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## *VIII. General Information*

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### **Geography, Climate and Population**

Japan is composed of four main mountainous islands, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu and more than 3,900 smaller ones. Situated off the eastern coast of the Asian continent, Japan occupies a land area of 377,682 km<sup>2</sup>, about 40 percent of the size of British Columbia, or 30 percent of the size of Ontario. 69 percent of the land is forested, 16 percent cultivated and the rest is urban, grassland, or waste.

The climate in Japan varies from cool in Hokkaido to subtropical in Okinawa, but most of Japan experiences hot, humid summers and sunny, cold, dry winters. Rainfall is abundant, averaging 1,000 to 2,500 millimetres annually and during the rainy season from June to early July, the humidity level can reach 80 percent or more. Average temperatures in Tokyo, which is located at about the same latitude as Los Angeles, are 25.2°C (80°F) in the summer and 4.1°C (40°F) in the winter. April, May and mid-September to mid-November are the best times to visit.

Japan has a population of 124.5 million, the world's seventh largest, of which 99.4 percent are ethnic Japanese and 72 percent live in urban areas. The Tokyo area has over 30 million inhabitants. Other cities with populations exceeding 3 million include Yokohama, Osaka and Nagoya. Kyoto, Kobe, Sapporo and Kawasaki each have populations of more than one million.

### **Language**

Japanese is the official language and all documents submitted to the government must be in Japanese. English is widely studied, starting in junior high school and is used for international communications between Japan and other countries, but the number of Japanese people able to speak English fluently is limited.

### **Local Time**

Add 14 hours to Eastern Standard Time and 13 hours to Eastern Daylight Savings Time.