

BHS-Japan Exchange Program Meeting Agenda #1
January 21, 2016: 7-9 pm, Room 384

- 1. Welcome and sign in. Collect \$1950 deposit. Make checks out to: BHS Japan Exchange Program.**
- 2. Itinerary: map of Japan, details of travel**
- 3. Legal Documents & Behavior Expectations**
- 4. Travel Insurance Details: Medical Insurance, Travel Insurance & Emergency Info**
- 5. Your budget for this trip**
- 6. Money and Cell Phone Policy**
- 7. Fundraising Ideas**
- 8. Questions & Answers**

2. Travel Itinerary/Flight/Hotel Info:

Please see p. 7-9 of this packet.

3. Legal Documents/Behavior/Attendance Expectations:

- **Reminder:** You will miss 5 days of school since we are leaving on Saturday, April 9th (a week before April break). Please manage your absences so you do not lose credit for your classes- 21 absences are allowed for full year class, 11 absences for 1 semester class under the attendance policy.
- You will need to talk with your teachers in late March about collecting work that you will be missing and it is your responsibility to make up this missing work in a timely fashion after you return. We will work with your deans and teachers later this spring to help set this up but you will need to plan ahead for this.

Please review the Rules and Regulations document in the BHS Legal Forms packet to see rules set up by BHS for your trip. These are critical that you obey. Highlights from this document include:

- Curfew of 11:00 in your hotel room, 11:30 lights out.
- You must attend all activities at the host school. If you are sick, be sure to contact Ms. Eio or Ms. Alberola immediately.
- You must be on time for all events. If you are more than 15 minutes late, we will call the police to find you!
- No drinking, no drugs, no smoking. You will be sent home at your expense for this violation.
- Limited texting, internet use or iPod/iPad use, unless you are on your own time. See electronics policy for more info.
- Participants must abide by and adhere to the Japanese host school's rules.
- Most Japanese schools require that students, including visitors, remove jewelry, hats, baseball caps, and make-up when in the school. Chewing gum in the school is also not permitted. Dyed hair (unnatural colors such as green, pink, purple, etc.), tattoos and body piercings are not viewed favorably by Japanese schools. Students with tongue or facial piercings should be prepared to remove such jewelry while on school premises. Tattoos need to be covered especially while during the homestay/host school portion. Participants should observe these rules to show respect for Japanese cultural norms.
- No sexual contact with your BHS classmates or Japanese students you meet in the two weeks we are travelling together.
- You must be in groups three or more at all times.
- In addition, Japan is a very formal country where being loud is not acceptable. Please remember to keep yourself and body gestures "in a box." Use a quiet voice

and your luggage/bags, don't use big gestures, don't take up a lot of space, be cognizant of people around you and the way they are behaving, etc. You will be representing not only BHS, but also the United States. You are a special guest and please behave very modestly.

4. Travel/Medical Insurance/Emergency Information:

- Please **call your health insurance company** to find out what international coverage you have. In many cases, **you need to pay expenses up front in cash and then you will be reimbursed with proper receipts.**
- We will **purchase an individual travel insurance policy** to cover things not included in the medical policy provided. This additional coverage **will include** baggage delay, baggage loss, trip delay, missed connection, and trip change fee.
- Any items you claim would have to be paid for up-front and receipts submitted to travel insurance after the trip.
- Feel free to explore other options of additional coverage that you know of or have used before and speak to us soon if you would like to add additional coverage to your child's plan (for an additional fee).

Participant Illness/Injury

In the event of any participant becoming ill or injured, either Ms. Eio or Ms. Alberola will be responsible to take the child to the hospital or get them whatever treatment they may need. We will contact the child's parents directly to inform them of an accident or illness. If the child needs to return home, we will escort them to either the Tokyo or Osaka international airports (whichever is closer) and put them on the plane home.

National Emergency Situation

In the event of a national emergency, we will be monitoring information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the US Embassy. If an evacuation is ordered, we will coordinate the return to an international airport and the departure. Our BHS group will be registered with the US Embassy prior to the trip so that they may be accounted for in the event of an evacuation. Information about this registration can be found here: <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

5. Budgeting for this trip:

Currently, the conversion rate is approximately 1 US dollar to 117 Japanese Yen.

- You should estimate about \$10/day for expenses not covered by the program. This includes laundry in hotels, movie and internet services in the hotel, excessive baggage fees, etc.
- Souvenir money: Anything you feel is appropriate to carry. Probably no more than \$150 is necessary.

- We suggest **carrying a small envelope** each day and putting the money you need for each day in it each morning so you know you don't overspend and run out of money by the end of the trip!

The Cost of Shopping and Eating in Japan

Below are some approximate prices of souvenirs you might be interested in purchasing in Japan. It's impossible to provide a comprehensive list of all items of interest so this list is intended to give you a thumbnail sketch about the cost of living in Japan. Take a look at the website www.tokyopriceguide.com/list.htm to learn more cost comparisons.

SOUVENIRS

Origami paper ¥300 and up

Paper fan ¥500 and up

Daruma doll ¥500 and up

Green tea cups ¥500 and up

Kokeshi (wooden dolls) ¥2000-3000 and up

Geta (wooden sandals) ¥2000 and up

Yukata (Summer kimono) ¥2500 and up

Please note: Do not purchase a Japanese sword, fireworks or lighters to bring home. They are not allowed on the airplane, and are very expensive to ship home.

6. Bringing Japanese Yen and Electronics to Japan:

- In order to bring money to Japan, we need you to contact your local bank and get Japanese Yen in the US. It will take an enormous amount of time to change traveller's checks and American cash into Yen once we are in Japan.

Yen Available at these banks:

Coolidge Corner:

- Bank of America- need to be a current customer, current conversion rate applies, call in advance. You can order it online and have it sent to you for free (up to \$1000):

<https://www.bankofamerica.com/foreign-exchange/foreign-currency-exchange.go>

- Santander Bank- can order, takes about 2 weeks, need to be current customer.
- Brookline Bank: Can send yen to you, \$17 fee for service.
- Sovereign Bank, Needs to be ordered, need to be current customer.

Some other large banks may order for you, call them well in advance.

In addition, you may look into getting a student credit card for your child or adding him/her to your current account. **Credit cards are NOT regularly accepted** in Japan outside of major department stores, so **cash is critical** for everyday purchases. It might be helpful though to have a card for emergencies or big purchases. Here is some information on student credit cards and options:

<http://www.creditcards.com/college-students.php>
<http://www.familyfirstaid.org/teen-credit-cards.html>
<http://www.indexcreditcards.com/prepaidcreditcards.html>
<http://kreate.hubpages.com/hub/High-School-Credit-Card>

- The easiest and fastest option may be to put your child on your card as an authorized user.
- Banks and credit cards must be called in advance of trip. They will need to know dates of travel and that you may be using the card at home (in US)
- Ask about international fees. Credit cards (1-5%) and ATMs charge approximately \$5-9 per transaction. The only card we know that does not charge is Capital One.

Electronics in Japan:

- Students may bring cell phones and they can use them for texting, internet, etc. (preferably in hotel rooms, on long train trips, etc.) However, students should be paying attention to their surrounding at all times and not be distracted by their phones.
- In event of a minor conflict, students should notify teachers first of the situation before contacting home.
- Families **MUST CHECK WITH THEIR OWN CELL PHONE SERVICE PROVIDERS** regarding what they need to do to turn off voice and data roaming. There are extremely expensive charges associated with getting voice, internet and texts abroad. These charges, if incurred, would be the responsibility of each family.
- Please call your cell phone provider 2-3 times and talk to different representatives- they seem to tell you something different about how to turn off roaming functions each time!
- This also applies for iPads or other devices with 3G/4G capabilities.
- Please **DO NOT** bring laptops. They will be cumbersome to carry and get through security with.
- You will have internet access at your host family's home in Kyoto & Tokyo hotels and (at your own expense). There is no internet in Shirakawa-go.
- Ms. Eio and Ms. Alberola will be carrying Japanese cell phones with them at all times in case you need to reach your child in an emergency. The numbers for these phones will be provided as soon as possible.
- We will be blogging about the trip on bhskizuna.weebly.com so be sure to check the site often for photos and info about what we are doing!
- Remember, no news is good news! Do not feel the need to text or email your child all the time. They should be plugged into being in Japan, not their phones!

7. Fundraising Ideas:

- We have had success from the GoFundMe campaign so far but please ask your friends

and family to donate as well. Post: <https://www.gofundme.com/tzvvgyn8> to your social media sites.

- We still need to raise thousands of dollars. A T-shirt sale, raffle, food sales will all help. We need to go to local businesses with donation letters to ask them to sponsor students as well.
- Other ideas?

8. Questions & Answers