

# Willis's Walkabouts Japan Checklist

## Personal Papers

- **Passport** Valid for the duration of stay.
- **Passport photocopy** (I suggest a photocopy of the page with your photo, kept separate in case of loss.)
- **Visa. Not required** for less than a 90 day stay for citizens of most developed countries including Australia and NZ.
- **Air tickets**
- **Travel Insurance:** Your policy should cover costs incurred by the need to change airline reservations, medical expenses, lost baggage, lost passports, air tickets & personal papers, lost money (always limited). It should be possible to make a claim while in Japan. It should cover you while bushwalking. Not all policies will do this.  
*We need to see a copy. Our liability insurance requires you to have travel insurance.*
- **International driver's license:** Compulsory if you are intending to drive while in Japan. You can apply at <https://www.internationaldrivingpermit.com.au/>

## Money

Japan trips include accommodation, transport and dinners, so your money needs will not be as high as they might be on other WW trips. However, you want access to some money on the trip, and for any costs in Japan before or after the WW trip.

- **A credit/debit card** (Visa, Mastercard and Travelex etc). It is important to note that you cannot believe anything your bank or the card issuer say about the capabilities of various cards. The promises are sweeping and the reality limited and unpredictable. Surprisingly, typical bank staff in Japan seem to be unfamiliar these kinds of facilities. Or, seem to be until they try to use them. The best I (RC) can do is to describe a system that works, having not yet discovered a better system. For me it is Visa based. As best I can establish, Mastercard has the same capabilities and limitations but I haven't tested. To minimise fees, I have a pre-loaded Visa Global Currency Card, carrying my regular Visa Card as backup. I was able to set this up entirely from within my bank's online banking website. With online banking, I can top this up any time I have internet access. I have found Visa Card purchases are generally successful where cards are accepted. However, most ATMs and banks themselves are unable to access foreign Visa accounts for cash even though the card may be JPY enabled. And when unwittingly using an ATM that does not accept it, it is very easy to get the card suspended. The time and cost of ringing Australia to unblock it has been considerable. The only exceptions I have found are ATM equipped post offices and, so far, all 7-Elevens I have tried. But 7-Elevens are very common. Despite these limitations, with these cards and outlets, I can confidently rely on finding cash, but I will still back them up with cash.
- **JPY in cash** for emergencies and or failure of electronic methods of payment. Once having landed in Japan, the risk of having cash stolen, while possible, is minor. But problems with credit cards, travel cards and other electronic means of obtaining cash are surprisingly high in the world's second largest economy. How much to take will depend on whether you intend travelling independently before or after the WW trip. ATMs that accept foreign cards generally have a daily limit of several hundred dollars equivalent, so if you need a large amount of cash for any reason, you should get it in Australia before leaving.
- **Travellers cheques:** I have not tried using travellers cheques for many years. They might provide some backup in the form of obtaining cash over a bank counter, but I can't vouch for that. The kinds of places that do not take credit card purchases will not take travellers cheques. It is worth noting that access to bank offices during a WW trip will be inconvenient and so is not guaranteed.

## Mobile phone

- If you wish to be contactable by mobile phone (when we are in range), there are several ways to do this.
  - If you would like to be able to accept calls on your normal number, you should contact your service provider to enable your SIM for global roaming.
  - If you expect to be using your phone a lot and would like to keep costs down, there are online services that will supply a local Japanese SIMs for your trip. This is particularly important if you expect to be accessing the internet. Choose a service that will post your

SIM to Australia, or if you are too late for that, make sure it is a service that has a collection booth at your arrival airport.

- Most Australian phones are 3G and 4G capable. The Japanese system is 3G

## **Batteries**

- Considering spare batteries for any device requiring them. You can recharge batteries between walks but you will need your chargers and adapters. But bear in mind that when several people are recharging phone, camera, tablet batteries all at once, there might not be enough power points available. Hence spare capacity would be handy.

## **Personal Health**

- Vaccinations: Tetanus is recommended as is any other vaccination which is recommended in Australia. No other vaccinations should be necessary but official advice is to consider Japanese encephalitis and measles. Your GP can should advise.
- Personal medications: bring a copy of the prescription for any prescription item you carry.
- Personal first aid items: sunscreen, insect repellent, band-aids, blister kit or similar, etc. We will have a reasonable first aid kit for the walks but you might want your own antiseptic such as tea tree oil or betadine plus any other items you are likely to need.
- Antibiotics. If you want to carry antibiotics, see your doctor. In the major towns, they should be available of a similar standard to Australia.
- Toiletries
- Ear plugs for noisy nights might be useful.
- Water purification tablets or giardia proof filter. On many, but not all, of the walks we have done in the past, the water could be drunk untreated.

## **Equipment**

- Eating utensils (lightweight bowl, spoon, fork and cup)
- Water bottles (two 1l bottles or a 1l bottle and a wine bladder)
- Tent for yourself or shared (be prepared for strong winds and rain).
- Sleeping bag - suitable for 0 C for camping. Will have to be used in some accommodation as well, so a very heavy bag is not recommended.
- Sleeping bag liner – keeps bag clean and provides extra warmth.
- Torch - make sure it takes standard sized batteries. The rectangular batteries used in some Petzl torches can be difficult to find.
- A small towel is useful. The commercial 'pack towels' are excellent. A “microfibre” cleaning cloth is cheap and effective. A small towel/cleaning cloth will suffice for a modesty covering if planning to deport oneself at hot springs in the Japanese fashion.
- A backpack with a pack liner and/or cover. It is very important that everything in your pack stay dry in the heaviest possible rain.
- Light binoculars – optional, but always fun.
- Bear bell. The actual danger of bear encounter is difficult to assess, but most Japanese walkers wear bells, so we will do the same just to be on the safe side. Anything that tinkles as you move will do, but outdoor shops in Japanese cities also carry them for about \$20. Ask the guide in the week before the trip if you would like to have one purchased for you.

## **Food**

Quarantine regulations are similar to Australia's, so bringing fresh food from Australia is out of the question and it is best not to rely heavily on any processed food you might bring with you in case it gets caught on some other grounds. But before the trip and between walks, convenience stores will be everywhere and supermarkets are easy to find.

## **Clothing**

You will need to be able to walk, and therefore travel, with all your gear and clothing. If you require other clothing or equipment before or after the trip, you will need to store at your accommodation for the duration of the trip.

- A set of clothes for mild to warm weather.
- A set of clothes for cold wet weather.
- Something light for sleeping in. Saves weight and space if it can be drawn from the above.
- You should select walking clothes that are suitable, when cleaned, for going to casual restaurants etc. It is important to be able to be neatly and cleanly dressed at all times when you are not actually doing a walk. There will be numerous opportunities to do laundry.
- These sets of clothing should include the following
  - Trousers. Lightweight, quick drying trousers are recommended. Jeans are not suitable. On the walk, you need something which will keep your legs warm in cold rainy weather.
  - Shirts. Light and heavy as above.
  - Sweater, fleece or something similar for warmth.
  - Socks (3-4 pair) Thermal socks might help. Plastic bags between layers of socks can keep your feet dry.)Remember the layer principle. During the walks, you need to be able to put on and take off various layers of clothing so that you neither overheat nor get cold.
- In addition to the sets of clothing mentioned above, you need
  - Hat. You need this both to keep the sun off and to keep your head warm.
  - Thermal top & pants
  - Wind and waterproof parka
  - Gloves
  - Sunglasses.
- Optional
  - Overpants or 'rain chaps' may be useful. If we are unlucky, the weather can match the worst that Tasmania has to offer (without the mud). Probably not, but better to be safe than sorry.
  - Gaiters
  - Bathers

## **Footwear**

If you have a form of footwear that you have found tried and true in hills anywhere along Eastern Australia, you should go with that. Leather walking boots are probably best for their grip and foot protection. For stream crossings, it is recommended that boots be worn. You have to count on getting wet feet, so carry some extra socks. I recommend Crocs or similar to wear around camp. As long as they can be meticulously cleaned, big footed individuals can use them for slippers in accommodation where the provided slippers are too small.

## **Final note**

Japan is one of the safest places you can travel anywhere in the world. Most of the places you will be are safer than some neighbourhoods in major Australian cities. Nonetheless, please be careful and don't do anything to put unnecessary temptation in front of anyone.

## **Further information**

You might find more useful information on [https://www.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/visa.html](https://www.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/visa.html)