

III Daily Life and Housing

III-1 Looking for Housing

1. Applying for Prefectural Housing

Applications for Osaka Prefectural Housing are accepted at specified periods several times a year. Each time, new brochures are issued and distributed at city halls and ward offices in Osaka Prefecture, Information Plazas for prefectural residents, authorized management offices, Osaka Prefectural Government and other places. Tenants are determined by lottery and must meet certain criteria. Foreign nationals who meet all of the following conditions can apply for prefectural housing:

- ① Earning the income level that matches the criteria for application.
- ② Currently having difficulty finding housing.
- ③ Living or working in Osaka Prefecture. (Or plan to work within the prefecture)
- ④ Completed their resident registration.

Osaka Prefectural Public Housing Office:

URL http://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/s_jutakukeiei/ (Japanese Only)

2. Other Public Housing

City Housing	Housing provided by the city for households whose earnings are lower than the threshold
Public Rental Property Specified by Osaka Prefecture	Housing directly provided by Osaka Prefecture for those with middle-range incomes. http://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/jutaku_kikaku/boshujigyo/index.html
Osaka Prefecture Public Company Rental Housing	Housing managed by Osaka Prefecture Public Company for people with middle-range incomes ☎ 06-6203-5454
UR Housing	Housing built and managed by the Urban Renaissance Agency for people with middle-range incomes ☎ 06-6968-1717

3. Looking for Private Housing

When you are looking for private housing, clarify your needs, including rent, deposit, location, size of housing and other conditions. Real estate agents (who can show you rental houses and apartment rooms) in the area where you plan to reside can present you choices in rental housing. You can also use real estate agencies to appraise market value to help clarify your desired range and be informed of general housing costs. Also, you can research housing information magazines. Other helpful resources include classified advertisements for housing on foreign language online sites that offer job and housing information to foreigners living in Japan.

After you decide on the type of housing you will rent, you need to make a rental agreement (contract to lease an apartment room or other housing) at the real estate agent's office. On such rental agreements, not only the rent, fee for communal services, and deposits, but also cautions for when you vacate the residence, whether you can have pets, and other rules should be clear. Therefore, only sign an agreement after you fully understand the content. It is important to avoid future problems by clarifying when you have to notify your real estate agency about the termination of the contract, the amount they will retain from the deposit money you pay (upfront), and breakdown of the usage amount subtracted from the deposit.

There is also the Osaka Anshin Housing Promotion Council that provides useful information to assist with your house hunt.

URL <http://www.osaka-anshin.com/>

○ Money Required When Making a Housing Lease Contract

Rent	Monthly rent. You need to pay the rent of the following month. Therefore, you need to pay rent for two months up front.
Maintenance Fee (for apartments)	Residents pay monthly to cover the costs of the cleaning and maintenance of communal spaces
Deposit (partially refundable)	When a tenant makes a contract, leasee pays deposits to guarantee paying the rent to the landlord (the owner of the property). In the Kansai area, average deposits are equivalent to about a month to 3 months rent, and they are used for house maintenance or other purposes. When a tenant moves out, typically 30% to 50% of the deposit money is subtracted from the refund.
Key Money	This is a non-refundable gratuity payment to the landlord.
Commission	Commission you pay to the real estate agent.

III-2 Moving Out and Leaving Japan

1. Procedures at Your Old Residence Before Moving

When you move out of a rented property, you must pay the water, gas and electricity utility bills. Call each utility company to notify them of your planned vacancy date and ask them for a fee settlement. Additionally, submit a notice of vacancy to the post office nearest your residence, so that all incoming mail will be transferred to your new address - free of charge for the entire following year.

If you move to a place in the same municipality, please hand in a "Notification of change of address" to your local government administration office. If you move to a place governed by a different municipality to that of your prior abode, please hand in a "Moving-out Notice" to your local municipality, receive a "Notice of Change of Address," and submit a "Notice of Ineligibility" to the National Health Insurance division in the ward office or town/city hall and return your insurance card to the division.

2. After Moving into a New Residence

Contact the gas and electricity companies. The gas company will send a person to open the gas line for the house, and will require a resident to observe this. Generally, if you turn the breaker on, the electricity becomes available for use, but you must notify the electricity company as soon as possible when you start using electricity. Water systems are different in each rental house/apartment, so ask the landlord.

Submit a "Moving-in Notice" at the local municipal office of your new residence within 14 days after your move. If you are insured by National Health Insurance, after notifying the relevant authorities at the town/city hall in your new municipality of the transfer of your address, apply for insurance in your new municipality.

If you have a driver's license, have your address changed at your police station.

3. When You Leave Japan

- ① Settle all bills accruing from your rented housing. Pay utility bills for gas, electricity, water, and domestic and international phone calls.
- ② If you are leaving Japan in the middle of the fiscal year, it is necessary to settle any due taxes. With regards to the residential tax, pay the entire amount for the fiscal year at your municipal office. Local taxes are calculated based on the previous year's income, so you need to pay the tax even if you will not remain in Japan for the full fiscal year.
- ③ Regarding income tax, you can still receive a refund after filing your final income tax return, if you arrange for a person to manage your tax payment and report to the tax office. Or, file a tentative income tax return and pay all unpaid income tax for the year before you leave Japan.
- ④ Submit a Notification of Change of Address (Abroad) at your local municipal office.
- ⑤ Regarding National Health Insurance, about a month before you leave Japan, please report your withdrawal from the system to the municipal office, settle the account and follow all proper procedures.
- ⑥ If you are a member of the National Pension system, you may be able to request a lump sum withdrawal payment after you leave Japan. Obtain an application form at a Japan Pension Service branch office or your workplace.
- ⑦ Hand in your Resident Card to an immigration officer when you leave Japan.

III-3 Water Service

You can drink the tap water in Japan, including in Osaka. After you move in to a residence, you need to apply for the water service.

1. Application

There will be a water service application card for new users located near the front door of your home or somewhere else nearby. Inform the waterworks department (bureau) of your municipality of the number on the card (this number is referred to as the Shiyosha Bango). Subsequent to you contacting the waterworks department (Bureau), one of their employees will come to open the water line to your home. It can take up to four days from the time you apply to the time you can actually use water, so it is recommended that you apply as soon as possible. In an apartment or rental housing, the building's management association or the landlord may arrange your water supply.

2. Water Rates

Water rates are comprised of the basic charge and a charge proportionate to the amount used. Usually, the water bill comes once every two months and arrives by post. Payment can be made by automatic payment from your bank account, by transfer from a financial institution or at certain convenience stores. This varies depending on municipality. Note that inability to pay can result in having your water turned off.

If there are sewers in your area, you will also be charged for their use. In communal housing, normally the management association includes the sewer cost in the water bill after calculating the water supply to your household.

3. Points of Concern in Winter

Water pipes can freeze or break on the coldest of winter days. On such days, it is necessary to take certain precautionary measures, such as letting a small amount of water run at night.

III-4 Electricity

1. Electricity in Japan

Electricity in Japan is provided at a stable voltage of 100 Volts. Depending on the region, the frequency can be 50Hz (in East Japan) or 60Hz (in West Japan). Incidentally, the Osaka region is 60Hz.

If you use an electric appliance taken from abroad, because of the frequency difference, the performance of some electrical appliances or tools may be impaired, they may not be able to be used and could breakdown, so please be cautious.

2. Application for Electrical Service

In order to apply for electricity services, please call the customer service department of your nearest Kansai Electric Power Company office after you have pulled the main breaker. There are several other electricity companies you can choose from. The main breaker is usually located in an electricity distribution box (which stores all of the leakage and safety breakers necessary for safe electricity use) on the wall in the entrance way or kitchen. A contact voucher will be in either of these locations. Apply by either calling the number on the voucher or sending the attached postcard to the office noted on the voucher.

3. Payment

A monthly bill will be sent to you according to the meter-reading result. You can pay at various locations such as your local Kansai Electric Power Company office, financial institutions or convenience stores, so take the necessary steps to make payments when you receive bills. Also, you may establish automatic payment from your bank account.

4. Notice of the Amount of Electricity Used

The image shows a Japanese electricity bill from Kansai Electric Power Co., Inc. with several English annotations pointing to specific parts of the bill:

- Notice of the Amount of Electricity Used. It is delivered when the meter is checked.** - Points to the top header of the bill.
- Customer Number (Contract number of customer. Used for inquiries)** - Points to the customer number (08141967040100).
- Amount used in the last month** - Points to the usage amount (351kWh).
- Date of withdrawing the fee from your bank/postal savings account** - Points to the withdrawal date (August 20th).
- Final due date of payment for this bill (if payment is made after this date, a late charge will be added to the next month's bill)** - Points to the final due date (August 31st).
- Amount received (amount received during the previous month for those paying through their bank/postal savings account)** - Points to the amount received (2214 yen).
- Next date for checking the meter** - Points to the next meter check date (September 8th).
- Contact telephone number** - Points to the contact number (06-391-1061).
- This month's charge** - Points to the current month's charge (377 yen).
- Electricity bill (fee for reference, calculated from the amount of the fuel used in the past month)** - Points to the fuel cost section.
- Type of contract** - Points to the contract type (Type A).
- Last month's charge** - Points to the last month's charge (310 yen).
- Adjustment amount of fuel expenses (amount to adjust in case of the exchange rate and/or fuel cost changes more than a certain level)** - Points to the fuel adjustment amount (156 yen).

If you register your mail address, you can check your monthly electricity bill and amount of electricity used.

Provided by Kansai Electric Power Co., Inc.

III-5 Gas

1. Types of Gas

There are two types of gas: one is called city gas and is delivered by pipe to homes and buildings. The other is propane gas, in tanks placed near houses or other places. The equipment used differs with respect to the gas. It is very dangerous to use equipment that does not suit the gas type. Please confirm what type of gas you are using with your landlord or a local gas company.

(1) City Gas

The meter for city gas is located outside your residence. The contact phone number for a new contract is written on the meter, so when you apply for new gas service, please phone the number. When you make a phone call, you will be asked your address, name, the first day when you wish to use gas service, preferable appointment time with a worker who will visit your house, as well as other details.

Usually after you call, a gas technician visits you to open the gas line. You need to stay at home when the technician visits.

(2) Propane Gas

Even in the areas where propane gas is provided, just as with city gas, there is a tag on the meter with a contact number to call. Please dial the number when you apply for propane gas services. A fuel shop delivers the propane gas in tanks. Please note that you will not be able to use the same appliances and equipment used for city gas when using propane.

2. Gas Leakage

Gas gives off odor, so you can smell the gas when it leaks. When you suspect a gas leak, immediately turn off the gas at the main and report the suspected leak to the gas company.

Report suspected city gas leak (Gas leak hotline, Osaka Gas.
Japanese only)

Osaka City: ☎ 0120-0-19424

Osaka Prefecture (south): ☎ 0120-3-19424

Osaka Prefecture (northeast): ☎ 0120-5-19424

III-6 Garbage

1. Garbage Disposal

Separate garbage collection is carried out in order to reduce its amount and aid recycling.

Types of garbage separation

- Burnable garbage
- Non-burnable garbage
- Newspapers, magazines, cans and PET (plastic) bottles

If you do not follow the rules or proper method regarding garbage disposal, it may cause you to get into trouble with your neighbors.

Things you should not do

- ① Dispose of garbage on non-garbage-collection days.
- ② Dispose of garbage outside the designated area.
- ③ Dispose of garbage without sorting.

The exact rules and types of garbage to be sorted out are different depending on municipality, so we recommend asking someone at the ward office, city/town hall or even your neighbors about this. Some public offices offer explanations regarding garbage disposal rules in foreign languages.

2. How to Dispose of Other Types of Garbage

(1) Batteries, Drinking Bottles and Other Types

Batteries contain dangerous substances and require special care and technology for their disposal. Therefore, they should essentially be returned to the collection box at the store in which they were purchased. Moreover, some stores refund money on empty beer and juice/soda bottles and others, so it is recommended that you confirm this at the store when purchasing.

(2) Plastic Film Packaging

Please collect plastic containers and wrapping films in a bag and dispose of them on the designated day.

(3) Large-Sized Garbage

Furniture and appliances no longer used (except for air-conditioners, TVs, refrigerators and washing machines: rules for these items are mentioned below) should be collected either on a designated day as "large-sized garbage" or taken away upon special request. Some municipalities may charge for collection of large-sized garbage.

(4) Air conditioners, TV sets, refrigerators, washing machines, tumble dryers

When you dispose of an air conditioner, a television, a refrigerator, a washing machine or a tumble dryer you must contact the shop you bought it from (or the shop you are going to buy a new one from) to take them away for a certain charge. Manufacturers will recycle these appliances. Municipalities do not collect them.

(For your information) Home Appliances Recycling Law

URL http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/it_policy/kaden_recycle/

III-7 Daily Life

1. Manners for Living in Japan

Adapting to Japanese Society

The observance of Japanese manners and customs, as well as an understanding of the Japanese way of living will make things easier when living here. It is recommended that you gain an understanding of these little by little.

- When you have an appointment with others, you should keep to the time agreed. If you might be late or need to cancel, you should make contact in advance.
- Japanese people bow in many situations by bending over and lowering their head.
- It is rude to ask personal questions (regarding occupation, income, family matters etc.) if you are not very close to the person you are speaking with.
- When making a request emphatically demanding or being overly self-assertive may offend people.

Communicating with neighbors

(1) Greetings

It is important to occasionally communicate with people in your neighborhood. Your regular greetings will help facilitate subsequent communication. In addition to this, it is also said that exchanging greetings with each other can be effective in preventing crimes in the area.

(2) Noise complaint

In urban areas, there may be some people who are particularly sensitive to daily noises. They may not even tolerate the noise of children. You should be particularly careful if living in communal housing such as an apartment building. Generally, please refrain from making noises audible to your neighbors after 10pm. Some people work nights, and therefore spend daytime hours at home sleeping.

The structure of wooden buildings often found in Japan may transmit sound relatively easily. Therefore even small noises you unintentionally cause can annoy your neighbors even though you believe you are being quiet. In particular, take special care and avoid using vacuum cleaners or washing machines late at night. When possible, avoid closing and opening doors with noise – especially late at night/very early morning.

If you are bothered by loud noises and live in communal housing, it is suggested that you consult with the real estate agent with whom you have made a contract. If your residence is not a communal one, it is recommended to consult with a board member of the neighborhood committee or a fellow neighbor.

(3) Neighborhood Committee (Town Community Association)

In your local area, a local community association may hold autonomous activities in an effort to promote ties among neighbors, clean up public areas and prevent crimes. Participation in such activities and registering for the neighborhood committee is completely voluntary. However, if you become a member, you can easily obtain information about the administration of your local municipality, and your membership will be appreciated by your neighbors. Thus it can be beneficial to you. Furthermore, if you and your neighbors get acquainted with each other, it can be useful for crime prevention, so please join in these activities as much as possible.

(4) Information circulation in the community

After you join the neighborhood association, you will receive a circular notice board (“Kairanban”). The typical circular notice board contains a leaflet notice from the municipality office, which is bound to a clipboard. After you read the circular notice brought by your neighbor, please affix your hanko (personal seal) or signature on it and pass it on to the next household. If you’re unsure of whom to pass it to after you, it is probably best to ask the person who gave it to you.

(5) Cleanup activities

Some communities in towns or apartment buildings have set a day as cleanup day, where residents join a cleanup activity in public areas near their house, roads, nearby parks or other

places. On these days, at least one member from each household is expected to participate in cleaning or weeding activities. You are advised not to miss participation in such cleaning events since it is a good opportunity to improve ties with your neighbors, and get to know more about those who you rarely see on a daily basis for reasons such as differences in working hours.

2. Consumer Affairs

Nowadays, consumers are purchasing products and services as well as signing agreements online, and not only at actual shops. Either way, when you subscribe to a mobile phone or Internet service, buy a car on loan, sign an agreement for a property transaction and so on, you are entering a legal contract as a consumer. Due to different business customs and language barriers, you may face trouble when buying a product or signing a contract. In such cases, you can receive information and advice from a nearby consumer center. Consumer centers are consumer advocate bodies that offer free information and advice about products and services.

URL http://www.kokusen.go.jp/map/ncac_map27.html

III-8 When You Face Problems in Life

Systems or services below are provided for those with difficulties in their life. Please ask the welfare division of your municipality for further details. (Appendix IX-1)

(1) Local Welfare/Juvenile Support Staff

Social workers are able to provide consultation for people having trouble earning a living, elderly people living alone, bedridden elderly people, single parent families and people with disabilities. Staff also offer necessary assistance to these people in cooperation with welfare offices and related government organizations, and also give advice on issues related to children.

(2) Welfare Benefits

If you still have trouble making a living even after using up all of your property (assets) or savings, relied on other means or measures, or any support from your relatives, please consult the Protection Division (hogo-ka) of your municipality. The division will offer necessary protection depending on the severity of the situation.

(3) Living Expenses Loan

There are loan services for families in poverty to lend funds for living expenses and also for emergency support.