

夏 Summer in Japan

Summer in most of Japan is hot and humid. If you are travelling to Japan in summer, it is best to keep in mind just how humid it can be. Australians travelling from the southern winter can find the conditions particularly

draining. So, are we saying it's best not to go to Japan in summer? No, not at all. Just be aware of possible heat stress and plan your activities to suit the time of day. In a country which has long appreciated the seasons, Japanese people have developed various ways to deal with the heat and get the best from the season. Summer in Japan has its own charms.

Traditional Japanese homes were built raised off the ground and designed to be opened up during the summer days to create maximum airflow. This type of housing has become less frequent in Japan with apartments and Western-style homes the norm, but certain traditional items such as reed blinds called *sudare* are still used to shade windows particularly on balconies.

These days eco-solutions are sought to save energy and help mitigate the heat. 'Green curtains' are one such solution—training fast-growing plants up simple trellises to shade buildings, an approach even adopted by some large corporations.

A very lo-tech traditional method is hanging a wind-chime (*furin*) in an open window or door. The idea is to trick the senses: the

sound of the chime is said to make people feel cooler as they 'hear' the breeze. Tokyo is known for its painted glass wind chimes and they make lovely souvenirs.

Creating your own breeze with a folding fan (*sensu*) or a light-weight rounded fan (*uchiwa*) is an option. You might come across plastic *uchiwa*, often as giveaway promotions, but you will find that the traditional bamboo and paper versions cool you down even more effectively. Both *sensu* and *uchiwa* come decorated with attractive designs and again make good souvenirs.

Keeping cool from the inside is another strategy. Refreshing barley tea (*mugicha*) and shaved ice treats known as *kakigori* are an enjoyable way to cool down. And that brings us to summer food.



When the heat hits, it is easy to lose your appetite. We all know to keep well hydrated, but it is also vital to maintain your energy and eat well. This is easy to do in Japan, made even easier by the way food and drink are presented during the hotter months. Chilled tea will often be served in glass rather than ceramic cups. The cups themselves will be placed on a woven reed or bamboo coaster, which creates an airy and open look. Glassware is used to serve many types of food, including *sashimi*, which appears that little bit cooler resting on glass. Other foods literally cool down. *Ramen*, a favourite among noodles, can be found served as *hiyashi-chuka* (chilled Chinese noodles), but one of the most refreshing summer takes on noodles is *somen* (wheat noodles) served on ice and dipped into a cold broth. Traditional Japanese sweets *wagashi* adopt cool shades at this time of year. Many use jelly which creates an impression of water. And watermelon is a wonderful pick-me-up (it's such a sign of summer that it is a common design on summer greeting cards). 'Stamina' foods are popular at this time of year—many of these are hot including delicious grilled eel—one of the many great tastes of summer you can try in Japan!

Keeping your cool in the heat

The need to be aware of heat stress and heat exhaustion is something that even Japanese people are regularly reminded about, so it makes sense that visitors keep this in mind too. Consider sightseeing early, resting in the heat of the day or seeking out air-conditioning in shops, museums or galleries, and heading back outside in the late afternoon and evening.

Ministry of the Environment—Heat Illness Prevention Information

www.wbgt.env.go.jp/en/

JNTO Safety Trips for Travellers

www.jnto.go.jp/safety-tips/eng/index.html

SCHOOL VISITS

In Term 2, the school visit team gave **calligraphy workshops** at two schools. At **Bonnyrigg High School**

on 9 May the team did two sessions with Year 8 Japanese students. On 28 June, the team gave two workshops to year 7 students **Hunter Sports High School** south of Newcastle.

At both schools, students were still new to Japanese, but there was definitely a can-do attitude in all sessions as they took on characters they were seeing for the first time.

Schools in New South Wales* are invited to apply for our 2019 program (Terms 3 and 4).

*Schools in regional areas are welcome to apply for visits. We may not be able to meet all requests.

