

## 4 Japan

Japan is an island nation in East Asia, to the east of China. It is an archipelago made up of 6852 islands. An archipelago is a group of many islands in a large body of water. The four largest islands are Honshu, Hokkaido, Shikoku and Kyushu. Japan is situated directly north of Australia.

Its location is centred on latitude 36° north, longitude 138° east.

### Population

The United Nations estimated that the population of Japan in 2016 was 126 324 000. This is more than five times as large as Australia's population. Japan has a high population density, with an average of 347 people for every square kilometre. This is much higher than Australia (3 per km<sup>2</sup>), and higher than Indonesia (144 per km<sup>2</sup>).

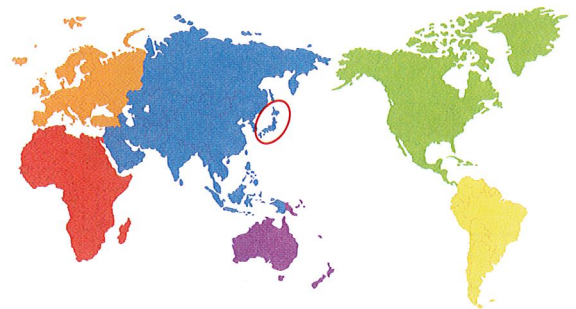
The life expectancy in Japan is 85, which is one of the highest rates in the world. This compares to Australia (82) and Indonesia (72). Average annual income is US\$36 680, which is over half Australia's figure of US\$60 070, but much higher than Indonesia (US\$3440).

The main religions in Japan are Buddhism and Shintoism. Japanese is the language spoken throughout Japan.

### Environment

About three-quarters of Japan is rugged mountains mostly covered in thick forest. The highest point is Mount Fuji (right), an active volcano that rises 3776 metres from the plains south-west of the capital city, Tokyo. Fuji is one of more than 100 active volcanoes in Japan.

The climate of Japan is subarctic in the north, through to subtropical in the south. The northern island of Hokkaido has long, cold winters with regular snowfalls and mild summers. Some Japanese islands experience extremely cold winters and hot summers.



### Settlement Patterns

As the mountain and forest areas are not suitable for agriculture or large settlements, most people live in the flatter coastal areas. These densely populated areas support both farming communities and large industrial cities.

Small communities exist in hilly and mountainous regions.