Japan – an island nation in East Asia, located in the Pacific Ocean. It lies to the east of the Sea of Japan, China, North Korea, South Korea and Russia, stretching from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and Taiwan in the south. The characters that make up Japan's name mean "sun-origin" (because it lies to the east of nearby countries), which is why Japan is sometimes referred to as the "Land of the Rising Sun". Japan is an archipelago of 6,852 islands. The four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku, which together comprise about ninety-seven percent of Japan's land area.

When you think of Japan, your mind fills with all sorts of images of ancient traditions, beautiful landscapes and fascinating culture.

Traditionally, [sumo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumo) is considered Japan's national sport. [Japanese martial arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_martial_arts) such as [judo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judo), [karate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karate) and [kendo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kendo) are also widely practiced and enjoyed by spectators in the country. After the Meiji Restoration, many Western sports were introduced in Japan and began to spread through the education system. Japan hosted the Summer Olympics in [Tokyo in 1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Summer_Olympics). Japan has hosted the Winter Olympics twice: [Sapporo in 1972](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972_Winter_Olympics) and [Nagano in 1998](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1998_Winter_Olympics). Tokyo will host the [2020 Summer Olympics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Summer_Olympics), making Tokyo the first Asian city to host the Olympics twice. Japan is the most successful Asian [Rugby Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rugby_Union) country, winning the [Asian Five Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Five_Nations) a record 6 times and winning the newly formed [IRB Pacific Nations Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IRB_Pacific_Nations_Cup) in 2011. Japan will host the 2019 IRB [Rugby World Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rugby_World_Cup).

Japan is one of the most successful football teams in [Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Football_Confederation), having qualified for the last five consecutive [FIFA World Cups](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FIFA_World_Cup) with second round advancements in [2002](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002_FIFA_World_Cup) & [2010](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_FIFA_World_Cup), and having won the [AFC Asian Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFC_Asian_Cup) a record four times in [1992](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992_AFC_Asian_Cup), [2000](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000_AFC_Asian_Cup), [2004](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_AFC_Asian_Cup) & [2011](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_AFC_Asian_Cup). The team has also finished second in the [2001 FIFA Confederations Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_FIFA_Confederations_Cup).

Following a good performance at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the Japan national team started a new era under Alberto Zaccheroni, and only four months after his arrival in September 2010 the Samurai Blue clinched the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar.









