



COMPLIMENTARY SITE MINI GUIDE • 2026

# JAPAN FOOD GUIDE

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What to eat, how to order & the small rules that make meals easier

*Practical, traveller-ready information designed to make the journey easier to navigate.*

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# A quick guide for real travel

Japanese food is much more than sushi and ramen. This compact guide focuses on the foods and habits a traveller is most likely to meet, with practical tips for ordering, convenience-store meals and everyday etiquette.

## WHAT TO TRY

Sushi, ramen, wagyu, curry, onigiri and more

## EVERYDAY FOOD

Konbini, bento and quick meals

## ORDERING

Menus, food models and useful phrases

## ETIQUETTE

Chopsticks, tipping and quiet customs

*Zephyrus note: practical details can change. Always re-check opening hours, transport rules, fares and local conditions before travel.*

## 1. Start with the classics - then go further

Japanese cuisine changes by region, season and setting. A simple bowl of noodles, a convenience-store onigiri and a carefully presented multi-course meal can all be part of the same food culture.

### Sushi

Try traditional sushi bars or kaiten-zushi conveyor-belt restaurants. Quality and presentation can be excellent even in casual places.

### Ramen

Look beyond “ramen” as one dish: shoyu, shio, miso and tonkotsu broths can taste completely different, and regional styles matter.

### Wagyu

The experience is about marbling, texture and quality more than portion size. A small serving can be enough to understand why it is famous.

### Japanese curry

A comforting, easy option for travellers. It is usually mild to medium in spice and widely available.

### Onigiri & bento

Portable, inexpensive and ideal for travel days. Train-station bento and convenience-store meals are part of everyday Japan.

### Seasonal sweets

Matcha, sakura, chestnut, sweet potato and other seasonal flavours appear in desserts and snacks throughout the year.

## 2. Konbini: the traveller's secret weapon

Convenience stores - konbini - are much more useful than their name suggests. They are good for breakfast, snacks, drinks, quick lunches and late arrivals.

- Onigiri, sandwiches and bento
- Hot food, noodles and soups
- Coffee, tea, soft drinks and sweets
- ATMs and basic travel essentials in many branches
- A reliable backup when restaurant hours do not match your day

## 3. Ordering without stress

Many restaurants use picture menus or extremely realistic plastic food models called sampuru. Pointing at the dish is completely practical when language is a barrier.

| Phrase                  | Use                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Kore o onegaishimasu    | This one, please.      |
| Osusume wa nan desu ka? | What do you recommend? |
| Kādo wa tsukaemasu ka?  | Can I pay by card?     |
| Arigatō gozaimasu       | Thank you very much.   |

## 4. Food etiquette that matters

- Do not stick chopsticks upright in rice.
- Do not pass food directly from chopsticks to chopsticks.
- Use the chopstick rest when one is provided.
- Avoid using chopsticks to point at people or objects.
- Tipping is not the general custom in Japan.
- Saying itadakimasu before eating and gochisōsama deshita after the meal is appreciated but not required for visitors.

## 5. Food on travel days

Long-distance train travel is one of the best times to try a bento. Eating and drinking are generally acceptable on Shinkansen services. In local commuter trains and metro systems, follow the atmosphere around you and keep food discreet.

## 6. Dietary needs & practical caution

If you have a serious allergy or dietary restriction, prepare a written translation before the trip. Ingredients such as fish stock, soy, sesame and wheat can appear in dishes that may not be obvious from the menu.

- Keep some cash as a backup even though card acceptance is widespread.
- Busy restaurants may have queues; arriving slightly before peak meal times helps.
- Do not assume “vegetable” automatically means vegetarian - broths and sauces may contain fish or meat ingredients.

# Keep this guide handy

Save this complimentary mini guide to your phone before departure. It is a quick-reference resource, not the full Zephyrus destination guide.

## Useful official resources

- [Japan National Tourism Organization - Travel Japan](#)

## Full guides & personalised guides

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## Source & edition note

Adapted from Japan: Beyond the Attractions - The Story Behind the Destination (Zephyrus, 2026), especially the chapter "The Culture of Food" and the traveller-ready etiquette material. Practical transport-food guidance checked against official JNTO information in September 2026.

## More destination Food & Transportation Guides are coming soon.

Zephyrus guides are expanding to new destinations with practical, cultural and locally focused content designed to make every journey easier to navigate and richer to experience.

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