

# 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## **Geography**

Occupying a land area of 377, 682 KM<sup>2</sup>, roughly 40 per cent of the size of British Columbia and 1/3 the size of Ontario (less than 4 per cent of the land area of Canada), Japan is composed of four main mountainous islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Some 69 per cent of the land is forested, 16 per cent cultivated, and the balance urban, grassland, or waste.

Japan is known as a country with four very distinct seasons, each lasting for about three months. The climate is temperate with hot and humid summers and generally sunny, cold dry winters. Average temperatures in Tokyo are 25.2°C (80°F) in the summer and 4.1°C (40°F) in the winter. July and August are uncomfortable, except for the northern areas.

The best time to visit Japan climatically is from March to early May or November to February. June and September/October are the rainy and typhoon seasons, respectively.

## **Population**

With 123.1 million people, Japan is the world's seventh most populated country. Of this highly homogeneous society (99.4 per cent ethnic Japanese), 74 per cent live in urban areas.

Tokyo, the capital, has a population exceeding 12 million, almost 1/10th of the total Japanese population. Other cities with populations of more than 2 million are Yokohama, Osaka and Nagoya. Cities with populations of more than a million include Kyoto, Kobe, Sapporo, Kawasaki, Fukuoka and Hiroshima. On a given business day, the population of greater Tokyo approaches that of Canada.

Although some English is used commercially, the number of Japanese able to speak fluent English is extremely limited. Even fewer speak French. However, almost all large corporations in Japan have general staff or engineers who speak English well-enough to conduct necessary business transactions or negotiations.