**HOMESTAY in JAPAN**

You will experience a homestay during your visit to Japan. The following are some of the basic manners in Japan. If you are faced with any unfamiliar situation, feel free to ask to your host families. They will be more than happy to teach you any Japanese traditions and customs!

**Inside the house...**
- Guests are asked to **take their shoes off** at the entrance of any Japanese house. Once inside the doorway, there is a small section where you can take off and leave your shoes. Slippers are worn inside except on the tatami matting.

**Using the toiled and bath...**
- If you have chance to use the **Japanese style toilet**, don’t sit on it but squat over it, facing the raised hooded end. Usually special slippers are provided for use only on the toilet floor area. Your leg muscles will enjoy the extra exercise!
- Before going into the **public bath**, you disrobe and take off your clothes in a changing room. Place your clothes and underwear in a basket or shelf compartment.
  To take a bath, first sit on a low stool or upside down bucket in front of pair of hot and cold water faucets. Fill a bucket with hot water and pour it over your body to get soaking wet. The water helps the soap become bubbly, and it can be fun to play with the bubbles. Soap and rinse off thoroughly and then get into the public bathtub for a good, relaxing soak.
  These procedures are almost the same for **taking a bath at home**. Please remember that at home, all the members of the family take turns using the same hot water in the bathtub. You should soap and rise off thoroughly before entering the bathtub for another good, relaxing soak.
  If you wish to take a **shower** in the morning, it is better to ask your host family if you may use the shower instead.

**Eating the food...**
- Host families may not know your **food restrictions**, so please make sure you let them know if you are on special diet. In case some misunderstanding occurs, please tell to your host family that you can’t eat the food. They will not be offended if you explain why.
- Before starting eating, you would say “**Itadaki-masu,**” which means, “Thank you for the food. Let’s start eating.”
- After eating, you would say “**Gochiso-samadeshita,**” which means, “Thank you for giving us the food.”
- The traditional daily diet in Japan consists of the following staple food and side dishes: boiled rice, fish and vegetables, miso soup and pickles. Nowadays, Japanese people eat beef, pork and chicken ordinarily. The Japanese diet has been further diversified with the introduction of Chinese cuisine, western food like hamburgers, pizza, etc...
- Most Japanese people (especially the older generation) eat rice more than once a day. When they eat a Japanese traditional dish, they use **chopsticks** (**hashi**) all the time. You can ask your host family how to use them and then
try eating with them! As a hint, bring your mouth closer to your plate so that there is less of a chance that your food skydives and falls to your lap. It is also okay to hold a dish in your hand when you are eating.

- Many people drink alcohol such as beer, wine, or Japanese-sake during dinnertime. This is a way to promote better communication with you, but if you are not comfortable with drinking alcohol, you may tell your family that you don’t drink beforehand.
- Some Japanese food may taste bland or sweet if you are not used to it. You may ask for extra seasoning if you wish. The most popular seasoning for Japanese cuisine is soy sauce (Shoyu).

Making phone calls...
- It is preferable to avoid making an international telephone call from your host family’s house except in a case of emergency. When using the telephone, ask your host family for the permission and please offer to pay them the charge after using the line. Host families are told to charge you for the international phone call at the orientation for homestay.
- To call the police, dial 110. To call the ambulance, dial 119

Talking to each other...
- Unfortunately, not many Japanese can speak English fluently. You might feel some difficulties with communication. Please try to interact with them by using a dictionary, drawing pictures, or making gestures.
- Please use the “Easy Japanese Conversation” text for simple conversation!

Gift Giving

According to Japanese custom, people bring souvenirs when visiting friends. You are not obliged to do so, but it would be nice if you could bring some gifts from your country to the homestay family. Gifts do not necessarily have to be expensive, but something that is originally from your country will be adequate. Since you will not know the family members until you come to Japan, it will be a good idea to bring several small gifts in case there are any children.

Originally in Japanese culture, people do not open the gift in front of the person who had given it to you, so please don’t mistake that they are not happy with the gift if your family did not open it in your presence. However, the custom is changing, and it is perfectly okay for you to ask them to open it in front of you, or for you to open the gift in front of the person who gave it to you. They will be happy to receive your explanation about the gifts from your home country, too!