

Salary per annum - ¥3,600,000

Monthly Salary - ¥300,000 (less taxes, insurance, rent, etc.)

Current Exchange:	¥98.18 = \$1	=	\$3,056.61	\$36,667.35
\$1 = ¥87.1 ~ 110.7	June 2008 ~ June 2009	=	\$3,444.32	\$41,331.80
		=	\$2,710.03	\$32,520.33
\$1 = ¥99.2 ~ ¥123.9	June 2007 ~ June 2008	=	\$3,024.19	\$36,290.32
		=	\$2,421.31	\$29,055.69
\$1 = ¥110 ~ ¥122.1	June 2006 ~ June 2007	=	\$2,727.27	\$32,727.27
		=	\$2,457.00	\$29,484.03

As a JET over the last three years, your annual salary converted to US\$ has fluctuated dramatically in a range of about \$12,275! (In February 2002, the yen depreciated to ¥135 / \$1.) Over a three year tenure, this fluctuation could cost you as much as \$36,828!!! This is the equivalent of another year's salary as a JET!!!! The good news is that your costs in Yen will remain fairly constant.

What happens if you have bills to pay outside of Japan or you go on a trip?

#### 1) Banking in Japan

- a. Japan is a CASH SOCIETY. No personal checks. Pay in cash at the point of sale. Pay utility bills in cash at 7-11 OR by automatic debit. Pay restaurants and bars in cash. Buy small appliances and groceries in cash. Do you see a trend here?
- b. Get a regular savings account at a bank in Japan. Avoid country-bumpkin banks. They will have little experience with YOUR needs and it may take hours for them to look up procedures for the purchase of \$US traveler's checks. Go with the biggest name bank you can in your town with ATM's.
- c. You will need your Gaijin Card and a hanko (AKA inkan). A hanko is a seal with your name on it that you ink and stamp instead of signing. Your bank book will show the stamp that you use. DO NOT LOSE YOUR HANKO.
- d. Use the ATM during business hours to save money. Japanese banks will charge you for using your ATM card at your bank to withdraw your money if you use the machine after business hours. After business hours means anytime after 5pm, anytime on weekends, and anytime on holidays. Yes, it is a scam.
- e. If you are in a big city, use CitiBank. If you are not in a big city, use a big local bank AND make a CitiBank account. You can access it in English online. CitiBank will allow you to use multi-currency accounts. If the rate is in your favor (EG ¥102/\$1), make an online transfer in the same bank to your \$US account. When the rate is high (EG ¥120/\$1), transfer the money bank to your yen account. By being clever and while maintaining complete access to your money in Japan, you have just earned slightly less than 20%. Wow.

- 2) Phone Line Rights - ¥80,000 to buy. This gives you the right to have a phone line connected to your abode. It is cheaper to lease one if you are staying for only one year. If you think there is a chance that you will stay more than 1 year, it is cheaper to buy it upfront. These are freely alienable – you can always sell it when you leave. Ask about this now – your school may loan you one OR you can buy it from the previous JET.

- 3) Cellular Phones – NTT DoCoMo, etc. Lots of models, lots of plans, get one with English menus and a manual – not all have these so LOOK! There are cellular phone companies on nearly every corner in Japan. To get a cell phone you will need:
  - a. Gaijin Card – ask your supervisor
  - b. Bank account from any Japanese bank (and your hanko – see 1(c) above)
  
- 4) Internet Access – Yahoo Broadband ADSL - No set up fee, ¥1,715 ~ ¥2,870/mo 8~50MB if you have a home phone. If no home phone, ¥3,379 ~ ¥4,534/mo. <http://bbpromo.yahoo.co.jp/>
  
- 5) How do I get money out of Japan?
  - a. Cash – for small amounts this is fine, such \$100 to exchange at the airport in Bangkok for your taxi and your first night in a hotel. Do not take all of your money in cash. Professional thieves are waiting for you throughout Asia. Exchange only what you need. Banks are everywhere and will be happy to exchange your money for you.
  - b. Traveler’s Checks – good for trips – can buy Yen or \$ - bad rate & fees. Insurance is the reason that you would buy these. If they are lost or stolen, you will be very happy that American Express is on your side.
  - c. Furikomi – bank transfer - \$50 charge per transfer, good rate – 2~3 days to wire payment to your bank of choice anywhere in the world.
  - d. Kaigai yuubin kawase – International Postal Money Order – You buy these at your local post office – hence, the name. It is generally a bad rate, then mailing costs and slow – additional time for payment clearance in target country.
  - e. Lloyd’s of London – No set up fee, competitive rates, \$10 fee, same day transfer OR contingent orders (ie send the money when the yen hits ¥102). Done by ATM from your bank in Japan to predetermined transfer accounts (personal, agent, etc.). <http://www.golloyds.com/en/>. Lloyd’s is wonderful.
  
- 6) Power of Attorney – Easy to create, no fee, must be notarized, can limit scope, good until revoked. DO THIS NOW. You will need it later to take care of your:
  - a. US Banking affairs
  - b. US taxes – probably none due, but you still MUST file
  - c. Student loan issues
  
- 7) How do I save money?
  - a. Back away from the *izakaya*.
  - b. Put aside a “man” a week - ¥10,000 – this means go out and party one night a week, not two. Your bank account and your kidneys will thank you.
  - c. If you are going to be overseas for a long period – EG three years or more, consider a monthly savings plan with a trusted financial advisor. I recommend Banner Overseas Financial Services (<http://www.bannerjapan.com/>). If you are going to start – start now.
  - d. One JET in rural Japan that I knew saved \$20,000 each year over a 3 year tenure with the JET Program. He took his \$60,000 home and made a huge down payment on a nice house in California. Another JET in a neighboring town left penniless as a direct result of failure to follow the advice in 7(a).
  
- 8) For additional inquiries, reach me at [expat4now@aol.com](mailto:expat4now@aol.com).

William Maher  
 ALT – 1993-1995      Fukuoka 1995-1998  
 Kumamoto, Japan      Kyoto 2000-2002