

Pacific Paradise

By Jennifer G. Williams

Ah—you're lucky enough to have orders taking you to the Pacific region. Whether you're heading to Hawaii, Guam, Japan, Okinawa, Korea or another Pacific Rim country, you are definitely in for a unique experience! But as with any move overseas, there are some things you should know before you go, so you can better prepare yourself and your family for the big adventure.

Photo courtesy of Japan Nation Tourism Organization © Nagano Prefecture/© JNTO

Most Pacific duty stations have smaller housing and limited storage facilities available, so your best bet is to decide what you have to take and what you can leave behind with a relative or in storage for a few years. Note that many military installations offer appliances, such as washers, dryers, ranges, and refrigerators, for military residents both on- and off-base to use. Check with your individual installation to see what is offered, so you can better plan your packing.

The easiest way to overcome some of the cultural barriers may be to learn some of the language and customs of your new home. And try to step outside your comfort zone and try something new—whether it's an unusual food or participating in a cultural ritual. Most installations offer basic orientations in the host country's language and customs, to help you get started.

Hawaii

Hawaii is a chain of more than 125 islands so isolated in the Pacific (almost 2,500 miles from California and 4,000 miles from Japan) that at times, it seems like its own country, with its own customs and ceremonies. And while Hawaii is renowned for its gorgeous, varied scenery and moderate tropical climate, the state is also notorious for its high cost of living. Plus, Hawaii has some distinctive rules and regulations, so be informed before you go.

One helpful law to know concerns gun ownership: No one can own or obtain ownership of a firearm (including antique firearms and those inherited or received as gifts) in the state of Hawaii without first getting a permit to acquire one. For more information, visit www.hawaiiipolice.com.

And new in 2009: Motorists on Oahu (which includes Honolulu) are prohibited from operating any hand-held electronic devices while driving.

A great way to get acquainted with your new home before you go is to check out www.ehawaii.gov, a website that can link you to various state departments and agencies, give you employment and school information and even can give you detailed visitor's information for when you feel like exploring your new home and its neighboring islands.

Guam

Guam is the largest and southernmost island of the Mariana archipelago, and is the United States' westernmost possession. The island's beaches and climate have made it a top tourism destination for Asian and Pacific residents.

You do not need a fishing license to fish on Guam but there are certain areas where you may use only limited kinds of gear or none at all. Please note that it is illegal to remove any coral from any area, even if they are dead. A hunting license is required to hunt certain species, including pigs, deer and francolin (a type of game bird). Visit www.guamdawr.org for more information.

You may bring your personal firearms to Guam, but there is a specific registration process you must complete. You must have your bill of lading from your movers or your customs declaration form, your valid firearms ID (currently \$55, and obtainable through the Guam Police Department), a safety inspection form issued by the Guam Police Department Armory and \$40 per firearm. Visit the FAQ section at <http://gpd.guam.gov> for more information.

Japan

Visiting Japan's major cities, rural towns and villages is an odyssey through a thousand years, because no other nation on earth has been able to modernize and advance in technology while reflecting its traditions and cultural values at every turn. Towering skyscrapers in Tokyo may have Shinto shrines on their roofs while feudal castles may neighbor new office complexes and train stations.

Cities in Japan often offer signs in both Japanese and English, to help you make your way around. Many residents also speak some English, but it is advised to take an on-base

or online course in basic Japanese. Many more residents can read and write some English, so it may be helpful to carry along a pen and paper when you venture out

beyond the gates. Your orientation should include an overview of special cultural customs and etiquette, to help you better get along in your new surroundings.

The public transit systems in Japan's larger cities are so efficient (although crowded!), that many residents do not own a car. Most major road signs and train maps are in both English and Japanese. A Japanese driver's license (for which you must complete a written and practical exam)

is required for all drivers who are staying in Japan more than one year (you may use a recognized international driver's permit for up to one year). Buying a car in Japan is relatively cheap, but keeping and maintaining one, with taxes, inspections and insurance—not to mention the high cost of fuel—can get expensive.

Speaking of costs, many basic items, such as milk and bread can be pretty expensive. And Japanese merchants mostly deal with cash, so get acquainted with the exchange rate and your local banking institution if you plan to shop on the economy.

If you have guns, note that some firearms, including pistols, are prohibited from entering Japan. Others, including hunting rifles, are severely restricted. Visit www.customs.go.jp/english/canswer_e/pdf/FAX1808e.pdf for more information.

Some helpful resources in touring Japan before you cross the ocean can be found at www.japan-guide.com and www.jnto.go.jp/eng. These websites offer information on everything from finding a job to how to properly get rid of your garbage, and even feature guides to Japanese etiquette and customs.

Okinawa

While Japan declared Okinawa a prefecture in 1879, this ancient "Kingdom of the Ryukyus" retains its own unique language, culture and cuisine.

The group of islands in the Ryukyu archipelago that encompasses Okinawa lies southwest of mainland Japan in the East China Sea. Its capital city, Naha, is a two-hour flight from Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Taipei or Manila. Although people on the main island of Okinawa speak what is known as Okinawan, dialects on the other 43 inhabited islands differ considerably.

Its sub-tropical climate keeps Okinawa balmy even when neighboring countries are in the dead of winter.

Okinawa's pristine white beaches, stunning coral and array of brilliantly colored flowers make the islands an ideal resort destination. In fact, Okinawa is in the same latitude zone as other famous beach resorts, including Florida,

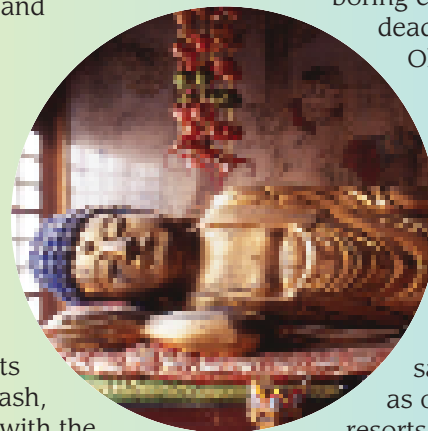
Hawaii and the Bahamas.

Okinawan cooking is generally spicier than Japanese food, and is more heavily influenced by Chinese cooking styles. Pork is a dominant ingredient in Okinawan cuisine, along with local seafood and native tropical vegetables and fruits.

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Photo courtesy of Japan Nation Tourism Organization ©Iwate Prefecture/©JNTO



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Be sure to check out www.okinawa.com, a comprehensive website that features everything from interesting factoids and frequently asked questions about the islands to helpful native words and phrases and even recipes for traditional Okinawan cuisine.

South Korea

Korea rests on a peninsula on the northeastern section of the Asian continent and is bordered by thousands of islands. China and Russia are to the north and Japan is to the east. The country has a temperate monsoon climate with four seasons—but between the cold,

Siberian-influenced winters and the rainy and typhoon seasons of summer, the spring and autumn are the best times to really enjoy the peninsula and its host of islands.

From ski resorts and well-forested national parks and Seoul's sprawling metropolitan area in the north, to beautiful wide beaches along its coasts and romantic island getaways on Cheju-Do Island south of the mainland, South Korea packs a lot into its peninsula, and almost any destination can be reached in an hour or less by air from any other part of the peninsula.

South Korea offers many public transit options, but if you want to

drive your own vehicle, you'll need to obtain a Korean driver's license. Visit www.dla.go.kr/eng/main.jsp for the most updated information. South Korea has strict laws concerning bringing guns into the country. Be sure to check with your new installation's legal office for the most up-to-date information concerning firearms on or off post.

One incredible resource for new residents and visitors alike is the revamped www.korea.net website, which not only features a search option, but offers links to various government agencies and the country's national tourism organization. ●

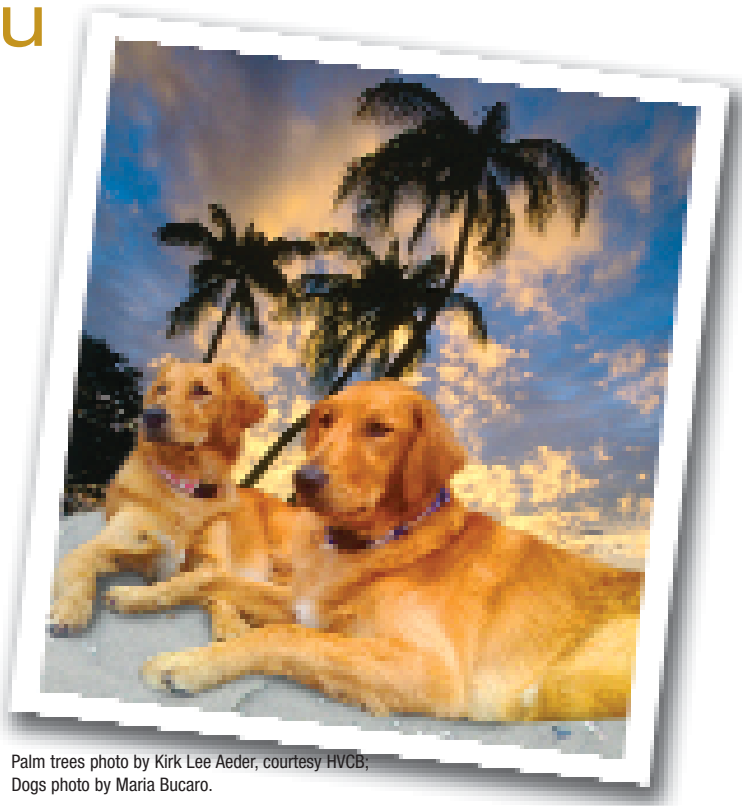
Taking Pets With You

Planning ahead is key if you plan to take your family pet with you overseas. Check out these brief rules and regulations, and visit these websites for more detailed information and timelines. You may want to consider if it would be better and/or easier to leave your pets with a trusted friend or relative while you are overseas.

Hawaii: If you have pets, be sure to check out Hawaii's animal quarantine laws at <http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/ai/aqs/info> a few months before your scheduled arrival. Hawaii has a very strict policy concerning animals coming into the state, and has several requirements, including blood tests and microchip identification, before dogs or cats are allowed to enter. The state has approved a new pet quarantine program in which your pet can be released to you in as little as five days.

Guam: It also pays to plan ahead when bringing your pet to Guam. Incoming animals are required to complete a 120-day confinement in an approved quarantine facility. However, if specific pre-arrival and post-arrival requirements are met, animals may qualify for an alternate 30-day quarantine. It is suggested that you contact the Guam Department of Agriculture at least 90 days prior to your intended arrival to satisfy all requirements. Visit www.petsonthego.com/impguam.html for more information.

Japan/Okinawa: Pets are allowed to enter Japan and Okinawa, but only after a strict procedure is followed. Pets without the proper health certification, testing and microchipping are subject to quarantine of up to 180 days at the owner's expense—with kennel rates averaging about \$30-35 a day. For detailed information, visit www.maff.go.jp/aqs/english/animal/dog.



Palm trees photo by Kirk Lee Aeder, courtesy HVCB;
Dogs photo by Maria Bucaro.

South Korea: Bringing pets to Korea is slightly easier than to Japan, but there's a limit of four animals per family. Any more than that requires advance notice to the National Veterinary Research and Quarantine Service, so that animals can be held in a quarantine area for one day upon arrival. Korea also requires health certification and other paperwork be completed on each animal. Visit www.nvrqs.go.kr/eng/rese_quarantine_02.asp?pageNumber=3-0 for more information. ●

Hale Koa/KMC

Learning the Language

It's a good idea to take advantage of any free classes in language your new installation may offer. You also may want to get a CD course or books on your new home's language. To help get you started, however, here are a few helpful words and phrases.

Japanese

Hello*konnichiwa, moshi moshi (on phone)*
Goodbye*Sayounara*
My Name is ——*desu*
I Don't Understand*Wakarimasen*
Please Write it Down*Kaite kudasai*
Excuse Me*Sumimasen*
Thank You*Arigatou*

Korean

Hello *Ahn-yeong-ha-sey-o, Yeoboseyo (on phone)*
Goodbye*Ahn-ye-ong*
My Name is —*Je Ireum-eun — im-ni-da*
I Don't Understand*Mor-eu-ges-se-um-ni-da*
Please Write it Down*Che-o-geo Jes-ey-o*
Excuse Me*Shill-eh-hag-es-sum-ni-da*
Thank You*Kam-sah-ham-ni-da*

Chamorro (Guam)

Hello*Håfa ådai / Buenas*
Goodbye*Ådios Esta / Åsta*
My Name is—*Nå'ån-hu si—*
I Don't Understand*Ti hu Komprende*
Please Write it Down *Pot Fabot Tuge' fan pãpa'*
Excuse me/Sorry?*Dispensa yo'*
Thank You*Si Yu'us Mã'åse'*

Hawaiian

Welcome/Hello*Aloha*
Goodbye*A hui hou, Aloha*
My Name is*'O ... ko'u inoa*
I Don't Understand*Maopopo ia'u 'ole*
Please Write it Down*E kÇkau iho 'oe*
Excuse me/Sorry*E kala mai ia'u!*
Thank You*Mahalo, Mahalo nui*

Okinawan

Hello *Chuu Wuganabira, Moshi Moshi (on phone)*
Goodbye*Guburii Sabira*
My Name is——*yaibiin*
I Don't Understand*Wakayabiran*
Please Write it Down*Kachi Kwimisheebiri*
Excuse me/Sorry*Guburii Sabitan*
Thank You*Nifee Deebiiru*



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