were paid much attention than girls, and this festival was originally a celebration of and for boys.
- The **iris** is a favorite flower that blooms in parks and gardens all over Japan in May and June. Iris leaves are a symbol of heroism. They are put into a boy's bath to make him strong and brave.



Iris flower

- During Children's Day brightly colored paper and cloth kites fly from bamboo poles in the garden. The kites are shaped like dragons, butterflies, dragonflies and carp.
- The **carp** is a fish which is a symbol of energy and power.

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Japanese Koi carp fish

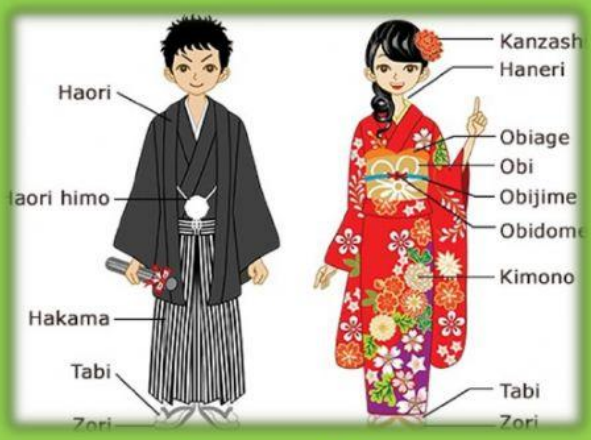
- Because of the many mountains, there is very little land for farming. There are paddy fields on which farmers grow rice.
- **Mochi** also called rice cake, is a special cake made from early harvested rice.



Rice paddies

- **Kimono** is a long loose gown worn by men and women on special occasions. The kimono is tied in the middle with a wide sash called an **obi**

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Japanese clothing

- Its national sports are Karate, judo and sumo wrestling.
- Japan's capital city is **Tokyo**.
- Currency (money): **Japanese Yen**
- Population: **125.8 million** (2020) World Bank
- Continent: **Asia**
- Emperor of Japan: **Naruhito**
- Prime minister: **Fumio Kishida**
- Government: Democracy, Parliamentary system, Unitary state, Constitutional monarchy
- Japan's two major religions are **Shinto and Buddhism**



Japan Religions

- **Shinto** which means "the way of the gods" is the most ancient religion in Japan and it's based on the belief that all things can be gods.
- **Buddhism** is a religion introduced in the 6th century as a gift from Korea and it follows the teachings of Buddha.

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