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JAPAN

QUICK GUIDE
SHOPPING IN JAPAN

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SHOPPING IN JAPAN

From a perfect cup of matcha to high-quality Japanese knives, Japan offers a shopping experience unlike anywhere else in the world. Japan's rich culture of craftsmanship, innovation, and obsession with detail means that every purchase carries a story. Whether you're on the hunt for the perfect yukata, a high-tech gadget, or just browsing neighborhood stalls for an unexpected gem, Japan has something for everyone.

In this guide you will find a list of the best Japanese souvenirs to bring home, iconic brands to know, and stores you won't want to miss. You'll also find some helpful tips regarding shopping etiquette in Japan as well as information on tax-free shopping.

BEST JAPANESE SOUVENIRS TO BRING HOME

Souvenirs make travel memories tangible, and in Japan, you're spoiled for choice with unique keepsakes that double as thoughtful gifts. Here's a list of must-buy items to help you shop smart and stylishly.

SAKE (JAPANESE RICE WINE)

Sake is more than just a drink; it's a cultural experience steeped in centuries of tradition. Made from fermented rice, water, yeast, and koji mold, sake offers a wide range of flavors, from crisp and dry to smooth and sweet. Deeply rooted in Japanese culture, it plays a significant role in rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations, often given as a thoughtful gift to mark special occasions. There's a sake for every preference, from light, fruity varieties to bold, robust options. While many Japanese sakes are available internationally, explore unique bottles and rare types for a more authentic experience. For those seeking premium quality, try *Junmai Daiginjo*, known for its refined taste and delicate aroma, offering a luxurious sip of Japan's heritage. Whether enjoyed warm or chilled, sake is a delightful way to connect with Japanese tradition.

When looking for unique or rare sake in Japan, specialty shops and breweries are the best places to start. Shops like *Hasegawa Saketen* in Tokyo or *Fushimi Sake Village* in Kyoto offer diverse selections,



including limited-edition bottles and regional specialties. Visiting local breweries is another excellent option, with many offering exclusive varieties unavailable elsewhere.

SAKE CUPS

Sake cups, known as *ochoko* or *guinomi* in Japanese, are an essential part of the sake-drinking experience. These small cups are often made from materials such as ceramic, glass, or wood, each adding its own character to the sake tasting process. Traditional ceramic cups are popular for their ability to retain the warmth of heated sake, while artisanal glass cups are favoured for their elegance, especially when enjoying chilled varieties. Some sake enthusiasts prefer wooden cups, such as *masu*, which impart a subtle aroma of cypress to the drink, enhancing its complexity. The choice of sake cup can significantly influence the drinking experience, making it a vital consideration for those seeking to fully appreciate the nuances of this iconic beverage.

For those seeking authentic, high-quality craftsmanship, Kyoto's pottery districts—such as Kiyomizu-yaki—are renowned for their traditional ceramic wares. In Tokyo, explore the vibrant markets of Asakusa, where shops often showcase both modern and classic designs. Large department stores like Isetan and Mitsukoshi often carry a wide selection of sake cups, including both traditional and contemporary styles.

CERAMICS

Japanese ceramics, ranging from simple, minimalist tea bowls to intricately glazed platters, embody the philosophy of beauty in imperfection, known as *wabi-sabi*. These handcrafted pieces are rich in tradition and artistry, with techniques that have been passed down through generations. Look for renowned brands like Kutani or Arita, famous for their vibrant designs and meticulous craftsmanship. For a more personal touch, explore local artisan kiosks in Kyoto's Higashiyama District, where you can find unique, hand-thrown pieces and even speak with the artisans themselves. Each piece tells a story, reflecting Japan's deep connection to nature, tradition, and culture, making these ceramics perfect for collectors, art lovers, or anyone seeking a meaningful keepsake.



JAPANESE KNIVES

Trusted by chefs worldwide, Japanese knives are renowned for their exceptional quality, precision, and razor-sharp edges. Crafted with centuries-old techniques, these knives combine traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation, making them a must-have tool in any kitchen. Brands like Korin and Kamikoto are celebrated for their attention to detail, offering stunning blades that are as beautiful as they are functional. Whether you're slicing sashimi or chopping vegetables, these knives provide unmatched performance. They also make the perfect souvenir, offering a touch of Japanese artistry for friends, family, or yourself.

One of the top destinations to shop for quality knives is Kappabashi Street in Tokyo, known as the "Kitchen Town," where you'll find specialized stores like Kama-Asa Shoten, offering a wide range of handcrafted knives. For an immersive experience, visit Seki City in Gifu Prefecture, the heart of Japan's knife-making tradition, where workshops and stores celebrate centuries of craftsmanship. Department stores like Isetan and Takashimaya also carry premium Japanese knife brands with knowledgeable staff to guide you. Whether you're searching for a functional tool or a work of art, these locations allow you to find a knife that perfectly suits your preferences.



JAPANESE STATIONERY

Quirky yet functional, Japanese stationery elevates the art of notetaking. From vibrant washi tapes in countless patterns and colours to precision brush pens perfect for calligraphy and planners with intricate layouts, the variety and craftsmanship of Japanese stationery will leave you spoiled for choice.

Brands like Midori and MUJI offer something for everyone—whether you love the clean simplicity of minimalism or the bold creativity of maximalism. Midori is renowned for its high-quality notebooks and timeless designs, while MUJI blends functionality with understated elegance in its stationery. In Tokyo, Itoya is a must—a multi-floor paradise packed with premium stationery and supplies.

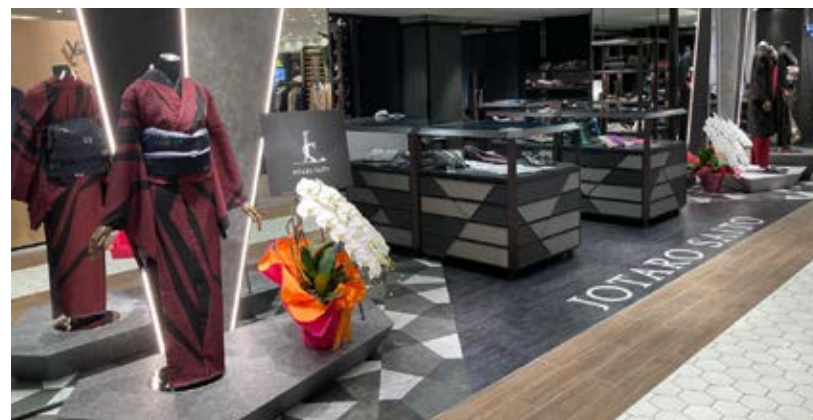
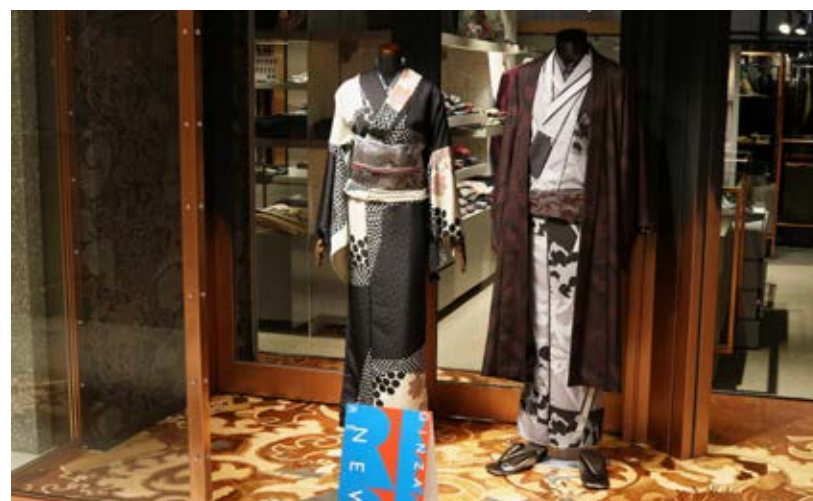


JAPANESE WATCHES

High-quality craftsmanship meets innovation with Japanese watch brands. Renowned for their precision and reliability, brands like Seiko, Casio's G-Shock, and Citizen have become global icons. Seiko offers timeless designs paired with advanced watchmaking techniques, while Casio's G-Shock is famous for its rugged durability and shock resistance, perfect for an active lifestyle. Citizen, a pioneer in eco-friendly technology, boasts solar-powered watches that never need a battery replacement. These watches combine classic elegance with cutting-edge technology, making them the perfect souvenirs that'll stand the test of time—literally and figuratively.

KIMONO OR YUKATA

A classic kimono or lightweight yukata is a beautiful and traditional way to bring a piece of Japanese culture back home. Kimonos, often crafted from luxurious silk, are elegant but can be quite pricey, making them a splurge-worthy investment for lovers of fine craftsmanship. On the other hand, cotton yukatas are a more budget-friendly option while still offering authentic Japanese charm. For a truly authentic experience, visit Kyoto's Nishijin Textile Center, where you can see traditional weaving techniques and purchase high-quality garments. Alternatively, explore the bustling streets of Ginza and stop by Jotaro Saito's designer kimono shop in Ginza Six, where you'll find a variety of styles perfect for any occasion. Whether for yourself or as a thoughtful gift, a kimono or yukata is a timeless keepsake.



MATCHA TEA & MATCHA SET

Experience the timeless art of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony in the comfort of your home with our premium matcha tea, beautifully paired with a bamboo whisk and a handcrafted ceramic bowl. Matcha, known for its vibrant green color and earthy flavour, is not only a delicious beverage but also a rich source of antioxidants. Uji, just outside Kyoto, is celebrated worldwide for producing some of the finest matcha, ensuring an authentic taste in every sip. For those seeking the highest quality, renowned stores like Ippodo Tea offer top-grade selections that elevate your matcha experience to the next level. Enjoy the perfect blend of tradition, flavor, and wellness.



JAPANESE COSMETICS & SKINCARE

J-beauty products are globally adored for their innovation, quality, and simplicity, combining centuries-old traditions with cutting-edge technology. Iconic brands like Shiseido, SK-II, and DHC offer game-changing products that focus on hydration, brightening, and achieving that coveted glass-skin look. From luxurious serums to gentle cleansers, these products cater to a wide range of skin types and concerns. For an authentic shopping experience, snag them tax-free at popular stores like Don Quijote or Ainz & Tulpe, where you'll find a vast selection of Japanese cosmetics and skincare items to elevate your beauty routine.

In Tokyo, visit Shiseido's flagship for exclusive products and luxurious experiences, where you will find exclusive products. In Kyoto's Gion district, explore artisanal skincare at Ueba Esou, where historical techniques are blended with modern innovation—the store specializes in makeup and skincare inspired by centuries-old Japanese culture.



YOSEGI ZAIKU (WOODEN MOSAICS)

A traditional craft from Hakone, *yosegi zaiku* is a delicate art form that combines the natural colours and textures of various woods to create intricate mosaic patterns. Artisans carefully select different types of wood for their unique hues and grains, piecing them together to form stunning geometric designs. The process requires incredible precision and skill, making each piece truly one of a kind. These handmade boxes, trays, and other items are not only functional but also serve as beautiful works of art, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of Japan.



ELECTRONICS & GADGETS

Japan is renowned for cutting-edge electronics and gadgets, offering unbeatable quality at competitive prices. From high-performance headphones and sleek cameras to quirky and innovative tech accessories, there's something for every tech enthusiast. Akihabara, Tokyo's famous electronics district, is a must-visit destination, packed with stores offering great deals on top brands like Sony, Panasonic, and Sharp. Whether you're looking for the latest gear or unique gadgets, Akihabara has it all, making it a paradise for tech lovers.

HELLO KITTY AND POKÉMON SOUVENIRS

For fans of Hello Kitty and Pokémon, Japan is a true wonderland of merchandise and memorabilia. You can find an incredible variety of Hello Kitty items, from adorable plush toys and stationary to exclusive regional-themed goods that showcase the charm of different areas in Japan. Similarly, Pokémon enthusiasts can indulge in a visit to Pokémon Centers located in major cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Yokohama. These stores offer everything from trading cards and figurines to apparel and home décor items, many of which are exclusive and unavailable outside Japan. Whether you're shopping for yourself or looking for the perfect gift, these souvenirs capture the fun and playfulness of two of Japan's most beloved pop culture icons.



JAPANESE BRANDS, STORES, AND DESIGNERS TO KNOW

Whether you're after designer labels or eclectic finds, these brands and stores listed below showcase the best of shopping in Japan; organized by category and listed alphabetically.

FASHION & ACCESSORIES

BAPE (A BATHING APE)

Founded in 1993 by NIGO—a member and in-house DJ for Japanese hip-hop group Teriyaki Boyz—BAPE has become synonymous with bold graphics, signature camouflage prints, and limited-edition collaborations that push the boundaries of Japanese streetwear. As a trailblazer in the global streetwear scene, BAPE's influence spans decades, becoming a favourite among hip-hop artists, sneakerheads, and streetwear aficionados. From its shark hoodies to iconic sneakers, BAPE pieces are instantly recognizable and highly sought after. The flagship store in Harajuku is a must-visit for fans and fashion enthusiasts, offering exclusive collections, a glimpse into the brand's heritage, and a chance to score a limited-edition piece that embodies urban culture. NIGO now serves as creative director for Kenzo, a Japanese luxury brand owned by LVMH.



BEAMS

A lifestyle retailer that curates everything “cool”, Beams is a one-stop shop for Japanese streetwear, casual menswear, and contemporary fashion with a global twist. Known for its eclectic mix of styles, the brand seamlessly blends tailored classics with modern streetwear trends. Whether you're after a perfectly tailored blazer for a smart-casual look, vintage-inspired pieces, or the latest streetwear drop, Beams caters to every style enthusiast. Beyond clothing, the stores offer a carefully curated selection of accessories, home goods, and lifestyle products that exude cool, understated charm. Check out their iconic Harajuku or Shinjuku locations for an unrivaled selection and an immersive shopping experience.



COMME DES GARÇONS

Founded in 1969 by the visionary Rei Kawakubo, COMME des GARÇONS is a powerhouse of avant-garde fashion, celebrated for its daring, deconstructed designs that challenge conventional norms. Known for redefining what constitutes high fashion, Kawakubo's work has earned the brand a cult following and critical acclaim in the fashion world. COMME des GARÇONS has expanded its reputation through exclusive, limited-edition collections, collaborations with brands like Nike and Louis Vuitton, and its diffusion lines such as COMME des GARÇONS PLAY, which is recognizable by its iconic heart logo.



GU

The sibling brand of Uniqlo, GU (pronounced “gee-you”) offers stylish, budget-friendly clothing designed for everyday wear. Launched in 2006 in Japan, GU focuses on combining the latest fashion trends with accessibility, making it a go-to choice for shoppers who want to stay on-trend without overspending. The brand is particularly known for its versatility, offering a wide range of items from casual basics like t-shirts and jeans to statement pieces that reflect seasonal styles. GU’s commitment to affordability doesn’t compromise quality, making it a favourite for fashion-conscious individuals who want to refresh their wardrobe on a budget or just want some inexpensive casual classics. Whether looking for office-appropriate outfits, cozy loungewear, or trendy pieces to make a statement, GU has something for everyone. Over the years, the brand has expanded internationally, earning a loyal following for its innovative designs and ability to make high fashion looks attainable for a wide audience.

HENDER SCHEME

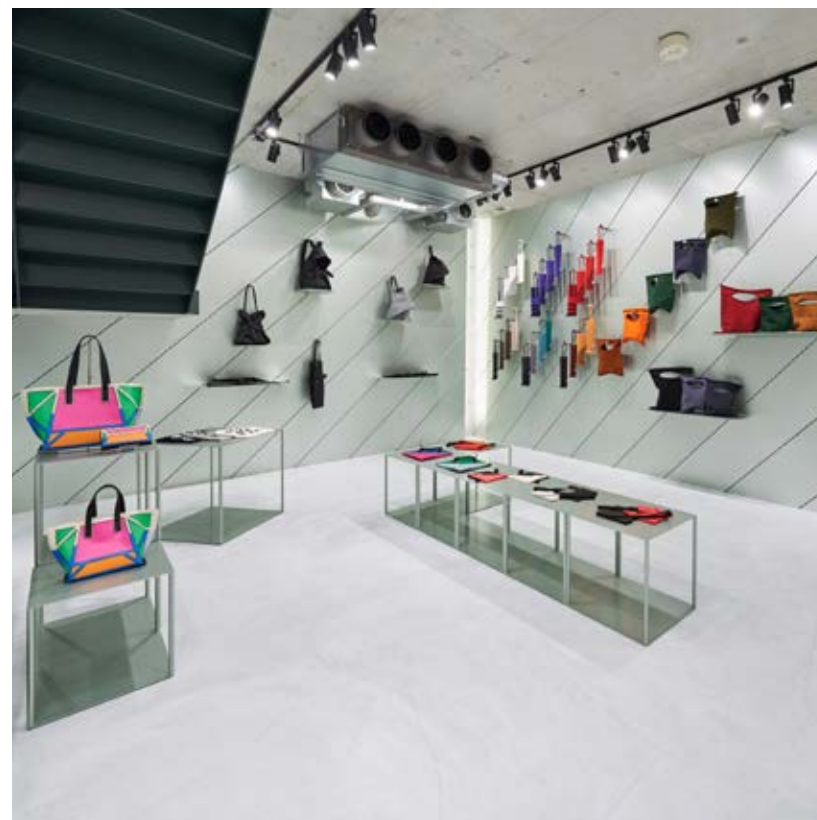
Renowned for its handcrafted leather sneakers, minimalist bags, and premium accessories, Hender Scheme elevates everyday items into works of art. The brand’s Manual Industrial Products line, which reimagines iconic sneaker silhouettes in natural leather, is especially iconic. Ideal for those who appreciate artisan craftsmanship and unique designs, Hender Scheme is where functionality meets luxury.



ISSEY MIYAKE

Founded by the Japanese designer Issey Miyake in the 70s, this fashion brand is celebrated for its groundbreaking approach to design, blending art, innovation, and technology. Known for its innovative pleating techniques, use of technical fabrics, and futuristic yet wearable designs, Issey Miyake has redefined modern fashion, offering timeless appeal mixed with functionality. Keep an eye out for the brand’s iconic PLEATS PLEASE collection—featuring signature lightweight and wrinkle-resistant pleated garments—and the BAO BAO bags, which are known for their geometric, transformable designs that combine practicality with artistic flair.

For a deeper dive into the brand’s experimental side, visit the Issey Miyake Aoyama store—his main boutique—which showcases some of his most avant-garde collections. Alternatively, check out the BAO BAO Issey Miyake Ginza store, a treasure trove of unique and iconic accessories that push the boundaries of design.





KENZO

Founded in 1970 by the visionary Japanese designer Kenzo Takada, this luxury fashion house has become a global icon for its innovative fusion of Japanese aesthetics and Parisian chic. Kenzo's designs are celebrated for their bold patterns, vibrant colours, and playful yet sophisticated approach to luxury fashion. Since its early days, the brand has stood out for breaking traditional norms, introducing collections that seamlessly blend cultural influences with modern trends. Although the brand is now based in France and owned by LVMH, it continues to draw deep inspiration from Japan's rich, expressive fashion heritage. With its commitment to creativity and pushing the boundaries of modern design, Kenzo remains a symbol of originality and artistic excellence in the world of high fashion.

SACAI

Founded in 1999 by Chitose Abe, Sacai is a high-end fashion brand that has revolutionized everyday wear with its distinctive approach. Known for its unique cuts, intricate layering techniques, and unexpected fabric combinations, Sacai blends traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. The brand is celebrated for its hybrid, avant-garde designs that push the boundaries of contemporary fashion, earning it a loyal following among style enthusiasts and industry insiders alike. Chitose Abe's ability to deconstruct and reimagine classic silhouettes has turned Sacai into a cult favourite, praised for its creativity and boldness. For an immersive experience, visit Sacai Aoyama, the flagship boutique located in the heart of Tokyo, where you can explore the brand's visionary collections in a space that reflects its artistic ethos.

UNIQLO

Uniqlo is Japan's most famous clothing brand, known for its affordable, high-quality basics. Founded in 1984 in Hiroshima, the brand has since expanded worldwide, blending innovation with everyday fashion. Their signature items include HEATTECH (for winter warmth), AIRism (for breathable summer wear), and Ultra Light Down Jackets (compact but incredibly warm). Stylish yet functional, Uniqlo is fast fashion done right.

The global flagship in Tokyo's Ginza neighbourhood spans 12 floors, though visitors will find locations throughout the country.



YOHJI YAMAMOTO

Renowned worldwide for his innovative approach to fashion, Yohji Yamamoto is a master of avant-garde design. His signature style includes flowing silhouettes, asymmetrical cuts, and a striking all-black aesthetic that challenges conventional tailoring. Each piece feels like wearable art, blending functionality with bold creativity. Visiting a Yohji Yamamoto boutique is a must for those who appreciate groundbreaking fashion and timeless design.



BEAUTY (COSMETICS & SKINCARE)

ADDICTION

Founded by a former NARS makeup artist, Addiction has become a go-to for sleek, high-pigment eyeshadows, creamy blushes, and bold lip colours. The brand's minimalist, black packaging exudes sophistication, while its wide range of shades caters to both subtle and statement looks. Perfect for beauty lovers who crave high-quality formulas and effortless chic, this brand will remind beauty experts and aficionados of NARS at its peak.



DECORTÉ

Decorté is a premium skincare and makeup brand combining state-of-the-art technology with sophisticated formulations. Known for its luxurious AQ Meliority Cream—a top-tier anti-aging product—and its Flawless Foundation, Decorté delivers results-driven beauty products with a touch of indulgence. With a strong focus on science and innovation, it's a favourite among those seeking high-performance skincare and makeup.

HAKUHODO

Hakuhodo creates some of the world's finest handcrafted makeup brushes, meticulously crafted in Japan using the highest-grade materials. From soft goat and squirrel hair bristles to ergonomic handles, each brush is designed for precision and comfort. Trusted by professional makeup artists, Hakuhodo brushes are a must-have for anyone serious about beauty. Their Kyoto store offers a unique opportunity to explore their craftsmanship up close.



KANEBO & SENSAI

Kanebo is considered one of Japan's most prestigious beauty brands, offering a premium skincare line under the name SENSAI. The SENSAI collection is inspired by the beauty of Koishimaru silk, featuring silk-infused formulas that deliver intense hydration and promote luminous, youthful skin. Their skincare products are designed to enhance the skin's natural moisture barrier, while their makeup line is loved for its refined, elegant textures and sophisticated finishes.

KOH GEN DO

A cult favourite in Japan, Koh Gen Do is famous for its flawless foundation and hydrating skincare. Initially developed for actors in the Japanese film industry, its products are now favoured by Hollywood makeup artists for their natural, dewy finish and long-lasting performance. Koh Gen Do's skincare-infused makeup products, particularly its high-performance foundation, ensure that the skin looks healthy and radiant, both on and off-camera.

SHISEIDO

Shiseido, Japan's most revered beauty brand, has been redefining skincare, cosmetics, and fragrances for over 150 years. Established in 1872, Shiseido continues to be a trailblazer in merging science with beauty, offering cutting-edge skincare innovations rooted in decades of research. Renowned for its luxurious textures and advanced anti-aging formulas, Shiseido exemplifies the pinnacle of Japanese beauty. For an unparalleled experience, visit Shiseido The Store, the brand's flagship in Tokyo's vibrant Ginza district. Here, you'll find exclusive products, personalized consultations, and premium services. Don't miss the Shiseido Parlour, where you can indulge in beauty-inspired desserts at a charming, historic café.

SK-II

SK-II is a world renowned Japanese skincare brand, beloved for its signature Pitera-infused products, inspired by a discovery at a sake brewery. Its cult-favorite Pitera™ Essence, often called the "holy grail" for hydration and anti-aging, delivers the iconic Japanese "mochi skin" glow. Combining cutting-edge science with luxurious formulas, SK-II has become a global leader in skincare and a must-try for beauty enthusiasts.



SHU UEMURA

A favourite among makeup artists globally, Shu Uemura is celebrated for its innovative approach to beauty. Known for its iconic cleansing oils, which effectively remove makeup while nourishing the skin, the brand combines artistry with performance. Shu Uemura's bold lipsticks and creative, artistic makeup palettes offer vibrant colours and textures—bridging professional artistry with everyday beauty.

SUQQU

Suqqu is a luxury J-beauty brand adored by skincare enthusiasts and makeup lovers alike, with a devoted following around the world. Renowned for its silky-textured foundations that seamlessly blend into the skin, Suqqu is synonymous with understated elegance. Its gradient lipsticks deliver beautifully blended, natural-looking colour, while the high-end skincare line focuses on enhancing skin elasticity and promoting a radiant complexion.



DEPARTMENT STORES

DAIMARU

Renowned for its exceptional customer service and premium merchandise, Daimaru department stores are a staple for shopping in Japan. With locations across the country, Daimaru offers a curated selection of both Japanese and international brands, spanning fashion, cosmetics, home goods, and gourmet foods. Visitors will also find beautifully designed stores with elegant layouts, making shopping a luxurious and enjoyable experience. Many Daimaru locations also host food halls featuring high-end delicacies, perfect for foodies and souvenir hunters alike.

ISETAN

Often referred to as Japan's most luxurious department store, Isetan is the ultimate destination for high-end shopping. Though there are stores throughout the country, the flagship location in Shinjuku, Tokyo, offers a curated mix of premium Japanese and international designer brands spread out over 9 floors, making it a go-to spot for fashion enthusiasts. Beyond clothing and accessories, the store features a wide range of beauty products, home goods, and lifestyle items. Be sure to explore the *depachika*, one of the most famous basement food halls in Japan, where you can indulge in a foodie paradise filled with gourmet delicacies, freshly prepared meals, and perfectly packaged sweets. It's a shopping experience that combines luxury, culture, and culinary delights.

MITSUKOSHI

With a rich history dating back to 1673, Mitsukoshi stands as a symbol of luxury, excellence, and elegance in Japan. This legendary department store offers a curated selection of high-end fashion, exclusive accessories, gourmet foods, and traditional Japanese crafts. Beyond shopping, Mitsukoshi provides an immersive cultural experience, showcasing Japanese heritage through its impeccable service and beautifully designed spaces. Visit Mitsukoshi for a perfect example of Japan's ability to seamlessly blend tradition and modern sophistication, where every product tells a story of craftsmanship and quality.

TAKASHIMAYA

Established in 1831, Takashimaya is one of Japan's most prestigious and historic department stores, known for its unparalleled selection of luxury fashion, gourmet food, and exquisite home goods. The store

combines modern elegance with traditional Japanese hospitality, making it a favourite among both locals and tourists. From high-end designer brands to carefully curated traditional Japanese gifts, there's something for everyone. Don't miss the *depachika*—the basement food hall—where you'll find an incredible array of fresh produce, artisanal sweets, and beautifully packaged Japanese delicacies perfect for souvenirs.



LIFESTYLE & SPECIALTY STORES

MUJI

MUJI (short for Mujirushi Ryohin, meaning "no-brand quality goods") is the go-to store for simple, well-designed lifestyle products. Founded in 1980, MUJI emphasizes sustainability, functionality, and understated elegance. Their stores sell everything from minimalist furniture and kitchenware to high-quality clothing, stationery, and travel essentials.

Visit the flagship store in Ginza—their biggest location, complete with a café and hotel—or their bustling location in Shibuya. MUJI stores are located at both of Tokyo's Narita and Haneda airports.



NITORI

Nitori, often referred to as Japan's answer to IKEA, specializes in creating stylish, functional, and affordable home furnishings that cater to a variety of tastes and budgets. From sleek furniture to cozy bedding and practical kitchenware, Nitori offers everything you need to create a comfortable and inviting living space. With a focus on blending aesthetics and functionality, Nitori's wide selection ensures that anyone can transform their home into a sanctuary of Japanese-inspired design. While not the most practical for tourists, it's always fun to poke your head in and explore.

SANRIO

Sanrio—Home of Hello Kitty and Friends—is a must-visit for lovers of *kawaii* (cute culture). From Hello Kitty to Cinnamoroll, the Ginza store is packed with plush toys, accessories, and adorable stationery, making it a great place to find gifts and souvenirs. You will also find exclusive Japan-only merchandise, perfect for collectors.

TOKYU HANDS

Tokyu Hands is the ultimate destination for curious minds and creative souls. Known for its eclectic mix of products, the store features everything from DIY tools and crafting supplies to beauty products, gadgets, and travel gear. It's not just a store—it's an experience where you can discover new hobbies, find unique gifts, or spark your next big idea. Whether you're a hobbyist looking for inspiration or a professional seeking tools and materials, Tokyu Hands has something for everyone. With its endless variety and innovative spirit, it's a place where creativity knows no bounds.

TSUTAYA BOOKS

More than just a bookstore, Tsutaya offers a curated selection of books, music, and lifestyle goods, often housed in beautifully designed spaces like Daikanyama Tsutaya in Tokyo. A paradise for book lovers and design enthusiasts, visit Tsutaya for a cultural experience.



CONFECTIONERY & SWEETS

MEIJI

A household name in Japan since 1916, Meiji has been a staple in Japan for generations, specializing in chocolates, candies, and dairy products. The iconic Meiji Milk Chocolate remains a favourite, while playful treats like Apollo strawberry chocolates and 'Kinoko no Yama' keep fans coming back for more. Beyond sweets, Meiji's high-quality dairy products, including milk, yogurt, and ice cream, are widely loved. Their premium 'Meiji THE Chocolate' series, crafted with carefully sourced cacao beans, showcases their dedication to artisanal chocolate-making, offering a gourmet experience that rivals international brands. With continuous innovation and seasonal releases, Meiji offers a delicious taste of Japan's confectionery culture.

ROYCE' CONFECTIONERY

Born in Hokkaido, Royce' is renowned for its rich, indulgent chocolates crafted with precision and care. Famous for its silky smooth Nama Chocolate, Royce' combines the finest ingredients with meticulous Japanese attention to detail, delivering sweets that melt in your mouth. Beyond Nama Chocolate, the brand offers a wide variety of treats, including chocolate-covered potato chips, truffles, and seasonal specialties. Perfect for gifting or simply indulging, Royce' chocolates are a luxurious experience that turns any moment into something extraordinary. With every bite, Royce' brings the heart of Japanese craftsmanship to the world of confectionery.



SHIROI KOIBITO

A Hokkaido icon, Shiroi Koibito is famed for its crisp, buttery *langue de chat* biscuits filled with smooth white chocolate. Produced by the Ishiya Chocolate Factory in Sapporo, these sweets have become a top souvenir from Japan. Visitors can tour the factory, explore European-inspired attractions, and enjoy exclusive treats. Whether indulging in a classic Shiroi Koibito or discovering limited-edition flavours, this confection captures the essence of Hokkaido's renowned dairy and confectionery excellence.



TORAYA

Toraya is one of Japan's most prestigious luxury *wagashi* brands, with a history spanning nearly five centuries. The brand is best known for its exquisite *yokan*, a sweet bean jelly that embodies elegance and simplicity, made using traditional recipes passed down through generations. Toraya's dedication to quality and tradition is reflected in every product, from their carefully sourced ingredients to their meticulous preparation techniques. In addition to *yokan*, Toraya offers other treats like *Monaka* (crispy wafers filled with sweet bean paste) and Matcha-flavoured sweets, which capture the essence of Japanese tea culture. Their beautifully packaged products are available in Ginza, Kyoto, and major department stores, making them an ideal gift for special occasions or a luxurious treat for yourself. Toraya continues to set the gold standard for refined Japanese sweets with its emphasis on tradition, innovation, and craftsmanship.

TSURUYA YOSHINOBU

With a rich history dating back to 1803 in Kyoto, Tsuruya Yoshinobu is one of Japan's most revered confectioners, celebrated for its exquisite *wagashi* (traditional Japanese sweets). Each confection is a delicate masterpiece, often inspired by the changing seasons and Japanese cultural motifs, embodying the harmony and aesthetics that define Kyoto's heritage. Crafted with meticulous precision, these sweets are designed to complement the refined flavors of matcha, making them an essential part of Japanese tea ceremonies.

Beyond their artistry, Tsuruya Yoshinobu offers visitors an immersive experience in *wagashi*-making. Many of their stores feature live demonstrations where skilled artisans craft these intricate sweets by hand, providing a rare glimpse into the centuries-old techniques passed down through generations.



SHOPPING ETIQUETTE IN JAPAN

Before you whip out your wallet, it's essential to understand that shopping in Japan comes with its own set of customs. These added layers of etiquette make the experience even more special—you'll quickly notice how seamlessly Japan blends impeccable manners with retail.

Here are a few rules and helpful tips to consider when shopping in Japan:

- **Bags and Packaging:** Retail staff take extraordinary pride in packaging. You'll leave every store with items expertly wrapped. Always accept the packaging graciously—it's part of the charm!
- **Queueing:** Japanese culture highly values order. If there's a line, join it at the back without cutting ahead.
- **Handling Products:** Only touch items if it's clear you're allowed to. This is especially important in traditional crafts stores.
- **Face Cover When Trying Clothes:** Many clothing stores provide a small sheet to cover your face to prevent makeup or oils from transferring onto the clothes. Make sure to use it as it's a widely appreciated practice in Japan!
- **Trying on Clothes:** In Japan, it's customary to try on clothing before purchase. If you can't find a dressing room in-store, ask a staff member for help.
- **Cash vs. Card:** While Tokyo is moving toward more cashless systems, many stores still prefer cash. Be prepared with yen on hand.
- **Returns or Exchanges:** Most stores in Japan don't accept returns or exchanges unless the item is defective. Make sure to check the store's policy beforehand.
- **Shoes Off, Slippers On:** In some Japanese stores, you may be asked to remove your shoes before entering. You'll often find slippers provided for customers to wear inside the store. Don't be surprised if you find this in small traditional boutiques. Be respectful and follow this custom.

SHOPPING ETIQUETTE IN JAPAN

- Politeness is Key: As with any interaction in Japan, always remember to be polite and show respect to retail staff. Use simple phrases such as “*sumimasen*” (excuse me), “*arigatou gozaimasu*” (thank you very much), and “*onegaishimasu*” (please) to make a good impression.
- Don't Haggle: Unlike in some countries, haggling is not common practice in Japan. The price listed is typically the final price.
- Be Mindful of Personal Space: In crowded areas or small shops, it's important to respect personal space and avoid bumping into others.
- Keep Your Voice Down: Being loud or excessively talking on your phone is a culture faux pas in Japan. When possible, avoid taking calls while shopping, and be mindful about your volume.
- Tipping Isn't a Thing: Gratuity isn't common in Japan, so there's no need to tip retail staff or delivery workers.



TAX-FREE SHOPPING IN JAPAN

Japan offers tax-free shopping for international visitors, allowing you to save 10% on purchases at participating stores. To qualify, you must spend at least ¥5,000 (before tax) in a single store on the same day. Look for stores displaying a "Tax-Free" sign, commonly found in department stores, electronics shops, cosmetics retailers, and major chains.

To claim your discount, present your passport at checkout. Some stores deduct the tax immediately, while others require you to complete a refund process before leaving Japan. Keep in mind that tax-free items are generally sealed and must remain unopened until you depart the country.



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