

## Travel Guide: Only in Japan

### Japan Has Vending Machines for Everything!



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Thinking of visiting Tokyo, Japan? We highly recommend it. Tokyo is Japan's capital and one of the most modern cities in the world. But as modern as the city is, you'll notice that the Japanese people have a unique way of combining very old traditions into very modern ways of life. You can see this in Tokyo's vending machines.

Giving excellent service to customers has long been an important part of Japanese culture and Japanese vending machines do just that. Vending machines in Tokyo offer hundreds of varieties of drinks—both hot and cold. Offering a lot of choices is one way to provide excellent service to customers.

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Japan probably has more vending machines per person than any other country. Japan has more than five million vending machines, that's one vending machine for every 23 people.

Japan's vending machines are very high-tech and don't need cash or coins to pay. You can use either a Pasma or Suica rechargeable smart card. You give the card company money, and it transfers that money to your card. To pay, all you have to do is touch your card to the circular sensor! But be careful not to tamper with any of the vending machines. The machine will send a signal that calls the police.

Many business people work in Tokyo. They work very long hours and don't always have time to run to restaurants or even to the store. Vending machines help with that! There are rows of vending machines that offer hot, fresh meals. You can get a cup of Ramen noodles or a tofu hamburger with rice. The food comes out hot and tasty. Even the rice looks pretty, molded into neat little triangles.

By James Hadfield (Banana Vending Machine)  
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If you're hungry for a healthy snack, you can buy a banana from a banana vending machine. Once you make your selection, a neat little tray rises up to collect the banana and then lowers it gently and places it in the vending slot. This ensures that your banana doesn't get bruised or mushy.

Vending machines even sell things like razors, umbrellas, and newspapers. They also sell canned bread, which is a little bizarre but interesting.



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Do vending machines mean quick food on the go? Yes and no. In Japanese culture, it's considered extremely rude to eat or drink while you walk, so if you can't wait to eat your banana, you have to do it while standing next to the vending machine. Don't worry, there's a garbage can right next to the machine where you can throw your banana peel when you're done.

Vending machines that offer full meals often have nearby picnic tables. That way you can sit down to eat your food if you like.

Vending machines are not only for city dwellers, but for people who live in the countryside as well. Imagine that you're on your way home from the city after a long day of work and as you get off your train you suddenly remember you are out of rice... Don't worry! There are rows of vending machines that offer sacks of rice in a wide variety. (Keep in mind that rice is a staple on Japanese tables. It's as important as bread or milk in America.)

As you can see, Japan's vending machines have a lot to offer. They offer great service and are one of the things that will make your visit to Tokyo a great one!

