

JETs Bringing Partners and Families to Japan.

Welcome to Japan – we hope your stay will be long and enjoyable. Here are some hints for living in Japan with a family.

1. Dealing With the Japanese Government

Your supervisor will help you with legally registering in the first few days.

- **Alien Registration Card** needed for each member of the family. You need it to get a phone, open a bank account etc. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alien_registration_in_Japan
- **Juminhyo** – this is the city register of residents. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juminhyo
- **Jidouteate** - Child Allowance. You are eligible for a child support payment from your local city hall if you have children. Available for children up to 12 years of age. Ranges from ¥5,000 per month to ¥10,000 per month. Your eligibility is based on last year's income (from your home country). www.city.hiroshima.jp/e/resident/living/childallow.html

2. How Will Your Partner Cope With Life In Japan?

Work – the Internet as well as word of mouth can be useful tools in finding work. There are many opportunities to teach English in Japan, either through private companies who supply English teachers to public schools or through companies that provide private lessons. Not all of these companies are created equal! Be sure to find a job that works for you. Most JETs are based in rural areas, so a commute may be necessary. If your partner wishes to work more than the 28 hours that the dependent visa allows, it should be possible through his/her employer to make the switch to a work visa.

Culture shock – The non-JET partner may feel the effects of culture shock even more acutely than the JET. Within the JET program we have a support network as well as generally having the feeling that we are part of a group. It may be helpful for your partner to find work or an activity through which they can make their own social connections. In the meantime, including your partner in community or work events when possible can help. Depression is a real concern.

3. Your Child's Education

- **Hoikuen, Day-care.** These are city run day care. Usually an emphasis on play over learning. Children attend all year round. Each day-care decides its start age, can be from 6 months to 6 years. *Hoikuen* have different admission requirements depending on city rules, e.g. only children where both parents work are able to attend. Fees are based on parents' income.
- **Youchien, Kindergarten.** Mostly privately provided. Start age varies from 2 ½ years to 4 years until they are six. Parents are able to choose. *Youchien* observe school holidays but are often open during holidays (at extra charge). *Youchien* charge their own fees (could add up to over 10% of your monthly income per child) - look out for extra fees. Most cities will refund part of the *youchien* fees to parents, based on income (in your case your income last year from your home country).
- **Shougakko – primary (elementary) school.** Mostly public schools. Children start from 6 years. Choice of school is based on where you live. To enrol, visit city hall who will assign you to your local *shougakko*. While most costs are paid from taxes, parents bear some costs.

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- **Home Schooling.** As there is no legal requirement to go to school for foreigners, some JETs may consider home schooling. Look online for pros and cons.

4. Health

- **Finding a doctor** - Doctors in Japan are specialists. Please be aware that you may need to see more than one doctor for the same ailment (eg. a head cold which has gone to your chest). Yellow pages have a list of city doctors. Your teachers may be able to recommend a doctor and other JETs will know of doctors who speak better English.
- **Medical Costs** – Each member of the family needs a *kenkouhokenshou* (medical insurance) card. These are organised through your supervisor. Visit costs vary from city to city. Note; whilst prescriptions may be free in your area you might have to pay for bottles and packaging.
- Visits to doctors outside of your city may not be covered by health insurance, or you may have to go through a complicated reclaim process. Check with the doctor you plan to visit before you go. Dental treatment is subsidised in the same way as medical costs.

5. Accommodation

- When considering accommodation in Japan, don't compare it to your home country. The accommodation provided for families is usually the equivalent of what a Japanese family of similar income would live in, e.g. three smallish *tatami* rooms, a kitchen/dining area and a separate for shower, toilet and washing machine .
- If you choose to leave your provided accommodation, you may have to pay market rates, for example up to ¥60,000 per month (you get paid around ¥260,000).

6. Where To Get Help:

- **Other JETs with families** - ask your Prefectural Advisor to put you in touch.
- **Your supervisor** –will be able to help with paperwork such as registering family members, getting permission for partners to work and health care cards for family members.
- **Your Japanese Teachers of English** – this is particularly so if they have children of their own. Please be aware that they might live in different cities to you (and so might your supervisor) and the rules regarding medical, schooling and partner's requirements for work etc for their city might be different to yours.
- **Locals** – if you have children, speak to the teachers at your child's school. Often they will know the city well and if not they will be able to put you in touch with someone who can help. Also ask around for someone who speaks English.

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