



## Rotary District 7475 2026 Short Term Youth Exchange to Japan Frequently Asked Questions

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### ***When should I apply for the program?***

Applications are accepted beginning March 1, 2026. Students are encouraged to apply early. Interviews are scheduled in the order applications are received. Applications will be accepted until 20 students are selected for the program. Therefore, early submission improves your chance of being selected.

### ***How do I apply?***

All applications are completed and submitted online. To request an application link, first read all of the program information on the [Japan Program web page](#). If you meet the requirements described on the program web page, click the link to request an application link on that page.

### ***How are students selected to participate in the program?***

Students and parents will participate in an interview and selection process held between March and April. We are looking for students who are well rounded, mature and interested in other cultures. Good candidates are open-minded; responsible; respectful of other people and their differences; able to communicate effectively; cooperative in a group setting; and capable of being away from home for three weeks. Students will be representatives of Rotary and ambassadors of goodwill from the USA.

We also take into consideration whether the student's family will be able to host two students for 6 days when students from Japan arrive in August. Since this a YOUTH EXCHANGE program, preference for participation will be given to those students whose families agree to host.

### ***What are the basic requirements for participating students?***

Students must be attending high school. The age requirement is 15 to 17 on July 1, 2026. Students must live in one of the listed NJ counties and be recommended by a local Rotary club.

Eligible Counties: Essex, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, Union or Warren

### ***When will the students depart and return?***

The trip is scheduled to depart on Thursday, July 1, 2026, and return on Wednesday, July 22, 2026.

### ***What is the cost of participation in the program?***

The cost of the trip is \$4,500, all inclusive. A \$500 deposit is due at time the student is accepted into the program. The final payment of \$4,000 is due at the orientation. These payments are non-refundable. Parents should consider purchasing optional trip protection insurance in the event the student is not able to participate in the trip for any reason.

### ***Do I need a passport, visa or any immunizations to visit Japan?***

A passport is required and you must have it by May 1, 2026. Airline tickets for the group are purchased at this time, and passports are required to purchase the tickets. If you do not have a current valid passport, you should begin the application or renewal process immediately as it takes several weeks. Visas and immunizations are not required to visit Japan.

### ***How many people will be on the trip?***

The goal is to have 20 students. We will also have 2 adult leaders (one male and one female). In addition, we are hosted by Rotarians Japan who provide many guides and chaperones during our stay in Japan.

### ***How much spending money should I bring?***

All of your transportation, meals, accommodations and activities are covered as part of the program. The amount of spending money you bring depends on how much you wish to purchase for souvenirs, gifts or personal items. You will also be expected to pay for any charges related to calling home or overweight baggage. During the orientation, there will be a discussion about credit cards, debit cards, cash, etc.

### ***Where will the students stay?***

All students and group leaders will participate in 4 homestays as part of the program. There will be a minimum of 2 students (same gender) in each homestay. The first day or two after arrival the group will travel together and stay in a hotel and tour major cities in the Osaka area. The group will then travel to Shikoku Island for the official welcome banquet and to meet their first host family. They will remain with this host family for approximately 4 days and then rejoin the group. The group will travel together by bus between each homestay. There will also be a hotel stay during the visit to Hiroshima, and a final hotel stay on the last night of the trip before departing back to the US.

### ***Who are the host families in Japan?***

Host families in Japan are carefully selected and screened by our Rotary partners in Japan. Consideration is given to the suitability of hosting American students. Most host families are members of Rotary.

### ***What types of activities will the trip include?***

Activities include visiting cities in the Osaka area in southern Japan. There will be a special trip to Hiroshima to visit Peace Memorial Park and Museum. The balance of the time will be spent on the Island of Shikoku, the smallest of the four islands in Japan (approximately the size of New Jersey), where they will be treated to visits to temples, schools, Rotary meetings, along with visits to many cultural events, manufacturing plants, museums, etc. Most students find that the best activity is meeting and getting to know the host families, as well as the other students, and experiencing true Japanese culture in homestays.

### ***Do I need to speak Japanese in order to be accepted?***

Japanese language skills are not required, however learning some Japanese will help you enjoy your experience. You will want to memorize a few helpful phrases and greetings. Having Google Translate or a translation device will be helpful.

### ***How much luggage can I take with me?***

Bring one large suitcase or duffel (must have wheels) and one backpack for carrying onto the plane. Your suitcase must weigh less than 45 pounds. (Actually, it is 50 pounds, but our experience is that every student procures 5 – 10 pounds of souvenirs and gifts). If weight limits are exceeded (50 pounds) there is an over-weight charge that will be the responsibility of the student. Once we finalize the flights, we will share the specific details about luggage requirements. Students are responsible for their own luggage. That means you will be required to carry and load what you bring.

### ***What should I bring with me?***

In general, you will need enough clothes for 7 days, as you will have the opportunity to do laundry during your homestays. The temperature will be hot and humid; at most you might need a sweatshirt to stay warm on the airplane. In Japan you will only need summer attire. Specifics will be discussed in detail at the orientation meeting.

### ***Should I bring gifts for host families?***

Yes, gift giving is part of the culture of Japan. You will want to bring a gift for each of your four host families. Something typically American and made in the USA is what is appreciated. Never bring anything made in Japan or China. Remember whatever you bring you will be required to carry in your luggage. Items that are fragile, perishable or of high value are discouraged. Host families will generally provide you with a gift as well.

### ***Will my family be required to host an incoming Japanese student if I participate?***

Hosting two Japanese students for 6 days in early August is strongly encouraged. This program cannot exist without the participation of host families both in the US and Japan. The Japanese students will be visiting New Jersey the first three weeks in August. Preference in selecting students is given to families who are willing to host Japanese students for a 6-day period. Details of hosting will be discussed at the interview.

### ***Do I have to eat with chopsticks?***

Yes, there will be times when only chopsticks "Hashi" are available. Practice in advance. Get into the spirit of the trip by learning some Japanese ways of doing things.

### ***What kind of food will there be in Japan?***

Students need to be open-minded and try new and different foods. Sometimes there will only be Japanese meals available. Other times there may be a western style food choice. Host families try to accommodate the likes and dislikes of our students.

### ***I'm a vegetarian. Will there be any conflicts with meals because of this?***

There are times when there will be no vegetarian meals available. Most times host families understand vegetarian preferences, but it is advised that vegetarians carry high protein bars or peanut butter as meal substitutes. If you are a strict vegetarian, you should be aware before signing up for the program that vegetarian meals will not always be available.

### ***What kind of medical attention is available should it be needed?***

Emergency medical care is available. Japan has one of the finest healthcare systems in the world. Our Rotary friends in Japan have excellent connections with the healthcare system. Whenever treatment has been required in the past, it has always been done with the best interest of the student in mind. Parents will sign a medical release authorizing Rotary leaders to make decisions for emergency medical treatment.

### ***Do I need any special medical insurance?***

Yes, travel medical insurance is a mandatory requirement. The cost for this insurance is very affordable. Most US medical insurance will not be accepted in Japan. This medical insurance requirement will be discussed in more detail at the orientation meeting.

***As a parent, will I know where my son/daughter will be and how I can contact them?***

Japan has excellent cell service. Both the Apple and Google "Find My" services work in Japan. Students will also have access to the internet, FaceTime, Skype, etc., to communicate with you. Additionally, our leaders in Japan are always in touch with our leaders here in the US. There will be a Facebook page where you can see regular post of what the group is up to. We suggest you check with your cell carrier about International Roaming or Travel plans before the students depart.

We discourage regular communication with the students. The program is much more effective if the students can immerse themselves into the Japanese culture.

***Is access to the Internet available?***

Wi-fi is readily available in Japan.

***Is it OK to bring a laptop, cell phone, etc.?***

Students are discouraged from bringing expensive items to Japan. The program is not responsible for any lost or damaged items. We realize that most students will bring their cell phones, however we believe that constant communication detracts from the overall trip experience.

***Can I stay longer in Japan, take a side trip to another city or visit with friends or relatives as part of the Short Term Youth Exchange?***

No. Students must travel and stay with the group and/or their host families. The schedule of activities is very busy and no time is available for side trips or visits. This is a group program. Students must be part of the group when traveling to and from Japan, no exceptions.

***Will I need to contact my local Rotary Club?***

Yes, students will need to contact a local club. The Rotary club may ask you to make a presentation on your experience in Japan when you return. Contact information for local Rotary clubs will be distributed at the orientation meeting in May.

***What is Rotary's Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth?***

Rotary International strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotary members, their partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people with whom they come into contact and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

For detailed information about Rotary's Youth Protection Program go to our Youth Protection webpage at <https://members.njrotary.org/sitepage/youth-protection>.

All Rotary leaders in direct contact with youth are required to take extensive training and complete a background check on a regular basis. Youth safety is our top priority.