

Japan

The nation of Japan is a long narrow island chain situated in the North Pacific Ocean parallel to the easternmost edge of the Asian continent. It is 3 776 kilometres long from its northeastern tip to its southwestern tip.

The Japanese islands are separated from the Asian continent by the Sea of Okhotsk in the north and by both the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea in the west. The Pacific Ocean lies off the southern and eastern coasts of Japan. The Korean Straits and the Straits of Tsushima separate Japan from the Asian continent by a distance of 297 kilometres. In the north, Russia lies just 198 kilometres off the coast of the Hokkaido, and some smaller islands are disputed territory between the two countries.

These waters kept foreign contact with Japan to a minimum and prevented foreign forces from invading the country. The American occupation after World War II has been the only instance of a formal occupation by another country.

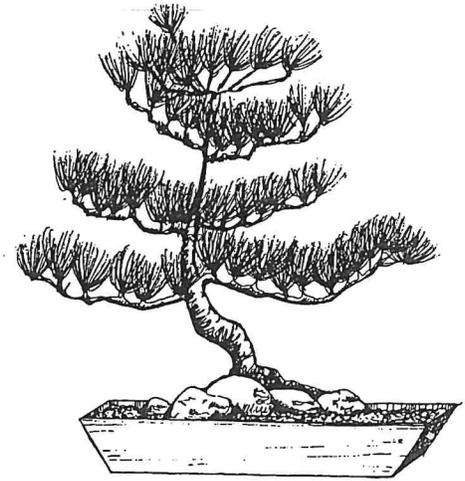


This geographic isolation has had a tremendous effect on the social and cultural development of Japan. The Japanese people have been able to absorb and adapt many aspects of culture from other countries without coming under the political influence of these countries.

The Japanese islands were formed by volcanic eruptions and are mostly mountainous crests rising from the sea. As a result, much of the land cannot be used for agriculture or settlements. Japan has a population of over 123 million, so most of the populated areas are very densely populated. There are four main islands, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyusu. These are surrounded by

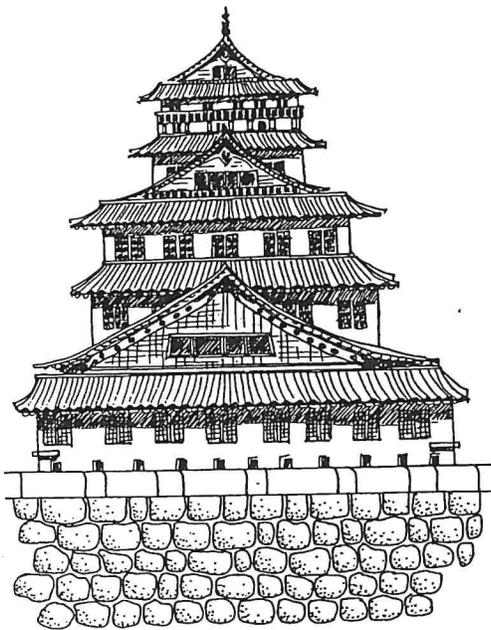
nearly 4000 other islands many of which are rocky, barren and uninhabited.

Three main ocean currents flow by Japan. The Japan Current is a salty, warm-water current which flows northward on the southeastern side of Japan. Due to its high salt content, the waters of this current are a purplish colour and has been called *Kuroshio* (the Black Current). Another warm current, the Tsushima Current, flows northward off the southern coast of Kyushu through the Japan Sea. From the north, the cold Kurile Current flows southward to the east of Kurile Islands and Hokkaido. The point where the cold Kurile Current meets the Black Current is a bountiful fishing ground.



The capital city of Japan is Tokyo. The city has a population of close to twelve million people. There are 651 cities in Japan and most of them are situated on the flat coastal plains or the mountain basins.

The topography of Japan consists of rocky coastal areas, flat plains, deep valleys, many mountains, and rushing rivers. Seventy-two percent of Japan's land is mountains. Due to the many mountains, the rivers are generally too swift to use for transportation, but are excellent sources of hydroelectric power and irrigation.



Many of the major cities are located in the few flat areas. Flat land suitable for growing crops is very precious. Even though seventy-two percent of Japan is covered with forest, there is no lumbering industry there because the areas are extremely difficult to reach. As a result, Japan has to import most of its food and lumber.

The climate of Japan varies from the north to the south. Temperatures in the south are hot in summer and cool in winter, while in the north it is cool in summer and very cold in winter.



CANADA AND ITS TRADING PARTNERS



Worksheet on Japan



1. What lies between Japan and the mainland of Asia?

2. What two countries are closest to Japan? _____
and _____
3. How does Japan compare with Canada in size?

4. What is the tallest mountain in Japan? _____
5. What is the tallest mountain in Canada? _____
6. Why does Japan have very little land suitable for growing crops?

7. Why are most of the farms in Japan along the coast?

8. What are the rivers in Japan used for? _____
and _____
9. What is the population of Japan? _____
10. What is most of the land like in Japan? _____
