Survival Tips For Living In Japan

- Always remember to remove your shoes before stepping up from the **genkan** (entryway) area of a Japanese home into the house proper. Slippers may be provided.

- Always remove your slippers when you enter a **tatami** room in a Japanese home. Bare feet or socks only on **tatami** (straw mats).

- Smoking is prohibited on local buses and trains. Some long distance trains permit smoking in designated cars. If you smoke, please be respectful of others.

- Converse in a moderate voice when in public. Raising your voice, even if only in fun, disturbs and sometimes frightens our hosts. Additionally, use earphones with portable music players and keep your car stereo volume low when your windows are open.

- Yen is the only currency acceptable in Japanese stores or other business establishments. Japanese businesses do not accept U.S. dollars, as might have been the case in some other foreign countries you may have visited. It is helpful to keep a small amount of yen at home for emergencies (i.e. locking your keys in your car. It will cost about 10,000 yen to have someone come to your off base home and unlock your car.)

- Although bargaining is accepted and even sometimes expected in some countries, in Japan it is **not** done (except on rare occasions.)

- Tipping is a custom that is **not** followed in Japan. Please do not tip the waiters, taxi drivers, etc. off base. **The American tipping custom IS observed on base.**

- Our hosts are very fond of gift giving. When a gift is given to you, you are expected to return the favor. In addition, when you move into your new house you will be expected to give small gifts to your new neighbors, such as chocolates or other small treats.

- When riding the trains, if you have to stand, it is impolite to turn your back to a person who is sitting down. You must face the person who is sitting down. This can feel uncomfortable, especially when the train is packed, but turning your back is viewed as an insult.

- ALWAYS carry toilet paper with you. Restrooms off base may be Japanese style and usually won't have toilet paper, especially in train and subway stations.

- It is polite to use "san" after Japanese adult's name (i.e.: Suzuki-san), "chan" after a young girl's name, and "kun" (pronounced koon) after a boy's name. **Never** use these after your own name. These are honorifics, so it is impolite to "honor" yourself over another person.

- The Japanese do not understand the use of sarcastic remarks to make a point. They also do not make use of profane hand gestures…please avoid gestures or remarks that our hosts may find offensive.