LOCATION GUIDE

Japan

Command sponsorship, pets, SOFA driving, housing and base notes for mainland Japan and Okinawa.

BOARDING PASS

FROM	TO	START
Your current duty station	Japan	6+ months out

REGIONS	ALLOWANCES
Tokyo area · Misawa · Iwakuni · Sasebo · Okinawa	OHA + COLA

SERIES OCONUS PCS

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

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WELCOME

Japan at a glance

Japan hosts more U.S. forces than any other country overseas. Families live in two very different settings: the Tokyo region and scattered mainland bases, or the subtropical island of Okinawa.

INSTALLATION	AREA	MAIN SERVICES	NOTES
Yokota Air Base	Western Tokyo	Air Force, joint	USFJ HQ; Patriot Express hub
Fleet Activities Yokosuka	Kanagawa	Navy	7th Fleet; U.S. Naval Hospital
Camp Zama / NAF Atsugi	Kanagawa	Army, Navy	U.S. Army Japan; Navy helicopters
Misawa Air Base	Aomori, northern Honshu	Air Force, Navy	Snowy winters
MCAS Iwakuni	Yamaguchi	Marines, Navy	Includes Navy Carrier Air Wing 5
Fleet Activities Sasebo	Nagasaki, Kyushu	Navy	Amphibious ships; small community
Okinawa bases	Okinawa	All services	Kadena, Camp Foster and more

Five things that work differently here

1

Command sponsorship

Families need it to come on government orders.

2

OHA + COLA

Overseas allowances replace BAH; many bases put you on base first.

3

SOFA license

Everyone who drives needs a USFJ license after a course and test.

4

180-day pet rule

Japan's pet import process takes about six months.

5

Left-side driving

Narrow roads, tolls and zero tolerance for drinking and driving.

Start six months out

Screening, passports and pet paperwork set the pace of the whole move.

COUNTDOWN

Command sponsorship and timeline

Families need command sponsorship to travel on orders, which means overseas screening for everyone. Start the pet process and passports the week orders arrive.

As soon as you have orders 6+ MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Request command sponsorship for your family
- [ ] Apply for no-fee passports (and tourist passports for leave travel)
- [ ] Request a sponsor from your gaining unit
- [ ] Start overseas or EFMP screening for every family member
- [ ] Start pet microchip, vaccines and blood test
- [ ] Ask your sponsor about on-base-first housing rules

Book the move 90–120 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Book Patriot Express or commercial travel through the travel office
- [ ] Split household goods: express, main and storage
- [ ] Gather school, medical and IEP/504 records
- [ ] Request pet spaces as soon as they open
- [ ] Decide whether to sell or store your car

Final prep 30 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Confirm lodging (TLA) and sponsor pickup
- [ ] Bring a few months of prescriptions
- [ ] Carry passports, orders and pet papers together
- [ ] Order yen or a travel card for the first week

Base policies vary

Some bases, like Yokota, require newcomers to live on base first. Others allow off-base living with OHA. Ask your sponsor early — it changes your whole plan.

FOUR-LEGGED FAMILY

Bringing pets to Japan

Japan is rabies-free and its import rules take about six months. Pets that arrive before the 180-day wait ends must finish it in quarantine.

Four steps, in this order

1

Microchip

ISO 15-digit; implanted before the first rabies shot.

FIRST

2

Two rabies shots

At least 30 days apart; chip number on both certificates.

6–7 MONTHS OUT

3

FAVN blood test

Result of 0.5 IU/ml or higher at an approved lab.

STARTS THE 180 DAYS

4

Health certificate

From a military or USDA-endorsed vet.

WITHIN 10 DAYS

The 180 days count from the day the blood is drawn. Advance notice to Japan's Animal Quarantine Service is required for commercial arrivals. Source: MCIPAC pet travel guidance; Japan AQS.

Military-specific rules

- Pit bull breeds, Rottweilers, Dobermans, Chows and wolf hybrids can't come to bases in Japan
- Pet travel costs may be reimbursed up to $2,000 for one pet
- On Okinawa, SOFA families in on-base housing may finish quarantine at home with VETAC approval
- Patriot Express allows up to two pets per family on PCS orders, first come, first served
- Arriving early? The rest of the wait is spent at a quarantine facility or approved kennel
- Register your pet with the base veterinary clinic right after arrival

Start the week you get orders

Six months of waiting plus vet and lab time is longer than many report dates allow. If the timing is tight, ask the base vet clinic about approved kennels before you fly.

ON THE ROAD

SOFA license, cars and driving

Most families buy a used car in Japan rather than ship one. American cars must meet strict Japanese standards and can be hard to drive on narrow roads.

Getting your license

1

Take the course

A driver's safety course, usually about four hours, run by the base safety office.

2

Pass the test

A written test on Japanese road rules and signs. Bring your valid U.S. license.

3

Get Form 4EJ

The USFJ Form 4EJ is the SOFA license. Spouses who drive need one too.

Buying and owning a car

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
Where to buy	Base "lemon lots," departing families and off-base dealers that serve SOFA buyers
Price	Used cars commonly run about $500–$3,000
JCI insurance	Japanese Compulsory Insurance is required; add personal property damage coverage
Shaken inspection	Japan's vehicle inspection, usually every two years — check the expiration date before you buy
Road tax	Paid every spring; small "kei" cars cost less
Registration	Register with base pass and registration quickly after buying

Rules of the road

- Drive on the left; the steering wheel is on the right
- Toll roads are fast but pricey; an ETC card makes them easier
- Japan's drinking-and-driving limit is very low, and passengers can be charged too
- Report every accident to base police right away

WHERE TO LIVE

Housing, OHA and allowances

Overseas allowances replace BAH in Japan. Where you live depends on your base's policy, your rank and what's available when you arrive.

1

OHA

Covers rent off base, up to a limit, plus a utility and maintenance amount.

2

COLA

Paid to command-sponsored members to offset local prices.

3

MIHA and TLA

Move-In Housing Allowance helps with off-base setup; TLA covers lodging while you wait.

Double-check your rates — OHA and COLA change often.
OHA: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Overseas-Housing-Allowance/OHA-Rate-Lookup/
Overseas COLA: travel.dod.mil/allowances/overseas-cost-of-living-allowance/overseas-cola-rate-lookup/

On base first CHECK YOUR BASE

- Yokota and several other bases place newly arriving families on base first
- Pet-friendly homes may have a longer wait
- Turning down an offered home for a preference can end your TLA
- Okinawa family housing for all services is managed through the Kadena housing office

Living off base IF APPROVED

- Use only housing-office-approved rental agencies
- Rents may require "key money" and agency fees — ask what MIHA covers
- Japanese homes are smaller, with limited closets and often no central heating
- Learn the trash sorting rules for your neighborhood on day one

Okinawa OHA update

Okinawa OHA rates increased in May 2026 for off-base renters across all services. Check the DoD OHA calculator for your current rate before you sign a lease.

KIDS

Schools and child care

DoDEA runs schools on or near most U.S. bases in Japan, so command-sponsored kids usually attend an American school with an American calendar.

AREA	SCHOOLS
Tokyo region	DoDEA schools at Yokota, Yokosuka, Camp Zama and Atsugi
Misawa, Iwakuni, Sasebo	DoDEA elementary through high school on or near base
Okinawa	Several DoDEA elementary, middle and high schools across Kadena, Foster, Kinser and Courtney
Other options	Japanese public schools or international schools, at your own expense

Command sponsorship matters

DoDEA enrollment and many services depend on it.

Military Interstate Compact

DoDEA follows it for records, placement and graduation rules.

School Liaison Officers

Every installation has one for enrollment and IEP transitions.

Child care

- Request on-base Child Development Center care through MilitaryChildCare.com as soon as you have orders
- Youth centers and teen programs run on most bases
- Family Child Care homes on base fill many gaps
- Off-base Japanese preschools are an option many families enjoy

Bring complete records

DoDEA needs shot records, transcripts and any IEP or 504 plan at enrollment. Hand-carry them; don't pack them in household goods.

HEALTH CARE

Medical and dental

Japan is in the TRICARE Overseas Program. U.S. military hospitals sit at Yokosuka and on Okinawa; other bases have clinics that refer to Japanese hospitals when needed.

1

Military hospitals

U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka and U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa offer the widest range of care.

2

Base clinics

Yokota, Zama, Atsugi, Misawa, Iwakuni and Sasebo have clinics. Specialty care may be off base.

Before you go

- Complete overseas screening for every family member
- Some U.S. medicines, including certain ADHD and allergy drugs, are restricted in Japan — check before you fly
- Ask how specialty care for EFMP needs works at your base
- Bring a 90-day supply of prescriptions in original bottles
- Get copies of medical, dental and shot records
- Plan for Japanese hospitals to ask for payment up front

Good to know

TOPIC	DETAIL
TRICARE Overseas	Enroll at your base; off-base care usually needs a referral
Dental	Active duty uses base dental clinics; families use the TRICARE Dental Program overseas
Emergencies off base	Dial 119 for ambulance and fire, 110 for police
Language	Many Japanese hospitals have limited English — bases often have interpreter or liaison help

DAILY LIFE

Money, phones and daily life

Japan is safe, clean and efficient, but some everyday tasks work differently. Your first two weeks will go smoother if you know these.

Cash still matters

Cards are more common now, but many small shops and festivals are cash only.

ATMs

Convenience-store and post office ATMs usually accept U.S. cards.

Electricity

Outlets look like U.S. ones but run at 100 volts. Most small electronics work fine.

Everyday details

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
Phones	Base providers sell easy plans; Japanese carriers are cheaper but need more paperwork
Mail	You'll have a U.S. military mailing address (FPO or APO)
Banking	On-base banks and credit unions handle yen and dollar accounts
Transit	Trains are excellent; an IC card (Suica or PASMO) works on trains, buses and shops
Trash	Sort strictly by type and put it out only on the right days
Time zone	13–14 hours ahead of the U.S. East Coast; no daylight saving time

Download the apps

A translation app with camera mode, a train route app and Google Maps make the first months much easier, especially off base.

LIVING IN JAPAN

Culture, safety and the NEO go-bag

Local customs

- Take shoes off in homes and some restaurants and clinics
- Keep your voice low on trains and in public places
- Don't tip; it can confuse or offend
- Avoid eating while walking down the street
- Bow slightly as a greeting; a smile and "arigatou" go a long way

Safety

- Earthquakes happen often; learn drop, cover and hold on
- Typhoon season runs roughly June to November, especially on Okinawa
- Follow your base's typhoon readiness levels (TCCOR) and alerts
- Know your tsunami evacuation route if you live near the coast
- Follow the current USFJ liberty and conduct policies

NEO go-bag KEEP IT PACKED

- [ ] Passports, orders and ID cards for everyone
- [ ] Medications for at least a week
- [ ] Water, snacks and a flashlight
- [ ] Pet carrier, food and records
- [ ] Copies of birth and marriage certificates
- [ ] Cash in yen and dollars
- [ ] Phone chargers and a battery pack
- [ ] A change of clothes for each person

NEO is part of overseas life

Command-sponsored families take part in noncombatant evacuation planning. Keep your NEO packet current and update it whenever your family changes.

BASE NOTES · KANTO PLAIN

Tokyo region bases

Yokota Air Base AIR FORCE · USFJ HQ

- In western Tokyo near Fussa; home of U.S. Forces Japan headquarters and the 374th Airlift Wing
- Patriot Express and space-available flights leave from here
- On-base-first housing policy for most newcomers
- Trains reach central Tokyo in about an hour

HOUSING OFFICE | A&FRC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

Fleet Activities Yokosuka NAVY · 7TH FLEET

- Home of the U.S. 7th Fleet and a forward-deployed carrier
- Housing on base and at Ikego, plus approved off-base rentals
- U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka is on base
- Busy port city about an hour south of Tokyo

HOUSING OFFICE | FFSC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

Camp Zama and NAF Atsugi ARMY · NAVY

- Camp Zama hosts U.S. Army Japan; families often live at the nearby Sagamihara housing area
- Both are about 90 minutes from Tokyo by train
- NAF Atsugi hosts Navy helicopter squadrons and shares the Kanagawa community
- Clinics on both; hospital care at Yokosuka or local hospitals

HOUSING OFFICE | ACS / FFSC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

BASE NOTES · MAINLAND

Misawa, Iwakuni and Sasebo

Misawa Air Base AIR FORCE · NAVY · AOMORI

- In northern Honshu; home of the 35th Fighter Wing and Navy units
- Strong community feel; lots of skiing, onsen and seafood nearby
- Heavy snow in winter — winter tires and a good coat are a must
- Patriot Express stops here

HOUSING OFFICE | A&FRC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

MCAS Iwakuni MARINES · NAVY · YAMAGUCHI

- Marine air station that also hosts Navy Carrier Air Wing 5
- Hiroshima is under an hour away by train
- Housing on base and at the Atago Hills area nearby
- Patriot Express stops here

HOUSING OFFICE | MCFTB / FFSC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

Fleet Activities Sasebo NAVY · NAGASAKI

- Home of forward-deployed amphibious ships on Kyushu
- Fukuoka is the nearest big city and airport hub
- Small, close-knit community; housing on base and at Hario Village
- Clinic on base; hospital care at Japanese hospitals or Okinawa

HOUSING OFFICE | FFSC | LODGING | CLINIC

BASE NOTES · OKINAWA

Okinawa

Okinawa is a subtropical island where every service is present. One joint family housing office at Kadena manages housing for all services.

Kadena Air Base AIR FORCE

- The largest U.S. Air Force base in the Pacific, home of the 18th Wing
- Kadena Housing Office manages family housing for all services
- Patriot Express hub for Okinawa
- Karing Kennel is an approved quarantine kennel for pets

HOUSING OFFICE | A&FRC | LODGING | VET CLINIC

Camp Foster and Marine camps MARINES · NAVY

- Camp Foster hosts Marine Corps Installations Pacific; U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa is nearby
- Northern camps mean longer drives to shopping and the hospital
- Camps Kinser, Courtney, Hansen and Schwab, plus MCAS Futenma, spread up the island
- Typhoon season shapes daily life from summer into fall

HOUSING OFFICE | MCFTB | LODGING | VET CLINIC

Torii Station and White Beach ARMY · NAVY

- Torii Station is the Army's home on Okinawa, on the west coast
- Both rely on the joint services across the island
- White Beach Naval Facility supports Navy ships on the east coast
- Beaches and snorkeling are minutes away — learn ocean safety

HOUSING OFFICE | ACS / FFSC | LODGING | CLINIC

OKINAWA ADD-ON

Living on Okinawa

Okinawa runs on its own rhythm: island traffic, typhoon conditions and a tight rental market every summer. Use this page with the base notes before it.

Housing on and off base START AT THE KADENA HOUSING OFFICE

- Most members must live on base if housing is available
- Agency fees run about half a month's rent, plus deposit and first month
- Living off base takes an Exception to Policy and a housing briefing
- June to September is peak season — American-style rentals go fast

AREA	NEAR	WHAT TO EXPECT
Chatan / Sunabe Seawall	Kadena, Foster	Walkable, shops and food; small units
Kitanakagusuku / Ginowan	Foster, Lester, Futenma	Central location; hillside homes
Yomitan	Kadena, Torii	Bigger homes, lower rents
Okinawa City / Uruma	Kadena, Courtney, McTureous	Local feel; good for east-side camps

Typhoon conditions (TCCOR) KNOW THE LEVELS

LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS
TCCOR 4 → 1	50-knot winds possible within 72, 48, 24 and then 12 hours. Stock up by TCCOR 3.
1-Caution	Strong winds; stay close to home and finish prep
1-Emergency	Destructive winds — everyone stays indoors
1-Recovery / All Clear	Crews check damage first; wait for All Clear to go out

Island weekends

DESTINATION	DRIVE	WHY GO
Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium	~1.25 hr north	Whale sharks and Emerald Beach
Kerama Islands	Ferry from Naha	Some of the best snorkeling in Japan

KEEP THIS HANDY

Contacts and links

Base numbers in Japan change often and use DSN or Japanese formats. Write in your own from your sponsor and welcome packet.

OFFICE	DSN	FROM A CELL
Sponsor		
Housing office		
Lodging		
Family readiness center		
Clinic or hospital		
Vet clinic		

NUMBER	USE
119	Ambulance and fire off base
110	Police off base
DSN 315-966-7593	Okinawa Veterinary Activity (pet questions)

Links

U.S. Forces Japan · Japan Animal Quarantine Service · DoDEA Pacific · OHA Rate Lookup · Overseas COLA Rate Lookup · Plan My Move

Sources: MCIPAC pet travel guidance; U.S. Army Garrison Japan driving and registration page; Yokota housing entitlements; Stars and Stripes (May 2026); PetRelocation.

READY FOR THE FULL PLAYBOOK?

Go step by step with the kits.

Worksheets, trackers and a complete binder setup for every stage of your move.

pcslikeapro.org
hello@pcslikeapro.org

WORKSHEET

Pet tracker and budget

Pet import tracker

STEP	DATE DONE	PET 1	PET 2
Microchip number			
Rabies vaccine #1			
Rabies vaccine #2			
FAVN blood draw			
180 days ends			
Advance notice sent			
Health certificate			
Flight booked			

Monthly budget

ITEM	AMOUNT
OHA + utility allowance + COLA	$
Rent (if off base)	$
Utilities	$
Car, JCI and road tax	$
Left over	$