

2. Daily Life

A. Moving

When moving to Iwamizawa, you will have to complete the following tasks:

- ① Locate suitable accommodations.
- ② Obtain a personal seal (hanko).
- ③ Open a bank account.
- ④ Arrange to have utilities turned on in your home (water, gas, electric).
- ⑤ Register your residency at City Hall.
- ⑥ Arrange to pay taxes or have them automatically deducted from your salary.
- ⑦ Obtain the proper licenses if driving.
- ⑧ Understand the rules for disposing of waste.
- ⑨ Familiarize yourself with nearby hospitals in case of an emergency.

When leaving Iwamizawa, be sure to:

- ① Notify your landlord of your departure date and arrange for inspection.
- ② Notify your utility providers of when to stop service.
- ③ Notify the post office of your change of address and apply for your mail to be forwarded.
- ④ Close your bank account or arrange to have it closed.
- ⑤ Notify City Hall of your departure by filling out a notice of transfer (tenshutsu todoke).

B. Housing

Contact a real estate agent to find a house or apartment to rent. You can see listings at real estate offices, in housing magazines, or online. To avoid misunderstandings during your search, it may help to bring a Japanese speaker along if you are not proficient in Japanese.

Once you have found accommodations, you can enter a rental contract. Be sure to fully understand it, as you may not be familiar with Japanese practices.



Terminology:

- **Ya chin**: monthly rent. You may have to pay a full month even if you move in mid-month.
- **Shiki kin**: Refundable deposit. One or two months rent given to the landlord, returned upon moving out if there are no repairs needed.
- **Chukai ryo**: Realtor's fee. Commission paid to the real estate agent. Usually equivalent to one month's rent.
- **Kanri hi**: management fee. Paid together with rent to the landlord as a management cost.
- **Rei kin**: key money. A non-refundable fee paid to the landlord, usually the same as one to three months of rent.

- **LDK**: Living, dining, kitchen. Used to describe the size of the property. The number in front (eg. 2LDK) refers to the number of rooms in addition to the living room, dining room, or kitchen.
- **Tatami mats (jo)**: the size of a room is described by the number of tatami mats that can fit in the room. One tatami mat (ichijo) is about 180 x 90 cm.

C. Life in Winter

Iwamizawa can be very cold, with winter lasting from December to March. The temperatures will be well below freezing for long periods of time.

During the winter, it is helpful to:

- Wear several layers of clothing, as temperatures differ greatly between indoor and outdoors.
- Wear shoes with good traction, as the roads are often frozen and icy.
- Drain the water in your residence when absent for long periods (even two or three days), because your pipes may freeze and burst.
- Allow fresh air into the room frequently when using heaters.

D. Utilities

I. Electricity

Electricity in Hokkaido is supplied by Hokkaido Electric Power Co. (Hokuden).

There are various ways to sign up for utility services. Fill in and post the necessary forms for each service, call the company, or visit the company in person. To discontinue service, call the utility company and give them any information requested.



Power outage

If the electricity in your house goes out, first check the circuit breaker to see if any of the switches are off. Your breaker will most likely be in the foyer/hall (*genkan*) area.

If you are unsure of where the breaker is, ask your landlord.

If the breaker has switched to "off" 「切」, turn off the lights or electronic appliances you are using and flip the switch back to the "on" 「入」 position.



If the electricity has gone out and all the breaker switches are on, or the electricity in your neighbourhood appears to be out of service, call the company in order to resolve the problem.

It is advised to always keep a flashlight in your residence for such emergencies.

II. Water

Iwamizawa's Water Department, located on the second floor of City Hall, maintains all water and sewage services. The charges include water and sewage.

If you are absent from your residence for a long period of time, you may have to drain your pipes (mizu nuki). If you don't, your pipes may freeze and burst, causing expensive water damage that you will be responsible for. Depending on how cold it is (if it does not reach above freezing temperatures for several consecutive days), you may have to drain your water even if you are only gone for a weekend.

Ask your landlord, neighbor, or previous tenant for how to drain your water in your specific situation. Turn off the main water valve, open all the taps in your sink, toilet, shower, washer, etc. and let all the water drain out. You can also buy anti-freeze liquid to pour into the toilet bowl.

If your pipes are partially frozen and water is not coming out, try wrapping the pipe with a cloth and pouring hot water on it.

III. Gas

There are two types of gas used in Iwamizawa – city gas and propane. City gas is provided through pipes under the roads. Propane (liquefied petroleum) is provided by compressed gas cylinders.

If something uses "gas", it is understood that it uses one of the two types. While there are other types of fuel like gasoline (for cars) or kerosene, they are not called "gas".

Gas appliances differ by gas types, so fires may occur if you use incompatible types of gas. **Be sure to confirm what type of gas your appliances use**, by consulting your landlord or gas contract.

City gas (natural gas)

Call the office before you move in and tell them your name, address, and the day you will begin your residence. A service person will visit your residence on the appointed day to inspect and open the gas valve. You will also receive your contract, relevant paperwork, and setup payment.

Propane/LP (liquefied petroleum) gas

Propane/LP gas is serviced independently. Ask your landlord for the relevant company's contact information.

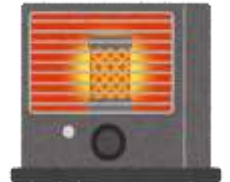


In the case of a gas leak, immediately stop using the gas and turn off all gas valves. Open the door and windows and call your gas provider's emergency number or the fire department. Do not use fire, lights, or fans.

IV. Gas stoves

There are different ways to heat your home, but gas heaters (stoves) are very common. Before purchasing one, check which type can be used in your residence, and make sure to have proper ventilation practices. If gas stoves are not well-ventilated, fires or carbon monoxide poisoning can occur. Following are the two main types of gas stoves.

- ① **Ventilated:** Gas heaters that have built-in ventilation.
 - A) **Chimney type:** it uses an exhaust tube to vent exhaust up and outside. For air intake, it uses air inside the room.
 - B) **FF (forced flue) type:** An air intake/exhaust pipe leads directly out of the rear of the heater and outdoors. If you decide on an FF type heater, you will need to make a hole approximately 5 cm in diameter behind the unit at knee height in order to feed the air intake/exhaust pipe outside.
- ② **Non-ventilated:** gas heaters that have no ventilation, usually portable ones. It is crucial to open windows or use them only in a well-ventilated space.



V. Disposal of Garbage

Garbage is separated into different categories and collection days differ from area to area. It is only collected from specific collection stations, and should be put out before 8:30 a.m. Garbage stations usually have a collection schedule posted on them.

Burnable, **non-burnable**, and **other** garbage should be put into **pink**, **green**, and **semi-transparent** or **clear** bags respectively. Bags are sold at convenience stores, grocery stores and drug stores in the area. The garbage bags that are sold in stores are for that vicinity only, so if you go to a store in a different city, they may not have the correct bags.



If your garbage is not sorted correctly, it may be refused by the collectors. There will be a notice on the bag with checkboxes identifying the reason. If refused, it is your responsibility to take it and re-sort it.

For more details, see the "Iwamizawa City Household Garbage Guidebook" (English). You can get a copy of this from City Hall, in addition to a 6-month collection calendar. It is also available online on the Iwamizawa City Hall website.

For oversized items, you can call the garbage disposal department at City Hall and schedule a pick up. Provide your name, address, and size of the items. They will tell you how much it will cost, and make an appointment to pick it up.

Consult the English garbage manual for detailed instructions on disposing of oversized items.

[\[https://www.city.iwamizawa.hokkaido.jp/material/files/group/1/content_20220304_141048_404.pdf\]](https://www.city.iwamizawa.hokkaido.jp/material/files/group/1/content_20220304_141048_404.pdf)



VI. Phones & Internet

Phone numbers:

Phone numbers in Japan are made up of three parts: the area code, the exchange number, and the line number. For example, the Iwamizawa City Hall number is as follows:

0126-23-4111

When calling from outside of Japan, first enter the country code, then leave off the "0" in the area code. For example:

+81-126-XX-XXXX

Overseas Calls:

To make overseas calls, you may need to get a phone plan that includes international calling. Alternatively, many smartphone apps are capable of phone calling or Wi-Fi calling. Some examples include WhatsApp or LINE.

Mobile phone plans:

There are many options to get mobile phone plans in Japan. Popular phone carriers include Rakuten, au, Docomo or SoftBank. You can go to any store location and sign up on the day of. There are often sales and promotions, so explore your options to find the best fit for you.

You may need a cash card, passbook, and other identifying information before you can sign a contract.

Prepaid phones are also available, though you have to travel to a larger city to find them.



Internet

Setting up internet is similar to setting up a cell phone plan. In fact, you can often get them bundled together from the same company. Consult with the internet provider of your choosing. Expect it to take some time, as a technician usually must go to your residence once or twice to set up the service.

Pocket-Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi only routers are also a reliable option, and require no setup.

E. Foreign Food

Foods that are not available in Japanese supermarkets can be found in a variety of other places.

- Costco: member only, but international memberships can be used. Locations in Sapporo and Ishikari.

- Jupiter: import store, locations in Sapporo.
- Kaldi: similar to Jupiter, locations in Ebetsu and Sapporo.
- Gyomu Super: bulk foods and import foods, locations in Iwamizawa and around Hokkaido.
- Foreign Buyers Club (online)
- Tengu Natural Foods (online)
- iHerb (online)

F. Festivals and Recreation

There are number of festivals held throughout the year in Iwamizawa, such as the "Hyappei" festival and shrine festival held in September, and the snow festival in February. There are sports facilities, parks, a library, amusement park, ski hills, fitness centers, and much more.

You can find information about events, facilities, and other aspects of life on the Iwamizawa City website.

[\[http://www.city.iwamizawa.hokkaido.jp\]](http://www.city.iwamizawa.hokkaido.jp)



G. Support for Foreigners

There is a variety of support systems for foreigners in Iwamizawa. One is the International Relations Department at City Hall. They can assist with things like:

- Japanese-English support at City Hall (in relation to city hall services).
- Information on the International Exchange societies in Iwamizawa.
- Information regarding international events and the sister city exchange.

For resources about living in Hokkaido, visit the Hokkaido government's English page.

[\[http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/foreign/english.htm\]](http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/foreign/english.htm)

There is also the Hokkaido Foreign Resident Support Center. They have a variety of resources about living in Hokkaido, as well as translation services in many languages.

[\[https://www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan/en/\]](https://www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan/en/)