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Customised Travel Specialists

**The Trip of a Lifetime on Planet Rugby.**



## KILLESTER TRAVEL

### IRISH RUGBY SUMMER TOUR – JAPAN REPORT

I have just returned from our 10 nights trip to Japan to follow the Irish Rugby team and to learn about this fascinating country which will host the Rugby World Cup in 2019.

It proved to be an excellent opportunity to experience one of the most mind-blowing destinations you will ever visit.

I have no doubt that Japan will be an excellent host for the World Cup. Having never visited the country I wanted to find out certain things that will determine any tours success. In short these are:

1. **Accessibility – Airlines, Flight routing and times. Visas**
2. **Hotels - standard, value, location, rooms and services**
3. **Infrastructure – Public transport (subway), internal flights and Shinkansen (Bullet Train services)**
4. **Stadiums – Location, accessibility, viewing and amenities**
5. **Food , drink and currency – restaurant etiquette , beer and food types , bars locations and acquiring the local currency the Yen . Tipping Culture**
6. **Night life – early to late there is no shortage of night life**
7. **Things to do and Places to see – excursions to experience the amazing ancient and not so ancient Japanese Culture. Places of outstanding natural beauty**
8. **The Japanese People: To meet and talk with the local people to see how they live and understand what they want and expect from international tourists and their knowledge of rugby!**
9. **Killester Travel Proposed RWC 2019 packages and estimate costings.**
10. **Pre RWC 2019 Tour information events**



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### 1. Accessibility –

Japan is very well connected by International flights

Finnair – Our recent group flew with Finnair and they happen to have the shortest flying time. Dublin to Helsinki 3 hrs and Helsinki to Tokyo just over 9 Hours. From next year for the Long haul stage Finnair will operate an A350 with very comfortable economy class seating , premium economy and business class. Other Airlines include

Emirates – Dublin to Dubai to Tokyo

Etihad – Dublin to Abu Dhabi to Tokyo

JAL Japanese Airlines – (use services of Finnair from Dublin) or Dublin London Tokyo

BA – Dublin to Tokyo via London

KLM – Dublin to Tokyo via Amsterdam

Lufthansa and Nippon Airways – Dublin to Tokyo via Frankfurt (v high standard but more expensive)

Turkish Airlines – Dublin to Narita via Istanbul

Cathay Pacific Dublin to Hong Kong direct then onwards to Tokyo

We are in contact with all the airlines and to get best rates for groups and individuals.

NOTE: Pre authorised Visas are not required as holiday visas are processed on arrival in Japan.

### 2. Hotels –

Hotels in general do tend to be a little on the expensive side. They aren't classified by Star rating but rather by price and we will have inspected all hotels we will be using for RWC



*New Otani Hotel Tokyo*

2019. Breakfast buffets are very good with both American Buffet and Local Asian style food. Breakfasts are generally served from 0700 -1100. All hotels are very close to the transportation systems and in good locations as night life bars and restaurants are

never too far away. Drink and food are expensive in Hotels so try not and to have more than just a night cap.! If you are a smoker - most hotels do have at least one floor designated to smokers. Some of the larger hotels in the major cities incorporate a shopping Mall with bars and restaurants and link underground to other hotels and train stations. Most hotels are high rise so if you don't like heights please remember to tell us so we can request lowest available rooms etc. As well as locally owned Hotel properties nearly all the big international brands are in Japan i.e. Hyatt , Hilton , Marriott, Conrad , Intercontinental. Interestingly there are other hotels classified as "Love Hotels" rooms are rented by the hour mainly to facilitate all the single people still living at homes with parents. We will be leaving these hotels to the locals however one of our group remarked that an hour was quite long for an Irishman and would they do a 15 minutes rate!!



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In Summary – Hotels in Japan (especially Tokyo) are generally quite big and are well serviced. Staff at reception do have the basic Hotel English and are all very very helpful. Wifi is generally free of charge.

### 3. Infrastructure -

It is safe to say that Japan has probably the best transport infrastructure in the World (public transport, Roads, trains – internal and international flights (140 Airports – 5 are International) . As it is a land made up of mountains and islands they have many spectacular bridges and tunnels. The Dublin Port tunnel main contractor was a Japanese British and Irish consortium. All this makes planning journeys easier so that travel times tend to be a lot more accurate than in other countries. The country has an excellent health service and due to this and lifestyle/diets Japanese people have the longest life expectancy in the world. We do advise medical insurance for all clients travelling to Japan. As an example on our recent trip one of the group had to visit the dentist and for a consultation, x-ray and filling the bill came to €70 which is not bad at all .



*Bullet Train passing Mt Fuji – from Kyoto to Tokyo route*



*Typical Tokyo Architecture – Tokyo bay*



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## 4. Stadiums –

During the RWC Japan will have 12 proposed stadiums throughout the country \_ see below



I visited the Shizuoka, Yokohama and Tokyo stadiums in June following the Irish team. The stadiums are quite representative of the stadium styles in Japan in that they tend to be multi-functional. In most cases there is a running track around the pitch. Access to all stadia is very good with parking and local train stations near-by. RWC will have the usual RWC supporter villages set up at each venue to add to the atmosphere and food and drink services. The Final of the RWC will be played in the biggest stadium in Yokohama with just over 72,000 seats.



Tokyo Stadium 2<sup>nd</sup>



Japanese Trad Irish Music Shizuoka Stadium



## 5. Food Drink and Money –

Contrary to comments in the press and other preconceptions we found food and drink to be quite reasonable especially when you have local knowledge. Of course if you eat and drink in hotel feature bars and restaurants it will be very expensive.

Food Types that you have probably heard of include:



Soba Noodle bar

**Sushi** – This comes in several formats but generally includes rice, vegetables raw or cooked fish.

**Yakatori** – This is a great fun way to eat food and is literally translated as “grilled chicken”. It come on skewers and you can order different meats and vegetables grilled over the BBQ.

**Tempura** – Mainly deep fried fish and vegetable in a very light batter.

**Ramen** – a really famous dish in Japan and inexpensive. It is a wheat noodle in broth with meat and vegetable and makes a great lunch. The thin buckwheat noodle version is called Soba. These small restaurants are the fast food business of Japan, Don't forget to “slurp” loudly as its expected!

**Sashimi** – Raw sliced fish or meat

**Kaiseki** – A very traditional multi course (8-15 courses!) Japanese meal and to really savour Japanese food culture it's a must.

**Isakaya** – This is a tapas style of food you will find in bars – Fish and meat courses.



Japanese BBQ

**Value Meals with drinks:** In Japan many restaurants they have a set menu deal called Nomihoudai – translated means all you can drink. The time limit is usually 2 hours. Ideal for groups of 4 or more but can be ordered by couples also. For our group this June we did this 3 or 4 times and worked out very well

There are also restaurants that specialise in Beef and one to try out is a style called Shabu Shabu beef – The beef is served to you raw in thin slices which you dip into a simmering broth in front of you to cook. It cooks in seconds and is excellent and after you have cooked the meat and vegetable you have the broth with noodles. You may also have heard of Kobe or Wagyu beef these are a speciality of Japan but beware they tend to be very expensive dishes.



In summary you can certainly eat in Japan within a reasonable budget and varied menus. If your knees aren't the most flexible some restaurants have clients sitting on Tatami mats with a low table – this can be quite challenging but great fun!



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In bars a pint of beer works out on average between €7-8.50 . In Stand bars (with stools) and snack food beer prices can be quite reasonable half litre 650 yen approx €5. The key is to look out for Happy Hour deals.

There is **NO TIPPING** in Japan in bars and restaurants.

Local Currency is YEN – Exchange rate is approx. 1€ = 125 yen . ATMS are everywhere but do charge for withdrawals and rate can be poor. So advise would be to bring some currency with but pay as much as you can by Credit card.



*In Ireland we have several Japanese Restaurants and if you want to try one and get an authentic experience try YAMAMORI restaurant in Dublin. Ormonde Quay or South Great Georges St ph: 01 6458001*

## 6. Night Life

In Tokyo there is no shortage of night life and area well known are Shibuya, Shinjuku, Roppongi and Ginza. All of these areas have very vibrant night life and plenty of late bars and nightclubs. Look out for the Tiny Hole in Wall bars – the most famous area is Golden Gai (a must visit in Shinjuku) . Most bars have between 5 and 20 seats! Outside of Tokyo night life is not so hectic Osaka is well known for night life but Kyoto for example has a much quieter offering so more relaxed. A good guide to Tokyo nightlife is <http://boutiquejapan.com/tokyo-nightlife-guide/> . We will update you with more information when we know exactly where we are going to be based.



Night Lights Tokyo





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## 7. Things to do and see - Excursions

After the rugby what you do and see in Japan will provide lasting memories for you so is a very important part of your trip. Obviously experiencing Japanese Culture is a major part of any trip as it is so different to what we have in Ireland.

Our packages will include some excursion/activities and we will also offer a wide range of extra excursions for you to choose from.

Hiroshima Memorial and Museum

Kyoto – main area for Shinto Shrines and Buddhist Temples in Japan – visit KinKaku (Golden Pavillion) , Fushimi Inari Shrine , Sanjusangen-do Temple (100 Buddhist Statues – quite amazing take a moment to light a candle in private thought or prayer) , Nijo-Jo Castle home off last Shogun , Sangano Bamboo forest followed by a boat trip down the gorge. There are many many more sights in Kyoto

Osaka City Tour including castle

Nara Cultural Tour

Onsen – (Hot Springs) – Bath and relax a real Japanese custom (not to be missed)

Geisha Dance and Show

Green tea ceremony

Tokyo City Tour

Museums - Future Museum: National Museum; Samurai Museum

Robot Cabaret Show – Tokyo Kabukicho's

Baseball game - Tokyo

Scuba diving and snorkelling in Okinawa

WW 2 memorial sites Okinawa Island

Sumo Training camp – all year round but Sumo tournaments only May June and September

Tokyo Fish market

Boat cruise Tokyo Bay

Mount Fuji and lake Ashi Cruise – Hakone area

Tokyo skytree Tower

Toyota Factory visit

Tokyo Disneyland

Overnight stay in a traditional Ryoken – Sleep on Tatami floors or Futon beds



*Golden palace - Kyoto*



*Quirky Japanese spray job!*



*Shinto Shrine - Kyoto*



*Bamboo Forest -Sangano*



*Sumo Wrestling show*



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## 8. The Japanese people -

A major highlight of any tour is always meeting the locals and this will be no different in Japan for the World Cup. The Japanese people are very helpful once they get past a little shyness of westerners. They nearly all study English in school so do have a few of the basics but as always it's really important that as visitors we try and speak even a little bit of their language – We will be providing a quick guide to the key phrases. !

Most Japanese families only have 1 child so the population is expected to drop dramatically over the next 20 years. The Japanese have a wonderful respect for the elderly and their wisdom. The Japanese religion is Buddhist or Shinto or a combination of both. They are a very disciplined people and the crime rate is very low compared to other developed countries.



*Cute Modern Japaesen fashion*



*The Busiest Crossroads in the World - Shibuya Tokyo*



*The Kimono is back in fashion!*



*Exercise is a must for all ages!*





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## 9. RUGBY WORLD CUP PROPOSED PACKAGES

We will not know until November 2017 the exact details of Irelands schedule:

As regards probable package durations we will most likely have the following

Our set packages will almost certainly be the following: (Dates depart and arrive back in Ireland)

1. 4 match - Last 3 Pools and Quarter – 26 Sept to 21 Oct
2. 4 match - Last 2 Pools and Quarter and Semi – 03 Oct to 28 Oct
3. 3 match – last 2 Pools and Quarter 03 Oct to 21 Oct
4. 3 match – Last Pool and Quarter and Semi 10 Oct to 28 Oct
5. 2 match – last Pool game and Quarter Final – 10 Oct to 21 Oct
6. 2 match – Quarter and Semi Final – 16 Oct to 28 Oct
7. We will also be doing tailor made packages to suit your specific request.

Package Cost – As we are in negotiations with airlines and hotels it is a little early for us to have prices. We will have a good idea in the next few months as costings are received.

PLEASE ADVISE WHAT PACKAGE ABOVE YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MOST – EMAIL US ON [rugby@killestertravel.com](mailto:rugby@killestertravel.com)

We will also be doing tailor made packages

If you are interested in setting up payment plans for RWC Japan 2019 please let us know and we can tailor it to your circumstances

## 10. RWC 2019 INFORMATION EVENTS

We will be running a few information events to give you more information on RWC Japan its food, culture and traditions.

These events will be in November and February – We will contact you with further details shortly. If you would like to attend please email us on [rugby@killestertravel.com](mailto:rugby@killestertravel.com)

Looking forward to seeing you in Japan

Paddy Baird

Managing Director

Killester Travel Group



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