

Concise Economic Geography of Japan

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北海道 Hokkaido

- Hokkaido is the northernmost island in Japan and is a single prefecture on its own. The population of Hokkaido is less than 5 million, while the population of Sapporo, the prefectural capital, is nearly 2 million.
- Temperatures in Hokkaido are cooler than in other parts of the country throughout the year, and there is a lot of snow in winter instead of little rain in summer.
- Hokkaido's industry is characterized by a higher proportion of primary industry (agriculture, forestry and fisheries) and a lower proportion of secondary industry (manufacturing) than other regions. Hokkaido's agricultural production is the largest in Japan, and agricultural products are shipped throughout the country.

東北 Tohoku

- The Tohoku region is located at the northernmost tip of Honshu, and the climate differs between the Pacific Ocean side and the Sea of Japan side.
- In the winter, the weather on the Pacific side is often fine, but on the Sea of Japan side there is a lot of snow and clouds.
- This is because the Ou Mountains, Japan's longest mountain range, runs through the center of the region and catches the cold air from the Sea of Japan in winter and makes it snowfall.
- The industrial structure is slightly more primary than the average for Japan as a whole.
- Sendai is the largest city in Tohoku, but with a population of about 1 million, the other prefectural capitals are not as large.
- All of the prefectural capitals are connected to Tokyo by the bullet train, and many young people leave for Tokyo after graduating, and in recent years the area has suffered from a declining population.

関東 Kanto

- The Kanto region consists of seven prefectures. Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures of Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama are known as the Metropolitan area.
- It has a humid climate with rainy summers, but is blocked by the Kanto Mountains to the north and the Chubu Mountains to the west, and is dry in winter.
- The Kanto Plain is the largest flatland in Japan, and is made up of sediment carried from the mountainous regions.
- Its main industry is tertiary industry, but manufacturing and agricultural output is also very large, reflecting the demand in a heavily populated area.
- It is the largest region in Japan with a population of over 40 million.
- Despite Japan's declining population as a whole, the Metropolitan area's population continues to grow. As a result, the average age of the population is the youngest in the country.
- Nevertheless, the elderly population is expected to grow rapidly in this densely populated area, and there are concerns about the problem of caring for the elderly.

中部（北陸・甲信・東海） Chubu

- The central part of Honshu (本州) can be divided into the Hokuriku region on the Sea of Japan, the Tokai region on the Pacific side, and the Koshin region sandwiched between them.
- Winter snowfall in the Hokuriku (北陸) region brings abundant water, making it Japan's largest rice producing region. While Niigata Prefecture has a close relationship with Tokyo, the region west of Toyama Prefecture has historically had strong economic ties with the Kinki region.
- The Tokai (東海) region has a mild and rainy climate. Mt. Fuji, the symbol of Japan, is located in Shizuoka Prefecture. The Tokai region has the largest concentration of manufacturing industries in Japan, and is home to major factories such as Toyota, Honda, and Yamaha, and has a high GDP per capita. The largest city is Nagoya City in Aichi Prefecture.
- The Koshin (甲信) region is the roof of Japan, and is surrounded by mountain ranges such as the North, South, and Central Alps and the Yatsugatake Mountains. Demographically, Koshin is directly connected to Tokyo.

鳳凰山 Mt. Houou (Phenix)



- The mountain is located in the Yamanashi prefecture and is 2800m high.
- Since the medieval age, people have brought baby-like buddhist statues (ojizo-sama), believing that they could have babies by praying to Buddha.
- You need to walk more than 7 hours to reach the top of Jizo-ga-take peak, which is famous for the Phenix-like rock tower (Obelisk).

近畿（関西） Kinki or Kansai

- The Kinki (Kansai) region was the capital of Japan and the political and economic center of the country until the Edo period.
- The Kinki is the second largest populated area in Japan after Kanto.
- The three largest cities in Japan, Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto, are located in this region, but in recent years, its population has been gradually declining due to the relocation of central corporate functions to Tokyo.
- Japan's manufacturing industry has been supported by the technological innovations of small and medium-sized companies that produce excellent intermediate goods. The Kinki region is emblematic of this characteristic of the Japanese economy.
- Kyocera and Nidec Corporation are among the technology companies that have developed in the Kinki region.
- The Kinki region is home to historic cities such as Kyoto and Nara, and has benefited most from the Japanese government's tourism policy. However, it has also been hit harder by the decline in foreign visitors due to the coronavirus pandemic than any other regions.

東福寺 Toufukuji Temple



- Toufukuji temple near the Kyoto Station, is one of the authoritative Zen temples built in the Muromachi era.
- Today it is the most popular place in Kyoto to admire autumn leaves, where you will see more foreign travelers than in any other places in Japan.

中国・四国地方 Chuugoku and Shikoku

- The Chugoku region is divided into the San'in region, which faces the Sea of Japan, and the San'yo region, which faces the Seto Inland Sea.
- Like the Hokuriku region, the San'in region has a lot of snow and a small population. The San'yo region has a mild climate and is scenic, and its manufacturing and tourism industries are thriving.
- In the Shikoku region, Ehime, Kagawa, and Tokushima prefectures are connected to Honshu by three bridges on the Seto Inland Sea, and the manufacturing and tourism industries are flourishing.
- In contrast, Kochi Prefecture, which is separated from the other prefectures by the Shikoku Mountains and faces the Pacific Ocean, has a thriving fishing industry.

厳島神社 Itukushima Shrine



- The shrine in the Hiroshima prefecture was built by the warlord Taira-no Kiyomori in the 12th century.
- The shrine is famous for its red gate, simmered in the water of the full tides.
- One of the most popular place for tourists and listed in the World Heritage of the UNESCO.

九州 Kyushu

- Kyushu is separated from Honshu and Shikoku by the Shimonoseki Strait. Close to Korea and China, Kyushu has been a gateway to continental civilization since ancient times, and has also been a base for modern Japan's military expansion into Asia.
- According to the mythology of the Chronicles of Japan, the Japanese nation began in Kyushu.
- Reflecting its mild climate, Kyushu produces a large amount of agricultural products and exports them throughout western Japan.
- Because of the many volcanoes in the region, earthquakes are common, but the country is also rich in hot springs, and tourism is thriving. Beppu (Oita Prefecture) and Unzen (Nagasaki Prefecture) are particularly famous for their hot spring resorts.
- Fukuoka Prefecture, which is close to the Eurasian continent, played a leading role in the development of Japan's modern industry, and is famous for the heavy industries of Kitakyushu and the coal mining industry of Chikuho.
- Even today, many manufacturing industries are located in the prefecture.

福岡市 Waterfront



- The new business center of Fukuoka city has been developed since the bubble period (late 1980s).
- The area is full of business buildings, attractions, and hotels, with the professional baseball dome.

玄界灘 Genkai Bay (Sea)



- The Kagamiyama Hill confronts the Genkai Bay (Sea).
- In the ancient time, Mt. Ukidake (in the right) worked as a navigator to lead boats along the coast.
- The 虹の松原 (Rainbow Forest of Pine trees) has protected the town against the strong wind from the north.

海地獄 The blue ocean hell



- In the Beppu city of the Oita prefecture is the largest *onsen* town in Japan.
- The hot springs are colored blue, white, red, or yellow, reflecting the types of volcano eruptions.

The Ito Campus, Kyushu University

九州大学伊都キャンパス

