

A Gazetteer of 21st Century Japan



Nippon – The Hard Facts

Japan, also known as Nippon, lies in Eastern Asia between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, east of the Korean Peninsula (co-ordinates: 36 00 N, 138 00 E). It covers a total of 377,835 square miles with a coastline of 29,751 kilometres, making it slightly smaller than the US state of California. The climate varies from tropical in the south to cool-temperate in the north. The terrain itself is rocky and mountainous with many dormant and active volcanoes, causing around 1500 seismic occurrences a year. The environment, as most of the world, is heavily polluted and has been since the end of the 20th century.

Japan was founded in 660BC by Emperor Jimmu, the Japanese are still ruled by a constitutional monarchy – an hereditary Emperor supported by a Prime Minister and Cabinet - and a legal system, at the head of which is a Supreme Court, modelled on the European civil law system, with heavy English (until recently of course) and American influence. The current head of state is Emperor Akihito II, who has been in power since his father died in 2008. The Prime Minister is Yoshiro Obuchi.

The Japanese are famous for their fanatical work ethic and their mastery of high technology, but over the years, there has been a strong emergence of youth culture microcosms which are beginning to erode this and drag Japan back to a feudal state. The only thing preventing this from happening completely are the huge Zaibatsu corporate families that control the economic, and to a large degree, political power of this tiny but powerful country. Despite the problems that have faced Japan's socio-economic identity and success, there is still less than 1% of the population sitting below the poverty line, with an unemployment rate of 5.5%. This is largely due to the surviving excellence of the country's educational system and the constant development and innovation of new technology and heavy industries.

Names and Dates

Japanese dates are measured from the start of an Emperors reign. For example, 2035 is the 27th year of the reign of Emperor Akihito II, so it is Akihito II 27.

As is the case in many areas of the Pacific Rim, peoples names are in reverse order with the family name first and the given name second. The exception to this is for a Japanese person who has been born and raised in a western country.

Nippon – A Rough Guide

That's the facts. Now let me tell you about the country itself. I have been here before, whilst I was at University back in England, and I love the place. It is a utopia for an entrepreneur such as myself, black market goods: cyberware, electronica and new technology of all sorts, contraband: cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, nightlife, deviant sexual practices – you name it, you can get it in as many colours, sizes and tastes as you want.

Before you say, hell yeah and buy a ticket, there are a few things that you should know about Japan. It is not entirely the hedonistic dream that I have made it out to be – although, if you know where not to go, it can be. The downside includes powerful corporations, dangerous and organised criminal organisations and ferocious street gangs. If that doesn't put you off then read on, and enjoy the scenery.

Politics

Japanese Labour Party

A strong contender and currently the majority holder out of the runners up. They have strong economic and foreign policy and a huge following from the Japanese working classes. They were in power at the time of, and the driving force behind the second Fujisan Ecological Summit of 2022.

Japanese Conservative Party

Currently in power, the Conservative party want Japan for the Japanese. They are currently restricting the amount of imports that are allowed into the country to just that which cannot be produced domestically. This has pushed prices of western goods through the roof and has increased the amount of black market goods to be smuggled in. They look as though they may lose the next election, although they have a great deal of corporation support.

Japanese Communist Party

An alternative for the anti-establishment voters of Japan. Both of them. A favourite amongst students and old anarchists who, for some reason, still believe that communism can work – despite all of the historical evidence to the contrary.

New Japan Reformist Club

An ultra-right wing Japanese nationalist party that some believe to be a front for the Yakuza. They seek to restore the halcyon days of Japan as an Imperial force, feared throughout the far east.

Japanese Liberal Co-Operative Party

A party of free thinking liberals who wish to emancipate Japan from it's stuffy traditional ways and to fully embrace the modern philosophies of the west. It is for this very reason that they will never get elected. A minor force in Japanese politics whom most pundits think of as a bit of a joke. They do, however, have some very viable environmental policies.

Japanese Economic Independence

Japan is probably, the most economically independent country in the world. Free of any firm political or economic union with other countries, Japan has persistently refused invitations from the UES and APEX, displeasing the former and it's member countries, and coming to blows with the latter. Despite this, Japan is a fearsome competitor in the global market with no individual country close to it's equal. Much of Japan's independence stems from the Nipponese arrogant disbelief of the capabilities of all other countries and races. Their fears were confirmed in the global food and fuel crises of 2010 and 2011 and the catastrophic collapse of the American economy. The single factor in keeping them in a position to retain this independence is their industry. Having been industrially castrated at the end of the 1940's by the US, the Japanese furious industriousness has sat them in good stead. Their reputation for new technology has stood the test of time, and their early interest in Grey Matter™ and the W-HEX energy technology, as well as their global supremacy with the Matrix software domination places them at the top of the international economic food chain. In a world of co-operatives, economic unions and transnational corporations, Japan has proved the power of the Zaibatsu and prevailed on it's own.

The Corporations

Corporations in Japan are little more than extended families, with each subsidiary company supplying or manufacturing for another company within the Zaibatsu. In Japan, the economy is controlled by the Zaibatsu's, regardless of what the government would have you believe, this is the case, harking back to

the merchant city states of renaissance Europe. The corporations in Japan are above the law. They have internal police forces that investigate anything that occurs within company property and their own armies that protect their interests regardless of the cost. These armies are well trained and well equipped, and on occasion, have gone to war with the armies of other corporations. If you cross a corporation, you can expect a swift retribution. If this takes place in Japan, then you have no legal recourse available to you (assuming you survive).

Zaibatsu

Historically, the Zaibatsu emerged from the changes of the Meiji restoration when power was taken away from the Shogun and Samurai and given over to the Emperor and the merchants. The Zaibatsu system was disbanded by the Americans at the end of the second world war – so the Japanese will tell you that Zaibatsu no longer exists. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Zaibatsu system was perpetuated and kept alive by the concept of Keiretsu through informal alliances (which are explained below). The traditional definition of Zaibatsu depends on two factors:

Family: A Zaibatsu is a family that controls many companies. By family, I don't necessarily mean blood relatives. In Japan, if a person is superior in ability, he or she can be adopted into a powerful family.

Keiretsu: A system where all aspects of a business are owned by the same Zaibatsu. For example, most Zaibatsu own a bank, revenue is generated by the bank through the debts that the bank holds. All companies owned by a Zaibatsu would use the same bank. In a practical example, to make cars, a Zaibatsu would import the raw materials, sell them to steel companies owned by the Zaibatsu, who would produce sheet steel and sell that to the Zaibatsu owned auto company who would in turn, produce cars for sale through Zaibatsu car dealerships or exporters. All capital for this would be obtained from the aforementioned bank. And so it goes on, in perpetuity. In short, a Zaibatsu works exactly like a country does.

Gohan

The Gohan Corporation is a relatively new face in Japanese business. Affiliated with no zaibatsu, Gohan is a very Western entity sat in the centre of the home of the zaibatsu, Osaka, in a custom-built industrial facility. Gohan's meteoric rise has been utterly dependent on their timely move from conventional soy-based food products into the new, universal algae foodstuff – Grey Matter™.

With substantial interests in Australasia, Gohan were a huge farming conglomerate, making use of farming Australia's natural animal population – kangaroo's and ostriches – as a substitute for traditional cattle, sheep and pig herds as a source of protein rich, natural meat. From this, Gohan moved into soy crops until the discovery, and subsequent 2013 release, of a genetically modified algae, rich in protein, minerals and vitamins that could be treated to simulate most known foodstuffs. As a cheap and easy solution to global hunger, shares in Gohan went through the roof – not only had they found a solution to an international crisis, but they also provided a substantial source of employment to the north-west coast of Australia, leading to a boom in the cities of Broome, Perth and Darwin.

Licences to process the Grey Matter algae are soon sold on to food manufacturers throughout the third world, as well as a substantial amount of the fast food manufacturers throughout the rest of the world. Everyone starts eating Grey Matter.

Chikara

Following the discovery of the water hydrogen extraction process in the early twenties, hydro-industrial giant Chikara quickly invested in the process, ensuring themselves a place in the global economy as major power-players. Japan's involvement in India against APEX had a great deal to do with Chikara's involvement. Chikara realised the potential of this new technology early on when, it is rumoured, Chikara paid huge sums of money to technicians working on the W-HEX project to leak information to them. This information was taken to the Japanese government who, together with Chikara's board of directors, started to produce a plan for the interception and purchase of this technology before any Western interest could react.

As soon as the breakthrough was announced, and APEX intervention took place, Japan wasted no time in moving in a substantial defence force and creating a stalemate with the APEX forces. This standoff allowed time for Chikara and the Nipponese Minister for Industry to move in and negotiate the almost exclusive rights to W-HEX technology out from under the noses of the Western alliance.

Black Sun/Shirow Systems

Domination of the global information and communications infrastructure has also fallen into the hands of the Japanese with the advent of version two-point-zero of the matrix™ software.

Following the problems of the first version of this full-immersive operating system and communications application, there was a great deal of scepticism leading up to the introduction of it's successor. The actual release saw media hype, rave reviews and subsequent low sales. The problems was, initially, that there appeared to be glaring inconsistencies in the performance of the security aspects of the software, and as a result, businesses, as well as the general public, were reluctant to trust it with credit transactions. Black Sun, and the subsidiary responsible for the product, Shirow Systems suffered initially as a result of this, but due to a well implemented financial strategy, were able to overcome this lean period and generate good publicity through excellent marketing and, subsequent consumer confidence. Based in the Kansai Science Centre outside of Kyoto, Matrix 2 is produced, supported and marketed from Shirow's facility and is now the world standard in information systems technology, ensuring Shirow and Black Sun a place in the life of everyone that owns or uses any sort of computer technology for the foreseeable future.

Mitsushiro

Heavy industries (automobiles, shipping and aerospace). Mitsushiro build airliners, ships and LEO shuttles, which probably means that if you have travelled any great distance in the world, then you have probably done it with the help of Mitsushiro at one point or another. Mitsushiro are an old Japan corporation. They have been building ships since the second world war and are getting bigger by the year.

Sony-Kendachi

Consumer electronics and micro-electronics, entertainment media and cyberware. Before the merger between Sony and the cybernetics giant, Kendachi had bought out the small Western mono-molecule company, The Fuller Corporation. Fuller became Fuller Orbital, a subsidiary of Kendachi and subsequently Sony-Kendachi and now produces mono-molecular optical chips and cable, industrial blades and drill-bits.

Hiro Aerospace

Orbital and Lunar aerospace engineering. Works heavily with NASDA (National Space Development Agency of Japan). Along with a great deal of government and NASA funded project work, Hiro carries out a lot of commercial development and launches for communications corporations. When the Aqua II satellite was launched in 2025, there was a great deal of speculation from conspiracy theorists that Hiro was putting monitoring and surveillance equipment on board all satellites that they launch (around 8% of all launches) that would enable them to eavesdrop on a great deal of communications traffic around the world. This was never taken seriously enough to be investigated.

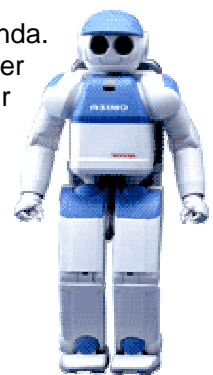
Takagi Pharmaceutical



Medical and pharmaceutical engineering and bioware. Innovators of ground breaking drug treatments. Also fundamentally responsible for treatments used in cybernetic implantation and replacement. Takagi, like Osaro Research Laboratories, work closely with Japan's educational institutes.

Honda

Automobiles, Aerospace and Robotics (military and civilian). Everyone has heard of Honda. They build cars, motorcycles and aircraft. Honda's CityCar (see left) is still the number one selling automobile in the world. The one thing that they are less famous for is their robotics and new technologies wing. Honda have always embraced new ideas and attempt to use them wherever possible. It was Honda that introduced the concept of hybrid-fuels and multi-fuel vehicles. They are not afraid to be laughed at by their



peers as often their innovations are commercially used sooner or later. They are currently developing their "Asimo" project robots for a variety of military uses, however, this project is heavily under wraps.

Arakudo

Military Engineering: small arms, vehicles and ACPA (power armour) suits and linear frames. One of the Japanese Defence Force's major contractors. One of their subsidiaries is the rapidly growing Sebuoro Arms Division, current supplier of small arms to the JDF and the Japanese Police Force, as well as numerous other South-East Asian countries. Arakudo also built linear frames for both civilian and defense contracts. Their military versions are used by the Japanese Police's "Maximum Tactical" or "MAXTAC" division. They are mounted with chain- or rail-guns, 37mm rocket launchers, EMP weapons and a variety of personalised small arms. Arakudo are rumoured to have been working closely with Osaro recently developing a new user-interface for their ACPA technology.



Osaro Research Laboratories

Special research projects. Heavily associated with Yokohama University and the Musashi Institute of Technology. Responsible for many innovations in new materials such as Buckminster-Fullerene carbon and reactive plastics. Developed mnemonic polyplastic (MPP), commonly known as memory-plastic three years ago.

Komitsu Global Communications

As well as being a player in the international telecommunications industry, supplying optical and wireless communications infrastructure, security and technology, Komitsu also have a staff of Hikyaku ("flying feet"), or couriers. These couriers will transport anything anywhere in the world. Officially, this has to be a legal transaction, but many of these hikyaku will undertake business of an illicit nature – off the record, of course.

Crime

The only thing that I can recommend if you are thinking about or have committed a crime is, either don't do it, or don't get caught. In Japan, there is no trial by jury. One, three, five or seven judges will pass judgement and sentence (the greater the offence, the greater number of officials overseeing), and even the most innocuous of crimes can have severe sentencing, with repeat offenders facing long imprisonment or even execution.

Laws are prohibitively strict, but ultimately worth breaking, for the profits that can be made are huge, especially when exporting out of Japan. Gun laws are the worst. It is totally illegal to carry anything more than a pistol (although there is a preponderance of heavy firepower within the gangs) and the police will respond in force, and I will just emphasise at this point that the Japanese police force is enormously well equipped with the latest weapons and technology and has a level of training and discipline that surpasses that of all other law enforcement agencies throughout the world. In addition, following a massive restructure twenty years ago that included some rigorous internal affairs investigations, the Japanese police are now almost incorruptible – a death sentence is achievable by those who are found guilty – so bribing a Nipponese law enforcement operator is a bad idea, the same could happen to you.

Gangs

Bosuzoku ("reckless driving tribes")

This is still the big youth anti-culture group amongst lesser and shorter lived gangs. These groups spend their time building, customising and racing high-performance cars and motorcycles. From their roots in Japan's automotive boom of the late 20th century when companies like Nissan, Honda, Mitsubishi, Suzuki and Kawasaki started building small to medium sized performance cars and superbikes in limited numbers for racing homologation, this has blown out of all proportion. The gangs themselves have strict hierarchies, colours, support businesses and urban territories.

Despite the Bosuzoku being the most common example of Japanese street gangs, there are numerous other types, most of which are fairly harmless. The Animé culture, that gains popularity at the end of the 20th century is still very popular and accepted here, so much so that many teenagers and young adults adopt the style of their favourite characters, even going to the lengths of having body sculpting or cybernetic enhancement to get the look right. Groups of these Kosopure (costume play) gangs can be

seen hanging around malls and parks – some of them can be quite disturbing. Schoolgirls, vampires, even dragons and robots are quite a common site.

Western culture is also unhealthily popular in Japan, with students dressing to emulate people like Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe – even Disney characters. Again, due to the amount of disposable income and the excellent resources that the youth of Japan has, they can afford the best body-sculpt jobs available.

The Cities

There are a few fundamentals about a stay in a Japanese city. First, it's expensive. Secondly, get used to sleeping in a box. Real estate in Japan is mind-blowingly expensive and unless you are the head of an international space agency, then you can't afford a hotel room. Expect to sleep in one of Japan's coffin rental spaces – a box eight feet long, five feet wide and six feet tall (on average, they do come smaller, believe me!) containing just a bed (or two) and a small wash-station. These boxes are often stacked and accessed by mezzanine walkways - Japanese cities, especially around the Tokyo Bay area is littered with these flophouses and motels, often several stories high, that cost from a few NewYen a night. These coffins are okay once your in bed, but the space to move around is very limited. You'll get used to it though. Just like living in a sunbed. One other thing to get used to (unless you are from South California) is the earthquakes. Of the 1500 or so seismic occurrences every year in Japan, most of the are centred around Tokyo Bay. Tokyo and Yokohama were both destroyed on September 1st 1923 by the worst earthquake in history. Don't worry about it, though. Civil engineering has come a long way in a hundred years.

Tokyo Bay – photographed from space



Tokyo

Clean, safe and well policed, Tokyo is rapidly becoming tourist heaven. It has everything that a casual commuter or traveller could possibly want from Japan. You want amenities and public services beyond reproach, okay. Shiny consumer goods ?, you got it; you want multinational franchise eateries, yup; you want diluted Japanese classic and popular culture, then Tokyo has it all. It is also, however, becoming one of the most clinically dull places around. The most dangerous thing that you might run into is a Bosozoku gang, but they only come into the city at night to race around the flawlessly smooth roads and they soon get chased out by the police. My advice would be to go to any of Japan's other major cities if you want the real thing – just make sure you know how to look after yourself. If you can't fire a gun, cut yourself when chopping your food or fall on the floor crying at the idea of a fight, then stay in Tokyo and enjoy the comfort of the shrink-wrapped, neon-lit, convenience-food city of East Asia.

Chiba



An hour and a half from Tokyo, on the east side of Tokyo Bay lies Chiba and its rapidly growing population of around 8.5 million people – which amounts to around 10 or 11 million with all of the people who aren't supposed to be there. When I first came here, all you could see as you flew into Narita International Airport was rice paddies. This area has since been drained and developed as Tokyo and Chiba expanded, but if you go far enough out, there are still people farming in the polluted fields. Just don't buy any rice – buy the imported Cambodian stuff or the genetically modified factory stuff that everyone else eats. Now, the only reason to visit Chiba is the lack of the overbearing policing that inhibits free enterprise throughout the rest of Japan. In the last two decades, Chiba has grown so much and, with it being on the east coast of Japan, has an abundance of 'grey-market trade' (smuggling and piracy to you and me) going on. Chiba is totally open to the entire Pac-Rim, and around 20% of import and export happens through Chiba (although, the Japanese government would tell you otherwise). In essence, Chiba is the anti-Tokyo. It does everything that the capital city does, but with the advantage (or disadvantage depending on your viewpoint) of not having to account for itself. Chiba is also a dangerous place to be. It accounts for most of Japan's murder rate and is littered with the sort of people that you wouldn't want to meet in a rainy, littered, neon-lit alley (of which there are thousands to choose). As for goods, in Chiba, you can buy all of the stuff that you cannot get for love or money in the rest of Japan (incidentally, you can get both love, and money too): unlicensed firearms; mono-weapons; even cheaper (although less reliable) Korean tech and of course, a whole world of vice-satisfying services and substances in almost whatever quantity you want).

My final parting word about Kanto and the Tokyo Bay area in general is that you get used to the earthquakes very quickly.

Osaka

Famous for the 'has-it-sunk-yet' splendour of the engineering miracle that is the Kansai International Aerospace Port. Kansai was built at the end of the 20th century on a man made island that was gradually sinking into the harbour. Since then, engineers have constantly fought against nature to keep it from being completely swallowed by the sea, and built a further two islands to accommodate more and more traffic from conventional as well as LEO flights.



Osaka is Japan's second city. Many Zaibatsu are HQ'd here, and if not actually based in Osaka, they will at least have a substantial presence here. Osaka has always been the serious face of Japanese business and culture, and it is from here that much of the country's international business is conducted. The Natural History Museum and the Japanese National Art Museum are also housed in Osaka, the latter displaying examples of classic and contemporary Japanese art and the influences on foreign art. This is well worth a visit – as is Osaka Castle, built between

1583 and 1615, which is now fully restored following the earthquake that nearly destroyed it in 2012.

Kyoto

Roughly at the centre of the Japanese archipelago, and split in two by the splendour of the Tamba mountain range, the Kyoto prefecture is the cultural centre of Japan. Kyoto City itself is a metropolis of theatre, music and art – both contemporary and classical forms of which can be found. Kyoto is the Hollywood of Japan and subsequently, is a haven for musicians, actors, artists and performers of all types. There are thousands of clubs, theatres, comedy joints and karaoke bars here, and entertainment subsidiaries of companies like Sony, as well as branches of western corps are based here. In addition, traditional forms of Japanese industry: ceramics, textiles, paper-making and swordcraft are still practised here.

Several factors make Kyoto a very unpleasant place. There are both incredibly affluent media stars, as well as a huge number of unemployed artists and musicians here, combine this with the nearby harbour and the ease of availability of both legal and black market narcotics and firearms and you have an explosive situation. The police here have to be very careful – the guy blazing away with his eleven-mil pistols whacked out on crystal meth could just as easily be SonyJapan's new number one artist as it could Johnny ThrashMetal from Otsu City. Sony and some of the other corps are very influential and powerful in this area and take a dim view of collateral damage by the cops. This gives downtown Kyoto a massive crime rate, and a very low police presence. The cops would rather spend the time and resources policing other areas. Not quite Chiba, but not far off.

South of Kyoto is Kansai Science City. KSC was originally conceived as an “international, creative, interdisciplinary, and multi-industry nucleus for the promotion of culture and academic research”, this has blown up into a fully fledged city in it's own right. KSC exclusively houses science industry professionals, career academics and students from KSC University, which is also contained within. The whole city is contained within several geodesic domes and is policed by a law enforcement population supplied by Osaro Research Laboratories and trained and equipped by Arakudo. This area is considered to be zero-crime-tolerance and the police are obliged to respond quickly and efficiently. Needless to say, with such a high presence of corporate police, there is very little trouble here.

Kobe

Home of the Yakuza, Kobe is an uncomfortably crime-free city. What crime there is, is carefully regulated and controlled by the Yak bosses. The phrase “never shit in your own back yard” is particularly applicable to Kobe. If you are involved in business here, take great care, and do not even consider double crossing the person or persons that you are involved in negotiating with or you will find yourself at the bottom of Kobe harbour before you can blink.

Kobe is also one of Japan's big ports and heavy industry centre's. Mitsushiro have a huge facility both here and in the massive Hanshin Industrial Park outside of the city, for the construction of both sea and air vehicles. Due to the massive quantities of all types of goods coming and going through Kobe, it is relatively easy to get illicit goods through here. Japanese port officials are surprisingly lax and open to bribery, making this a haven for criminals, smugglers and Yakuza operatives.

Kansai Road Network



Transport

Travelling around Japan is easier than in any other country in the world for two reasons. Firstly, Japan is a very small country, and secondly, public transport in Japan is second to none. All of Japan's major cities have a subway rail systems as well as skyway monorail systems running on overhead rail networks. The bus service is unequalled for cleanliness and timekeeping anywhere in the world, and some cities, such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Kobe also have tramways through the central business and commerce districts.



Inter-city transport is equally as impressive.



Maglev trains cover the distance between all of the cities at nearly 350 miles per hour and the 500 and 800 series Shinkansen (bullet-trains) take on the long-haul trips at between 200 and 250 mph, neither of which is too shabby. These are the most common trains running, but there are variations depending on your destination. Some of the more rural areas will have lesser, more conventional train networks, but all are clean and run precisely on time. Food and refreshments on board can be expensive though.

If you're not happy about being fired along a superconductive magnet, you can get a commercial shuttle flight on a short-haul passenger jet or 2- or 4-blade Osprey for a few thousand more NewYen. These domestic flights are available from all of Japan's airports and fly to most major cities every hour or so, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Japanese Institutions

Disneyland Japan

True to form, and exactly as you would expect to find it, the Disney-Pixar Transnational's multi-billion dollar theme park north of Tokyo is the same as the one in Florida, Paris, Rio De Janeiro, Bangkok, Adelaide and all the others scattered throughout the globe, except that this one speaks in Japanese. It is quite a culture shock walking through the park and seeing all the familiar characters that have been around forever, only to have a giant mouse come up to you and say koninchi-ha. It's a bit trippy to say the least. In addition to the contemporary Disney aspect, there are also more local cultural differences, mainly in the form of Disney Anime styled rides and attractions. Disney has only recently adopted this very distinct artform despite it's prolonged popularity and this is the acknowledged centre for Disney's particular take on Japanese animation – it's new release, Mecha-Princess is due for global release in a few months.



If this is all too much for you, then you always have the comfort of knowing that there will always be a generic southern-fried chicken or MacBurger concession stand whenever you turn, surprising you only when you read the price list.

Mount Fuji

Symbol of Japan, Mount Fuji is the ubiquitous landmark that you have to visit when in Japan. Fuji is, as always, a tremendous spectacle, just don't go expecting to be allowed to do some climbing. Fuji has been closed to climbers, ramblers and tourists in general, due to constant erosion, since the second Fujisan Ecological Summit of 2022 and is now guarded 24/7 by a contingent from the Japanese Defence Force. Look but don't touch.

The Akita Massdriver

Part of the Hiro corporation's service to the Japanese public is the removal of chemical, nuclear and biological waste. This is done with a two kilometre magnetic linear-accelerator rail that curves gently up at the end. On this is mounted a cradle that is launched along the rail at speeds approaching 7 miles per second and thrown into the safety of outer space. These launches are performed every twelve hours and can be particularly spectacular at night.

The Tanegashima Space Centre

Owned and run jointly by Hiro Aerospace and NASDA, the Tanegashima Space Centre is where you will take off from if using a LEO (low earth orbit) flight. Located on Tanegashima Island, 35 miles from the southern tip of Japan, it is also the site of the Hiro Aerospace (HAe) launch platform's and the facility that has been used to put all of Japan's satellites, including Aqua II, into orbit. Shuttle flights run from all of Japan's airports to Tanagashima, and a road and rail bridge has been built for tourist access to the island, a spectacle in itself.

Produce and Economy

The Japanese are obsessed with making things better. Whether this is smaller and better in the case of microelectronics; bigger and better in the case of firearms or faster and better in the case of every form of transport that they can imagine. What this amounts to is a cornucopia of the greatest toys known to man.

Cars and Motorcycles



As mentioned before, the Bosuzoku have mastered the art of making cars and motorcycles go as fast as the interfaced human can cope with. Japanese cars are the state of the art as far as automotive engineering has got. The Germans still build comfortable, reliable, sensible cars with a sky-high level of engineering and the American transnationals may think they can build great cars but the Japanese have the market cornered as far as the 0-100 (zero to hero rating) and the bhp per cubic centimetre market is concerned. It's true that you can buy a basic, entry

level commuter car in Japan, but the roads in the cities are so congested during the day and the public transport is so good that you should never need to bother. The roads outside the cities (what there is of them) is another matter, as are the urban clearways in the city after dark. The roads are made like racetracks – smooth and curvy. You must have seen the street racing arcade sims – well, Japan is just like that, so if you are going to have a car, have a small, really, really fast one.

This leads us on to one of Japanese youth cultures favourite pastimes. Street racing. Much like in New Rome, Japan's inner city youths have a great deal of time on their hands. Unlike New Rome's population, however, the Japanese also have money to burn. Their idea of street-racers are close to professional racing machines and they take their racing very seriously. Whether it be cars or bikes, whenever you find where a meeting is taking place – a task made notoriously difficult by the tight-knit street-racer community and the strict regimen of law enforcement – you will be stuck dumb by the levels of engineering and driving skill concentrated into such a small space. The reason is simple. There is big money to be made in these illegal races, they are supported by the Yakuza (who run the books – no cheating or running out on paying your debt there) and the larger bosuzoku, who, using their unsurpassed knowledge of this aspect of Japanese life, act as judges and scrutineers. Take it from me, this is a spectacle not to be missed if travelling to Japan.

Electronica

If it has semi-conductors, you can find it made smaller, cheaper and in fifty colours in Japan. The phrase "Consumer Electronics" is almost synonymous with this country. They invented the concept of small, affordable technology – whatever you are using it for. This has not changed at all. The cities of Japan are awash with retail outlets selling media players for whatever media you want to immerse yourself in; communications devices that you can practically teleport yourself through and all manner of labour saving household white-goods that will control and run your domestic-needs-solutions for you without having to get your perfectly manicured hands wet.

Weaponry

As is the case for microelectronics, the same goes for weapons technology. The gun laws in Japan may be close to actual emasculation but the associated technology can be bought in supermarkets: cyberoptic triangulation units; light sights in a variety of cross-spectrum varieties; cybernetic human/weapon connectivity solutions – you name it. It's like the old UK drug laws in as much as you can buy all the paraphernalia but not the goods themselves. My suggestion, buy your weapons tech here and take it away with you for Johnny Gunsmith to bolt onto your head/arm/gun in your home town.

If you are feeling particular masochistic and/or just plain stupid, you could try getting hold of some actual firepower. For this, you need a big 'in' with either a co-operative Zaibatsu (don't hold your breath Gaijin scum) or a gang



(again, don't hold your breath Gaijin scum). You may have caught from my tone of typing that this is more than a little tricky, but I won't go into the 'how's', 'where's' and 'when's' of illegal gun traffic, that would take the fun out of it for you, and give you an unfair advantage over me. I'll get to the good stuff.

Japanese guns are the absolute pinnacle of ballistic and electronic interfacing as you would expect. Unfortunately, the electronics usually ends up accounting for a deficit in the ballistics side – essentially, the Japanese can make the targeting unit and the cyber-interface but the guns are usually a bit crap. There is one exception though, Sebuo Arms. Sebuo is now a subsidiary of the Arakudo Corporation (and not a Zaibatsu in itself, as suggested in a recent Hellbelly article), and they make really cool guns. The recent [Hellbelly](#) article featured three of Sebuo's firearms, the best of which is a Japanese Police and JDF (Japanese Defence Force) only weapon, the Sebuo NP-1311 SMG (see image). If anyone can get hold of any of these, then I want to know, because I couldn't.



Prostitution

As in every city throughout the world, there is prostitution. It is the oldest profession in the world, and Japan is no different. Prostitution is licenced in Japan, which means that if you are in one of the multitude of authorised maiko houses throughout Japan's cities and the hooker that you are with can produce a licence, then she's going to be pretty clean. Japan has very strict laws governing prostitution, making it one of the safest places in the world to pay for sex. That and the fact that they

Slang and Phrases

Aho/Do-aho (Osaka) – Idiot/big idiot
Akan (Osaka) – Bad, no good, wrecked
Baka/O-baka – Fool/super fool
Cho – Super
Dachi/dachi-ko – Friend
Deka – Detective
Dojin-shi – fanzine, underground publication
Etchi – Pervert, have sex (written "H", the first letter of "Hentai", abnormal)
Gaki – Kid, juveniles
Hamaru – Play a game fanatically
Hameru – To attack an enemy's weak points
Ketó – Foreigner, white
Kubi – (Lit: "neck"), to get fired from a corporation
Muzu/Muzui – Difficult (short for muzukashii)
Mabu-dachi – Best friend
Namban/Namban-jin – European or American (lit: "Southern barbarian")
Nikkei-jin – Japanese related foreigners
Omawari – Police, patrol officers (friendly)
Onna-gata/okama – Female impersonators (the latter is more of an insult)
Otaku – Fanatical (about a hobby)
Pu/pu-taro – Unemployed
Satsu – Police, cops
Shimeru – Kill !
Tansha – Motorcycle
Yabai – Dangerous
Yaku – Drug
Zako – Weak enemies

Yakuza Slang

Anko – A worker or smuggling "mule"
Bon-naka – Smuggling den
Bon-ya – Bookie
Chaka – Handgun
Chimpira – Low level Yakuza
Deiri – War between Yak families
Douga – Handgun (lit: "tool")
Eda – Branch of a Yak family
Garasi-wari – To fire guns through an enemies window as a warning (lit: "glass crushing")
Gasa-ire – Police search
Hiné – Police
Kasuri – Protection money
Katagi – Common people, non-yakuza
Mom-mom – Tattoos
Mori – Bodyguard
Paku-rareru – To be arrested
Shaba – Common world, outside of jail (Buddhist term for "mundane world")
Shima – Territory (lit: "island"), a place or person you protect with your life.
Shinogi – Work, life, income
Teppo-dama – Hitman (lit: "bullet")
Tsutomeru – To go to jail for the family (lit: "go to work")
Yaru – To kill (lit: "to do")

even have an Academy in Hokkaido, means that you can get it whenever you want, however you want for as long as you want it in this great country. The girls that come from the academy, although not true geisha, are well educated and are taught other skills for when they decide to leave the profession. They are sexually educated and licenced. These young women are looked upon as professionals and not pariah's – and even in Japan's strict Buddhist societies, can expect a much higher degree of respect from the general public than the prostitutes of all western countries. True Geisha's can still be found in Japan, observing the tradition's and dress of their customs. These Geisha are generally brought up and trained as consorts to senior Zaibatsu executives.

Crime

One of Japan's biggest money spinners, both domestically, and for export is, unfortunately, a fanatical, dedicated and successful criminal underground. The Yakuza. Despite the Japanese Governments attempts at the end of the 20th Century to put the Yakuza out of business with the passing of the Act for Prevention of Unlawful Activities by Boryokudan (yakuza or criminal gangs) Members, the Yakuza has gone from strength to strength in other countries, overriding the Mafia in Europe and the United States to become the most feared criminal organisation in the world. The Yakuza still operate in Japan, but are largely recognised as legitimate businessmen, dealing with the Zaibatsu's on a level and legal playing field, preferring to launder money, sell drugs and weapons, operate money lending, extortion and gambling rackets overseas. The Yakuza still operate in Japan, based in Kobe and Osaka, mainly through affiliated Bosuzoku and other gangs, but on a much more minor scale than in past decades.

Other types of crime, are as you would expect in most countries. There are murders, rapes, gang fighting, theft, black marketeering, net crime and muggings amongst many others, some of which do not even have names yet. No more than you would expect in New Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Moscow or any of the more "civilised" centres around the world. As mentioned before, some areas are worse, much. Much worse than others, so keep clear unless you really know what you're getting into.

About the Author

Jonah Gray is a British citizen and currently a resident of New Rome City. He works in the entertainment industry as Promoter and Agent for the New Rome leisure venue, 'The Nightmare Asylum'. He has travelled to Japan several times, both during his time at university and in the years following. He can be contacted at JonahGray@Outgun.com or through his website, where this will be simultaneously published – <http://Welcome.to/JonahGray> .



OOO Credits:

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