

DIGITAL NOMAD VISA

Step-By-Step Guide To

IN JAPAN

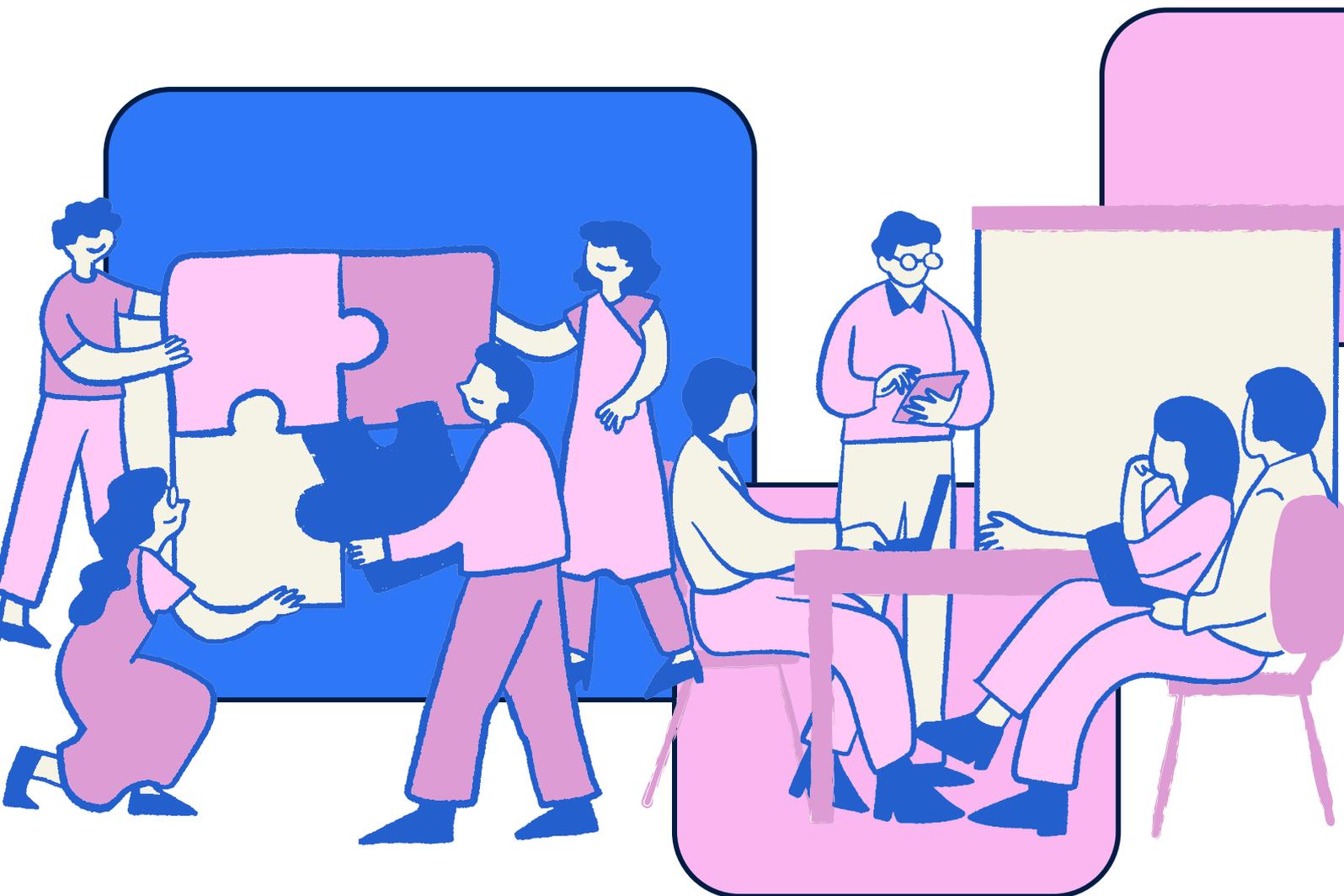


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WELCOME & HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS



Purpose of the Handbook

Japan finally launched a real digital nomad visa in 2024. It lets high-earning remote workers live in Japan for up to six months while working for companies or clients outside Japan.

Almost nobody is using it yet, mostly because the rules are new, confusing, and not very well marketed. That's where this guide comes in.

Who this is for

- 🔗 **Work fully remote** Employee, Contractor, or Freelancer
- 🔗 **Clients or Employer** Are outside Japan
- 🔗 **¥10,000,000/year** You earn around ¥10,000,000/year (mid-\$60,000s USD, depending on exchange rate)
- 🔗 **Test-drive** You want to “test-drive” life in Japan for up to six months without changing your job or learning Japanese first.

What this PDF covers

- What Japan's digital nomad visa actually is (and isn't)
- Who qualifies and how to check your eligibility
- Exactly what documents you need
- Step-by-step application flow
- What you can / can't do on this visa
- Realistic cost of living and city comparisons
- How to bring your partner or kids
- Community, networking, and lifestyle tips

What you'll get by the end

By the end of this guide you should be able to:

- Decide quickly if you're likely to qualify
- Understand your to-do list to apply
- Budget realistically for 3–6 months in Japan
- Avoid common mistakes that get applications delayed or rejected
- Use this visa as a “trial Japan life” before committing to a bigger move

What Is Japan's Digital Nomad Visa?

Japan's digital nomad visa is a short-term residence status under "Designated Activities" that lets eligible remote workers live in Japan for up to 6 months while they keep working for their foreign employer or clients.

You can base yourself in Tokyo, answer emails from a café in Osaka, spend weekends in Kyoto, and finish your stay on the beach in Okinawa - as long as you have Wi-Fi and your work remains abroad.

- **Length of stay**
 - **Maximum stay:** Up to **6 months** in Japan
 - **Within a year:** Legal guidance says the total stay under this status **must not exceed 6 months within a 12-month period.**
 - **No extension:** You cannot extend this status in Japan.

Some legal and tax guides note that you may be able to re-apply after a gap (often described as at least six months outside Japan and max one 6-month use per year). Exact practice can vary by consulate, so always confirm locally.

How it differs from other visas

Tourist visa / visa-exempt stay	Spouse visa	Work visas (engineer/specialist, instructor, etc.)	Digital Nomad visa
Usually 15–90 days only	For spouses of Japanese nationals or certain long-term residents	Require a Japanese employer to sponsor you	You keep your existing foreign job/clients
No work	long-term residency and full access to Japan's systems	Often come with a residence card, city registration, and national insurance	Stay up to 6 months without becoming a resident (no residence card, no city registration)
Lower documentation	Requires marriage to a qualifying spouse and proof of relationship	Your job is in Japan, not abroad	Ideal as a "trial life" in Japan, not a permanent move

DIGITAL NOMAD VISA HUGE BENEFIT
Legally live in Japan while working remotely

Eligibility Requirements

Break this into sections so readers instantly know if they qualify:



A. Nationality Requirements

Japan's digital nomad status is only open to nationals of specific countries.

- You must hold a passport from one of roughly 49 eligible countries/regions that:
 - Have a tax treaty with Japan, and
 - Have short-term visa-exemption arrangements with Japan.

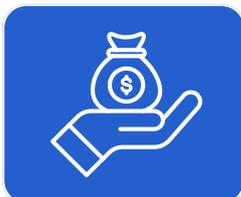
Examples (not full list):

- North America: United States, Canada
- Europe: All EU countries plus several non-EU states (e.g. UK, Switzerland, Norway)
- Asia-Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, some others

Action step:

Check the official eligible country list on the Immigration Services Agency (ISA) or Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) websites before you go any further.

→ If your country isn't on the list, you can't use this visa yet. You may **need to explore alternatives like student, highly skilled professional, or business manager visas** instead.



B. Income Requirements

Minimum annual income:

- At least ¥10,000,000 per year (10 million yen).
- Depending on exchange rates, this is roughly mid-\$60,000s USD.

What counts as income:

- Salary from a foreign employer
- Contractor or consultant income from foreign clients
- Freelance or business income earned outside Japan (e.g. SaaS, YouTube ad revenue paid from abroad)

Typical proof:

- Recent tax return(s) from your home country
- Employer letter stating your income and remote status
- Bank statements showing regular income
- Contracts / invoices if you're freelance or self-employed

If your income fluctuates (freelancer / founder)

Consulates will usually look at your last 12 months and documentation that clearly proves you meet or exceed the ¥10M threshold overall.

CONTINUED



Eligibility Requirements

Break this into sections so readers instantly know if they qualify:



C. Employment Type Requirements

You must be working for entities outside Japan.

Accepted types:

- Remote employee for a foreign company
- Contractor / consultant with foreign clients
- Self-employed / online business owner where customers and payers are abroad (e.g. content creators, SaaS founders, agencies, etc.)

Not allowed:

- Employment contracts with Japanese companies
- Freelance work for clients based in Japan
- Running a business that operates in Japan or earns Japanese-sourced revenue

Legal commentary is clear that digital nomads under this status are not permitted to work under an employment contract with a Japanese public or private organization or do activities outside the scope of remote work for foreign entities.



D. Insurance Requirements

You must have private international health insurance before you apply.

- **Coverage must explicitly include:**
 - Death
 - Injury
 - Illness
- **Total medical treatment coverage** (for injury/illness) must be at least ¥10,000,000.
- **Policy should clearly state:**
 - Your full name
 - Coverage period (must cover your full stay in Japan)
 - Geographic coverage including Japan
 - Coverage amounts

Because digital nomads on this visa do not join Japan's National Health Insurance and don't become "mid- to long-term residents," private coverage is your main safety net.

CONTINUED



Eligibility Requirements

Break this into sections so readers instantly know if they qualify:



E. Family Requirements If bringing spouse/children

Your partner and children can come, under a linked “Spouse or Child of Digital Nomad” status.

Requirements:

- **Relationship proof**
 - Marriage certificate (for spouse)
 - Birth certificates (for children)
 - In some cases, translations + apostille/legalization
- **Income & sponsorship**
 - Your income must still meet the ¥10M requirement; some consulates may want to see that this realistically covers dependents too.
- **Insurance for each family member**
 - Each dependent needs their own private health insurance with coverage similar to yours.

Limitations for dependents:

- Spouses and children cannot work or attend full-time school on this status.
- Their right to stay is tied to your digital nomad status.



DOCUMENTS YOU NEED

Core Documents

- Valid passport (with enough validity for your stay) _____
- Completed visa application form (digital nomad / designated activities) _____
- Recent passport photo (check consulate size requirements) _____

Proof of Eligibility

- Proof of nationality (your passport) from an eligible country _____
- Proof of income (meeting ¥10M threshold) _____
 - Tax returns / tax certificates _____
 - Employer salary certificates or pay slips _____
 - Bank statements _____
 - Contracts/invoices if freelance _____
- Proof of remote work _____
 - Employment letter clearly stating remote work and overseas employer _____
 - Client contracts (if freelance) _____
 - Company registration (if you own a foreign company) _____

Insurance & Family

- Private health insurance certificate (with ≥¥10M coverage for medical treatment) _____
- Spouse: marriage certificate (+ translation if needed) _____
- Children: birth certificates (+ translation if needed) _____
- Insurance certificates for each dependent _____

Travel & Stay Details

- Accommodation plan (hotel, monthly apartment, share house or coliving reservation, or explained plan) _____
- Tentative itinerary or explanation of how long you'll stay and where _____
- Return or onward flight reservation (often recommended) _____

STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

Use a simple flowchart-style outline:

➤ Step 1:

Confirm Eligibility

- Check:
 - Nationality (eligible country list)
 - Income (\geq ¥10M/year)
 - Remote work for a foreign employer/clients
 - Private health insurance with sufficient coverage
- Confirm you're comfortable with a max 6-month stay, no extension, no local work.

➤ Step 2:

Gather Your Documents

1. **Visa application form (with a photo)**
2. **Passport**
3. **Certificate of eligibility**
 - ((Note) If the certificate of eligibility is presented, (4) to (6) below can be omitted.)
4. **Documents explaining the applicant's planned activities** and period of stay during their stay in Japan
5. Documents proving that the applicant's **annual income is JPY 10 million** or more.
 - Tax payment certificate, income certificate, employment contract, contract with a business partner (which clearly states the contract period and the contract amount.)
6. **Documents proving that the applicant has insurance against death**, injury or illness during their stay in Japan (compensation for medical treatment for injury or illness must be JPY 10 million or more).

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STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

Use a simple flowchart-style outline:

Step 3: **Submit Application**

Typically:

- Book an appointment at the embassy/consulate
- Submit your documents and passport
- Pay the visa fee (often around ¥3,000–¥6,000 equivalent, varying by nationality and consulate).

Some consulates may ask a few extra questions at the counter or schedule a short interview.

Step 4: **Attend Interview**

Not everyone is interviewed, but if you are, likely topics:

- What your job is and where your employer/clients are based
- How you earn your income and meet the threshold
- How long you plan to stay and where you'll live
- How you'll support yourself and your family
- Confirmation that you will not work for Japanese companies or overstay

CONTINUED



STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

Use a simple flowchart-style outline:

➤ Step 5:

Receive Visa

- Typical processing times: roughly 2–4 weeks, depending on consulate workload.
- You pick up your passport with the digital nomad visa sticker inside (or receive it by mail, depending on local rules).

➤ Step 6:

Enter Japan & Register Accommodation

On arrival:

- You present your visa + landing card
- You do not receive a residence card at the airport, because this status isn't treated as mid- to long-term residence.
- You stay at hotels, monthly apartments, share houses, or colivings - your hosts will handle the usual guest registration rules.

→ Some guides mention address registration at city hall; but digital nomad holders cannot register as residents, so your main responsibility is to keep your contact details accessible and obey general laws.



How Long You Can Stay & Extensions

- **Max stay per visa** 6 months
- **Within a year** Total stay under this status must not exceed 6 months in any 12-month period.
- **Extensions** No extensions are granted for this status. When your 6 months are up, you leave Japan.

Re-applying:

- **Legal commentary suggests:**
 - You generally cannot immediately apply for another digital nomad stay.
 - Some interpretations: you must wait 6 months after the end of your previous digital nomad stay before reapplying.
- But rules and enforcement can vary; always ask your local consulate for the current line.

Converting to long-term visas:

- The digital nomad status itself is not a path to permanent residency.
- You generally cannot switch from digital nomad to a standard work visa inside Japan; if a Japanese company wants to hire you, you'll usually leave and follow the normal work-visa procedure.
- **For long-term stays you'd explore:**
 - Student visa
 - Highly Skilled Professional (HSP) visa
 - Business Manager visa, etc.



WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO ON THE VISA

Allowed

- ✓ **Work remotely for:**
 - Foreign companies
 - Foreign clients
 - Foreign-registered businesses you own
- ✓ Travel and live anywhere in Japan during your 6-month stay
- ✓ Use coworking spaces, cafés, hotels, monthly apartments, share houses, and colivings
- ✓ Bring spouse and children (if they qualify)

Not Allowed (Important)

- ✗ Work for Japanese companies (employment contracts)
- ✗ Freelance or consult for clients based in Japan
- ✗ Run a local Japanese business or earn Japanese-sourced revenue
- ✗ Sign standard long-term housing contracts that require residency status and a residence card
- ✗ Open a Japanese bank account, because this status does not come with a residence card and banks normally require mid-to long-term residency plus 6+ months of stay.

DIGITAL NOMAD COST OF LIVING IN JAPAN



FOOD

From cost-of-living breakdowns and expat estimates:

- Groceries & cooking at home: **¥30,000–¥45,000 / month**
- Eating out regularly (cheap lunches, ramen, izakayas): + **¥15,000–¥30,000 / month**



HOUSING (TOKYO) IN TOKYO

- **Studio / 1K in the 23 wards:** typically ¥70,000–¥120,000 per month.
- **One-bedroom** in central expat areas like Minato, Shibuya, Shinjuku: often ¥150,000–¥250,000+.
- **Share houses:** private rooms often ¥70,000–¥95,000, shared rooms cheaper.

Cheaper City Alternatives

- **Osaka**
- **Fukuoka**
- **Sapporo**
- **Okinawa**



TRANSPORT

- Using trains/metro a lot in Tokyo: around **¥10,000–¥15,000 / month** for most nomads.



PHONE & INTERNET

- Mobile data: **¥3,000–¥5,000 / month** on a typical low-cost plan
- Home Wi-Fi is usually included in monthly apartments or share houses; pocket Wi-Fi rentals add similar amounts.

COWORKING

- Day passes in Tokyo: generally **¥1,200–¥1,500** per day.
- Monthly memberships: often **¥10,000–¥25,000+** depending on location and hours.



BEST AREAS FOR REMOTE WORKERS

Tokyo:

- Shibuya, Shinjuku, Meguro, Kichijoji, Nakameguro, Asakusa/Ueno

Osaka:

- Umeda, Namba, Shin-Osaka, Tennoji

Fukuoka:

- Tenjin, Hakata, Daimyo

Sapporo & Okinawa

Where Digital Nomads Usually Stay

Accommodation options that work well with a 1–6 month stay and without a local residence card:

▶ MONTHLY SERVICED APARTMENTS

- Fully furnished, utilities & Wi-Fi included
- Contracts typically start from 1 month
- Great if you want privacy and a home-like feel

▶ SHARE HOUSES / GUESTHOUSES

- Private or shared rooms, shared kitchen and living space
- Foreign-friendly share houses often cost ¥55,000–¥95,000/month including utilities.
- Easy way to meet people quickly

▶ COLIVING SPACES

- Designed for digital nomads: private rooms + coworking & community
- Often located in Fukuoka, Tokyo, and smaller towns
- Good balance of work, social life, and flexibility

▶ AIRBNB / MINPAKU

- Short-term rentals regulated under Japan's Minpaku law (max 180 days per year per property)
- Great for shorter stays or moving around within your 6 months

Legal considerations:

Because digital nomads don't get a residence card, standard long-term leases (2-year contracts, key money, guarantor, etc.) are hard or impossible. Most nomads stick to monthly furnished apartments, colivings, or share houses that cater to foreigners and short stays.

How to Get Internet, SIM Card & Banking

📍 SIM / eSIM Options

Prepaid SIMs at airports, electronics stores, or online

- eSIMs you can activate before arrival for data-only plans
- Plans aimed at visitors and mid-term stays usually include:
 - Unlimited or high-cap data
 - Short activation periods (7–180 days)

Many nomads keep their home-country number active (for banking and 2FA) and use a Japanese data SIM/eSIM just for internet.

📍 Pocket Wi-Fi

Pocket Wi-Fi routers are popular if:

- You have multiple devices
- You're traveling as a couple/family
- You want guaranteed coverage without fiddling with SIMs

You can rent them monthly; many providers ship to your hotel or pickup counter.

📍 Public Wi-Fi

- Found in large cafés, some trains, and tourist spots
- Often requires email or SNS login
- Fine for light work; don't rely on it as your main connection.

Banking

Most banks in Japan require:

- A residence card (zairyū card)
- Proof you've been resident for around 6 months or more
- Registration of your address at city hall (jūminhyō)

Digital nomad visa holders:

- Don't become mid- to long-term residents
- Don't get a residence card
- Can't register their address at city hall

So they cannot open a standard Japanese bank account, and official guides on this visa state this explicitly.

Best Alternatives for Nomads

- **Keep your existing bank accounts and use:**
 - International debit/credit cards
 - Cash withdrawals from ATMs in convenience stores
- **Multi-currency accounts & cards (e.g. Wise, Revolut, etc.)**
 - Hold JPY, convert at better FX rates
 - Use Japanese ATMs or card terminals directly
 - Online wallets & payment apps Many foreign cards work with Apple Pay / Google Pay in Japan
 - Some Japanese QR apps require local accounts, which you won't have — so don't rely on them



How to Bring Your Partner or Family

You can bring your spouse and children on a linked “Spouse/Child of Digital Nomad” status.

Who Can Come

- Spouse (legally married partner)
- Children (usually minor dependents)

Extra Documents

- Marriage certificate + translation (if not in Japanese/English)
- Children’s birth certificates + translations
- Proof that you live together / have genuine relationship (varies)

Insurance

- Each family member must have their own private health insurance with adequate coverage.

Important Limitations

- Spouses and children cannot work in Japan on this status.
- Children generally cannot enroll as regular public school students; some law firms and consulate notes confirm kids under this status can’t use standard schooling options.
- Their status is 100% dependent on yours — if your visa ends, so does theirs.

Tip:

Tip: For school-age kids, consider timing your stay during a break, or look at online/remote schooling options from your home country.

Mistakes to Avoid

◉ Under reporting income

If your documents don't clearly show \geq ¥10M/year, your application will likely fail.

◉ Weak or vague insurance

Policy must explicitly cover death, injury, illness, and show coverage amounts that meet or exceed the required threshold.

◉ Confusing digital nomad status with a work visa

You cannot take local jobs or open a company in Japan on this visa.

◉ Overstaying your 6 months

Overstays can cause serious immigration problems and hurt future visa applications.

◉ Assuming you can open a Japanese bank account / sign long-term leases

Without a residence card, you can't open a standard bank account or sign typical long-term residential contracts.

◉ Ignoring tax implications

Even if Japan doesn't tax you as a resident, your home country probably still does.

How to Meet People & Build Community in Japan

This visa isn't just about logistics; it's also about making your time in Japan feel like a real chapter of your life, not just an extended hotel stay.



Where to Find People

- **Meetup / Event apps**
 - Language exchange events
 - Tech & startup meetups
 - Hobby groups (photography, hiking, board games, etc.)
- **Coworking spaces**
 - Many Tokyo and Fukuoka coworking spaces host:
 - Networking nights
 - Workshops
 - Startup / nomad events
- **Facebook & online communities**
 - “Digital Nomads in Japan”, city-specific expat groups, etc.
 - Great for sublet finds, events, and casual meetups
- **Nomad gatherings & coliving events**
 - Examples: Fukuoka has become known for digital-nomad conferences and coliving-focused events.
- **Safe Areas for Newcomers**
- In big cities, popular, generally safe, and convenient areas for newcomers include:
 - Tokyo: Shibuya, Meguro, Nakameguro, Kichijoji, Asakusa/Ueno
 - Osaka: Umeda, Namba, Tennoji
 - Fukuoka: Tenjin, Hakata
 - Sapporo & Okinawa: central neighborhoods near main stations or beaches
- Japan overall is one of the safest countries in the world, but still practice normal city awareness (keep valuables safe, respect local rules, etc.).



Final Checklist (Printable / Screenshot-friendly)

Eligibility

- I hold a passport from an eligible country
 - My annual income is \geq ¥10,000,000
 - My work is fully remote for foreign employer(s)/client(s)
 - I'm okay with a max 6-month stay, no extensio
-

Documents

- Passport + visa application form + passport photo
 - Income proof (tax returns, employer letters, bank statements)
 - Remote work proof (employment or client contracts)
 - Private health insurance (\geq ¥10M coverage, includes Japan)
 - Marriage/birth certificates for family (if applicable)
-

Insurance & Money

- Private insurance for me (and each dependent)
 - Bank cards that work overseas
 - Multi-currency or low-FX card set up (e.g. Wise/other)
-

Application

- I've read my consulate's specific digital nomad instructions
 - I've booked an appointment at my local Japanese embassy/consulate
 - I know roughly how long processing will take (2–4 weeks typical)
-

Accommodation

- First 1–4 weeks of accommodation booked (hotel, monthly apt, share house, coliving)
 - I understand I probably can't sign a standard long-term lease
-

Arrival Steps

- I know I won't receive a residence card
- I have plan for SIM/eSIM or pocket Wi-Fi
- I've saved maps of my area and nearest stations offline

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Can I stay longer than 6 months?

- Not on this visa. The digital nomad status is capped at 6 months and can't be extended. Many interpretations also say total stay under this status can't exceed 6 months in any 12-month period.

Q: Can I convert it to a spouse or work visa?

- In general: You can't simply "upgrade" your digital nomad status to a standard work visa while in Japan. Legal commentary says those who enter on a short-term or digital nomad status and then accept work at a Japanese company must leave and follow the standard work-visa process.

For a spouse visa, you'd need a qualifying Japanese spouse or permanent/long-term resident partner and go through that route separately.

Q: Do I need Japanese language?

- No. There's no language requirement for the visa. All the official criteria are about nationality, income, insurance, and remote work.

That said, learning basic Japanese phrases will make daily life much smoother.

Q: Can I enter as a tourist, then switch to digital nomad from inside Japan?

- In some cases, yes in theory, but it's more complex:
 - For people from visa-exempt countries, one path described by some law firms is:
 - Enter Japan on a short-term stay,
 - Apply for a Certificate of Eligibility for the digital nomad status, then
 - Apply for a change of status if granted before your tourist stay ends.
- In practice, this route is bureaucratically heavier and time-sensitive.

Most people will find it simpler and safer to apply at a Japanese consulate before coming to Japan.

Q: What if I'm a freelancer without a fixed salary?

That's fine — as long as you can prove that your annual income is at least ¥10M from foreign clients.

Your best evidence:

- Last year's tax return showing your freelance earnings
- Several months of bank statements
- Major client contracts and payment records



JoynTokyo

JoynTokyo is a project by JIMA Inc., a Japan-based company that helps people from around the world study, work, and build a new life in Japan. While JIMA works on different projects around global talent and Japan, JoynTokyo is the part that focuses specifically on guiding foreigners who want to come to Japan for study and career.



Why you made this guide

We kept meeting smart, motivated people who wanted to do a master's in Japan, but the information was scattered, confusing, or only in Japanese. Many didn't know which scholarships were real, which websites to trust, or how the timelines actually work. We created this guide so you have one simple, honest roadmap that shows you real fully funded options, in English, without the fluff or fake promises.



How you help international students navigate Japan

Through JoynTokyo, we break down the whole “study in Japan” journey into clear, practical steps: from understanding scholarships, to choosing programs, to planning what happens after you land in Japan.

We share guides, videos, and resources based on real programs and real experiences, so you can make confident decisions about your future here.



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