
GUIDELINES FOR FILMING IN JAPAN

About Japan Film Commission (JFC)

Japan Film Commission (JFC) is a national film commission as well as a network of film commissions in Japan. As a film commission, it provides services to overseas filmmakers who are considering shooting in Japan. As a nationwide network of film commissions, it offers educational programs to regional film commissions, supports the development of the film and video industry, and assesses local resources for the film and video industry. JFC also works closely with the national government, local governments, film commissions, film related companies and organizations, as well as professional organizations to contribute to the development of the shooting infrastructure in Japan.

JFC's Main Services and Activities

- Provides film commission services to overseas film crews shooting in Japan.
- Undertakes activities to enhance and promote the filming environment and locations in Japan.
- Forms a network of film commissions and other location support organizations throughout Japan.
- Provides JFC certification training to promote the development of support personnel for film production.

Flow for Shooting on Location in Japan

(1) Arriving in Japan

+ Required procedures for entering Japan

Citizens of certain countries are not required to obtain a visa, depending on the length of stay and whether they receive compensation while in Japan, when entering Japan for the purpose of producing a film. In all other cases a visa is required. Obtaining an Authorization of Resident Eligibility certificate from a source in Japan will help speed up the visa issuance process and will also simplify the immigration and customs process when entering Japan. The procedures to apply for a visa to enter Japan as well as the required documentation vary by the country of origin of the film crew. Below is a brief overview, but for further details check with the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Bureau of Japan as well as the embassy in Japan of the film crew's country of origin.

List of foreign embassies in Japan and their official websites:

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/link/zaigai/index.html>

+ Transport of Equipment

When bringing equipment into Japan to film or accepting crews who bring equipment to film, a customs document known as an ATA carnet will need to be obtained in order to make it easier to temporarily import the equipment duty free and to avoid paying import taxes or other guarantee money.

To learn about the actual procedures, please refer to the following website:

<http://www.jcaa.or.jp/carnet-j/about.html>

(2) Finding Locations and Local Crew

Information regarding locations throughout Japan, contacts for local film crew and production service companies can be obtained from JFC.

(3) Applying for Film Permits

In addition to obtaining permits for shooting on streets and at public and private facilities, filmmakers need to consider various factors when shooting in Japan. For example, products and displays cannot be filmed without permission. Passersby have portrait rights in some cases. Filmmakers also need to provide compensation for interrupting the business of private commercial entities. The time needed to obtain permits varies depending on the city or prefecture in which the shooting takes place.

(4) Finding Local Cast and Extras

Japanese actors can be hired by contacting local casting companies. In the event local residents are needed for filming, the producer may have the option of using a database of registered volunteer extras managed by the local film commission. Should the producer or production company need or choose to find extras on their own, it is the responsibility of the production side to brief the extras of their obligation of confidentiality as well as to obtain releases of their portrait rights.

(5) Purchasing Property and Casualty Insurance

All filmmakers are required to purchase property and casualty insurance before filming in Japan. The scope of this property and casualty insurance must include not only damage insurance against buildings and goods, but also damage caused to all persons participating in the production, including extras, cast, staff and others.

Important Information for Shooting on Location in Japan

Film commissions, production service companies, and location coordinators all offer services for on-location shootings.

Film commissions are not-for-profit public sector organizations, mostly run by local governments and tourism organizations, and their services are offered free of charge. Although there are over 100 local film commissions in Japan, services offered vary depending on the film commission, and many film commissions have only Japanese speaking staff. Therefore, JFC is the best contact for overseas filmmakers to obtain overall information on locations, Japanese crew, incentives, and any other information needed related to filming in Japan.

Production service companies and location coordinators are private companies or individuals that need to be hired by filmmakers. In many cases, obtaining permits, hiring local crew, renting equipment, arranging transportation, purchasing insurance, and other procedures require that the applicant is a Japanese citizen or a company based in Japan.

For more about filming in Japan, contact: Japan Film Commission

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