

# How to Book & Play Golf in Japan

Everything you need to know to book your round and enjoy an authentic Japanese golf experience

## Step 1: Check Availability

Start by finding available tee times on the golf course page on Nomae Golf.

### Select your date

On the course page, use the date picker in the "Check Availability" section to select your preferred date.

### View available plans

After selecting a date, you'll see a list of available tee times with detailed plan information including price, number of holes, cart availability, caddie options, and lunch inclusions. Prices vary by day of the week, time of day, and season. Weekdays are typically less expensive than weekends and holidays.



## Step 2: Select a Plan and Book on Rakuten

Once you've found a plan that suits your needs, you'll complete your booking on Rakuten Gora.

### What is Rakuten Gora?

Rakuten Gora is Japan's leading online golf booking platform, similar to Booking.com for hotels. It allows you to search, compare, and book tee times at golf courses across Japan.

### Click "Book on Rakuten"

Click the "Book on Rakuten" button next to your selected plan to proceed to the booking page on Rakuten Gora.

#### **Important: You'll see a language warning banner**

When you first visit Rakuten Gora, you'll see a banner message about the site being in Japanese. This is normal for international users. Here's what to do:

1. Read the banner (it explains that the site operates in Japanese)
2. Scroll to the bottom of the banner
3. Click the button to accept the terms and proceed
4. Once past the banner, use your browser's translation feature (Chrome: right-click → "Translate to English" or Safari: tap the translation icon)

**Don't let the Japanese interface intimidate you—browser translation works well for the booking process!**

### Complete your booking

On Rakuten Gora, you'll complete the following steps:

- Confirm your selected date and tee time
- Select number of players (Most courses accommodate 1-4 players per booking)
- Create a Rakuten account or sign in (registration is free)
- Complete payment with your credit card
- Receive confirmation email with your booking details - save this!

**Helpful Tip:** Rakuten Gora is primarily in Japanese, but modern browsers make it easy to navigate:

**Chrome:** Chrome: Right-click anywhere → "Translate to English"

**Safari (iOS):** Safari (iOS): Tap the aA icon in the address bar → "Translate to English"

**Safari (Mac):** Safari (Mac): Click the translation icon in the address bar

**Edge:** Edge: Right-click → "Translate to English"

The translation isn't perfect, but it's good enough to complete your booking. Key information like dates, times, and prices will be clear.

## Step 3: Before Your Round

### Arrival Time

**Arrive 30-45 minutes before your tee time.** This is essential in Japan and arriving late is seriously frowned upon. Japanese golf courses are very strict about punctuality. Use this time to check in at the front desk, change into your golf attire if needed, warm up at the practice range, and prepare mentally for your round.

### Check-in Process

- Present your booking confirmation (printed or on your phone)
- Complete any additional paperwork at the front desk
- Make any remaining payments if required
- Receive your scorecard and any additional course information

### Dress Code

Japanese golf courses have strict dress codes. Here's what to wear:

- Collared shirt: Required for all players (polo shirts are ideal)
- Golf shoes: Proper golf shoes with soft spikes or spikeless soles
- Conservative attire: Avoid jeans, t-shirts, or athletic wear

- Hat or visor: Optional but recommended for sun protection

*Note: Many courses require you to change into golf attire at the course and won't allow street clothes on the course.*

## What to Bring

- Your booking confirmation
- Valid ID or passport
- Credit card for additional purchases
- Sunscreen and sun protection
- Rain gear (Japanese golfers often play in light rain)
- Towel for cleaning clubs

## Step 4: Japanese Golf Etiquette

Golf in Japan is more than just a game—it's a cultural experience steeped in tradition, respect, and meticulous attention to detail. Following proper etiquette is essential to showing respect and having an enjoyable experience.

### Respect and Courtesy

- Bow when greeting: Bow slightly when greeting staff and fellow players as a sign of respect
- Keep noise levels low: Keep conversations quiet and avoid loud celebrations
- Remove hat when appropriate: Remove your hat and bow briefly when passing the clubhouse or other significant landmarks
- Turn off mobile phones: Phone usage on the course is generally discouraged

### On the Course

- Maintain pace of play: Slow play is particularly frowned upon. Keep up with the group ahead
- Repair divots immediately: Replace or fill all divots you make
- Rake bunkers meticulously: Smooth out all footprints and club marks in bunkers
- Fix ball marks on greens: Repair your ball mark and one or two others if you see them
- Stay on designated paths: Don't take shortcuts across fairways or protected areas
- Let faster groups play through: If your group is playing slowly, invite faster groups to pass
- Respect nature: Japanese courses often feature beautiful landscaping—admire but don't disturb

## After Your Round

- Thank your playing partners: Bow and express gratitude for the round
- Clean your clubs: Use the designated cleaning stations thoroughly
- Tip your caddie: If you used caddie services, tip 2,000–3,000 yen
- Consider the post-round meal: Participate in traditional post-round meals or drinks if invited—this is an important social aspect
- Thank the staff: Express appreciation to the pro shop staff and anyone who assisted you

## Important Reminders

### Don't Be Late

This cannot be stressed enough: punctuality is extremely important in Japanese culture, and even more so at golf courses. Being late can result in your booking being canceled without refund, and it

shows disrespect to the course and other players. Plan to arrive at least 30-45 minutes early.

## Cancellation Policy

If you need to cancel your booking, do so as early as possible. Cancellation policies vary by course and booking platform, but generally:

- Cancellations made 7+ days in advance: Usually full refund
- Cancellations made 3-6 days in advance: Partial refund (often 50-80%)
- Cancellations made 1-2 days in advance: Minimal refund (often 20-30%)
- No-shows or same-day cancellations: Usually no refund

Always check the specific cancellation policy when booking. If you must cancel, contact the course or Rakuten Gora immediately.

## Payment Methods

**Important: Some courses accept credit cards while others may be cash-only.** Please check with the course about accepted payment methods before your visit.

It's recommended to carry both cash (Japanese Yen) and cards to be prepared for any situation. ATMs are available at convenience stores near most courses.

## Weather Considerations

Japanese golfers often continue playing in light rain, so courses rarely cancel due to weather unless conditions are severe. Come prepared with rain gear and appropriate clothing for the season. Check the weather forecast before your round and plan accordingly.

## **Playing with Others**

If you book as a solo player or a small group, you may be paired with other players to fill a foursome. This is common practice in Japan and provides a great opportunity to meet fellow golfers. Be friendly, respectful, and embrace the social aspect of the game.

## **A Note on Cultural Respect**

By following these guidelines and embracing Japanese golf etiquette, you're not just following rules—you're participating respectfully in a cultural tradition that values harmony, respect, and the pursuit of excellence. Your behavior on the course reflects not only on you but also on international visitors as a whole. Enjoy your round and the unique experience of playing golf in Japan!