SLEEP

US Travellers: How to Plan a Japan Walking and Onsen Reset Week — Paperwork, Medicines Rules, Vaccines, Jet Lag, Hot Springs Safety and Coaching (Planning Guide)

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Short answer: Japan suits a reset week built around walking, public transport, early nights, simple food and hot-spring bathing. The things that most often trip up US travellers are not wellness questions but paperwork and medicines: Japan restricts some medicines that are common in the US. Plan those, plus jet lag and safe bathing, before you book, and talk to your own doctor if you have a medical condition or take regular medicines.

This is a planning guide, not medical advice. We do not sell or promote medical treatments abroad.

Entry and paperwork

Entry rules can change, so check the US State Department's country page for Japan and Japan's official immigration and customs guidance shortly before you travel rather than relying on a blog. Make sure your passport is valid for your whole stay. Consider enrolling in the State Department's [STEP programme](https://step.state.gov/) so the embassy can reach you in an emergency. Travel insurance that covers medical care abroad is worth checking, because US health plans often cover little overseas.

Medicines: the part people get wrong

Japan regulates what medicines travellers can bring in. Some medicines that are legal on prescription in the US, including certain stimulant-containing ADHD medicines, are prohibited, and some over-the-counter cold and allergy products contain ingredients Japan restricts. For larger quantities or certain prescription medicines, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare explains when travellers must apply for advance import paperwork ([MHLW personal import guidance, Japanese](https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/kenkou_iryou/iyakuhin/kojinyunyu/index.html)). What to do: 1. Make a list of every medicine and supplement you plan to bring. 2. Check each one against current Japanese guidance well before travel. 3. Ask your prescriber about alternatives if a medicine is restricted. Never stop a medicine on your own. 4. Carry medicines in original labelled packaging, with a copy of the prescription. If you use an injectable medicine such as a GLP-1 pen, ask your prescriber and pharmacist about storage, timing across time zones and paperwork before you go.

Vaccines and health checks

CDC's [Japan traveller page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/japan) lists recommended vaccines and health notices, which depend on your itinerary, season and activities. Book a travel-health visit four to six weeks before departure if possible; CDC's [travel vaccines page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines) explains why routine vaccines should be up to date.

Jet lag

Flights from the US cross many time zones, and eastward-feeling adjustments are often harder. CDC's guidance on [jet lag](https://web.archive.org/web/20261013120110/https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/travel-air-sea/jet-lag-disorder.html) covers shifting sleep before departure, timing daylight, and short-term use of sleep aids only after talking to a clinician. A practical plan: get outdoor light in the morning on arrival, take a long walk the first afternoon, avoid long naps, and keep caffeine and alcohol modest for the first few days.

Onsen and hot-spring bathing safety

Hot-spring bathing is central to many Japan trips. Sauna and hot-water bathing are pleasant, and observational data from Finland link frequent sauna use with lower cardiovascular mortality ([Laukkanen et al., 2015](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25705824/)), but that is an association in one population, not a treatment. Hot baths also lower blood pressure and can cause dizziness. Simple rules: - Do not bathe after drinking alcohol or a heavy meal. - Keep early sessions short and get out if you feel lightheaded. - Drink water before and after. - Take care getting up and out, as floors are wet. - People with heart disease, low or poorly controlled blood pressure, or who are pregnant should ask their doctor first. Follow the posted etiquette at each bath, including washing before entering. Some baths have rules about tattoos, so check in advance.

Building the reset week

Walking. Japanese cities and rail networks make it easy to walk many thousands of steps a day without trying. Plan one long walk daily, such as a temple route, a riverside path or a hill trail, and build rest days in. Comfortable broken-in shoes matter more than gadgets. **Food.** Many traditional meals are built around rice, fish, soy, vegetables and soup. Enjoy them, and keep portions sensible. People with allergies, coeliac disease or kidney disease should prepare translated cards and ask their own clinician for advice. **Sleep.** Aim for consistent bed and wake times after the first few days. Hotel rooms can be small and warm; ask for a cooler room if you can. **Strength.** Pack a resistance band. Ten minutes of squats, lunges, push-ups and band rows in the room twice a week keeps the habit going.

Be cautious about medical add-ons

Some clinics and spas abroad market drips, injections, "detox" programmes or peptide packages to tourists. Medical treatment abroad carries extra risks, including different regulation, language barriers and little follow-up when you get home. We do not recommend booking medical treatments as part of a wellness trip. FDA's [health fraud page](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/health-fraud-scams) describes common warning signs in health marketing.

When to get help

Chest pain, fainting, severe breathing problems, confusion, high fever or signs of stroke need emergency care. Save local emergency numbers and your hotel address in Japanese before you go, and keep your insurer's assistance number handy.

After you get home

The return flight brings a second round of jet lag. Plan a lighter first week back: morning daylight, a daily walk at the same time you walked in Japan, and two short strength sessions. Write down the two or three habits that felt best on the trip and schedule them into your normal week before you unpack.

How a coach can help

A coach can help you plan the habit side of a reset week: a daily walking target, a sleep plan for jet lag, simple strength routines and a post-trip plan to keep the habits going at home. Coaches do not give medical, medicine or travel-medicine advice; they refer those questions to your doctor and pharmacist. Scope reference: [NBHWC scope of practice](https://nbhwc.org/scope-of-practice/).

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Safety note

If you have a medical condition, are pregnant, or take prescription medicines, check with your own doctor first.

Disclaimer

Education only. Not medical advice.

Confirm details with providers or a qualified clinician. This guide is education only.