

GeoGuessr Japan Guide
by: DazaiNLH

This guide is a bit outdated at the moment. I'll be working on a large series of updates over the next week or two

Quick pole top doc I threw together:  pole tops

Will polish and add to this doc at some point.

This guide ended up being over 60 pages so please refer to the table of contents for navigation

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* = three most important sections imo

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Country Maps

By Island



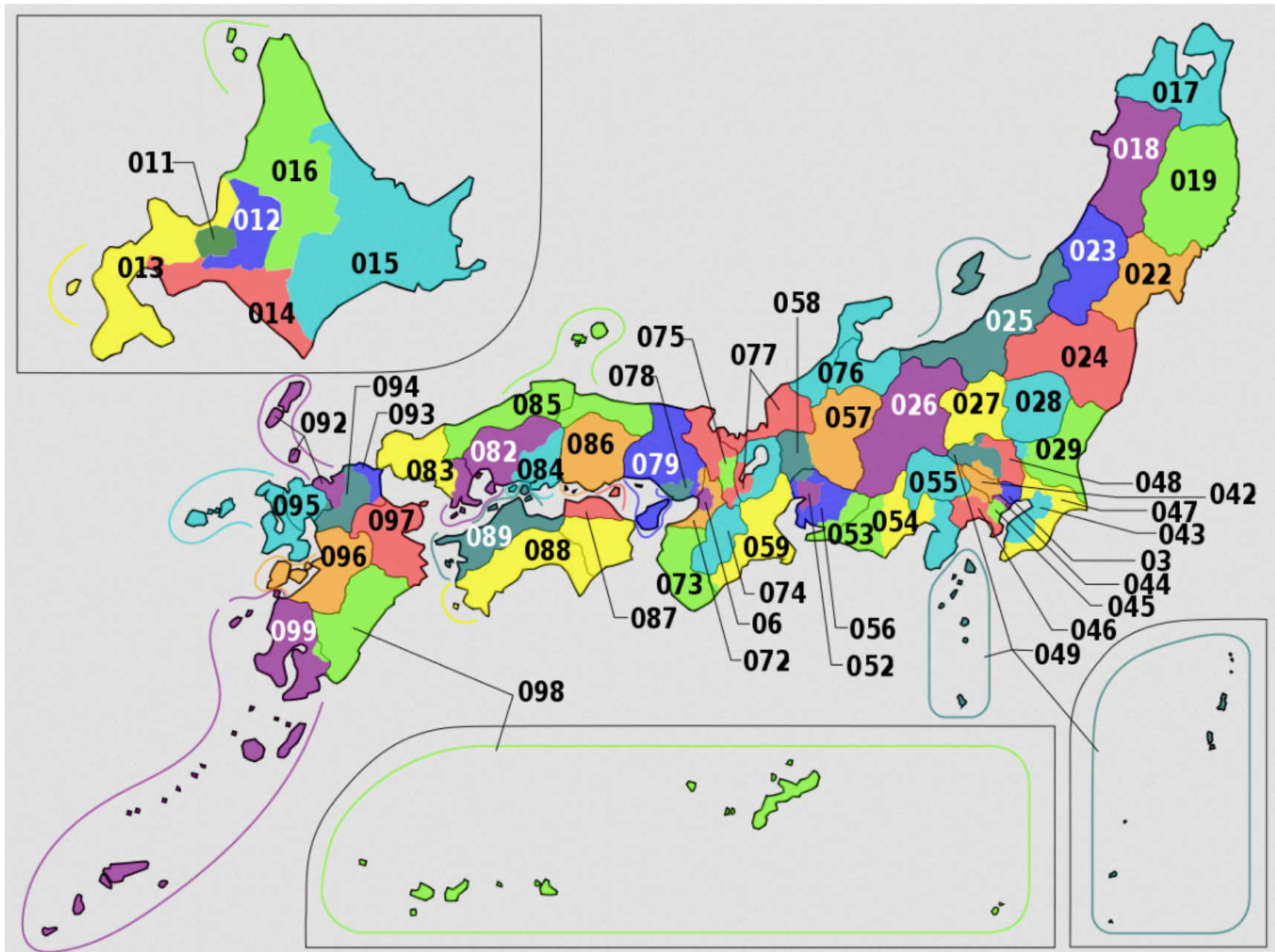
By Region



By Prefecture



Area Codes



More Notes on Area Codes:

When considering whether a phone number is useful look for these formats:

Typical format	0X-XXXX-XXXX
	0XX-XXX-XXXX
	0XXX-XX-XXXX

(also possible to see 0XXXX- and even 0XXXXX-)

- Also, with the exception being 011, 0X0 and 0X1 codes which are non-geographic.
- Geographic numbers should always be 10 digits long. You can see numbers of various lengths, but all others are non-geographic.
- 0120-XXX-XXX is incredibly common and can be found on many ads, **BUT** this is used for non-geographic toll-free numbers. It does not point towards any specific region.

Language Tips

Kanji for Prefectures and Major Cities

Being able to read/identify the kanji for prefectures and major cities is probably the most important skill for region guessing in Japan. They are written on a wide variety of signs, poles, and bollards. License plates also have the prefecture written at the top, which is useful when unblurred. There are readable place-names way more often than you may think. Examples:



仙台市 (Sendai-shi) (bollard outside Sendai)



長野 (Nagano) (Prefectural Highway Shield)

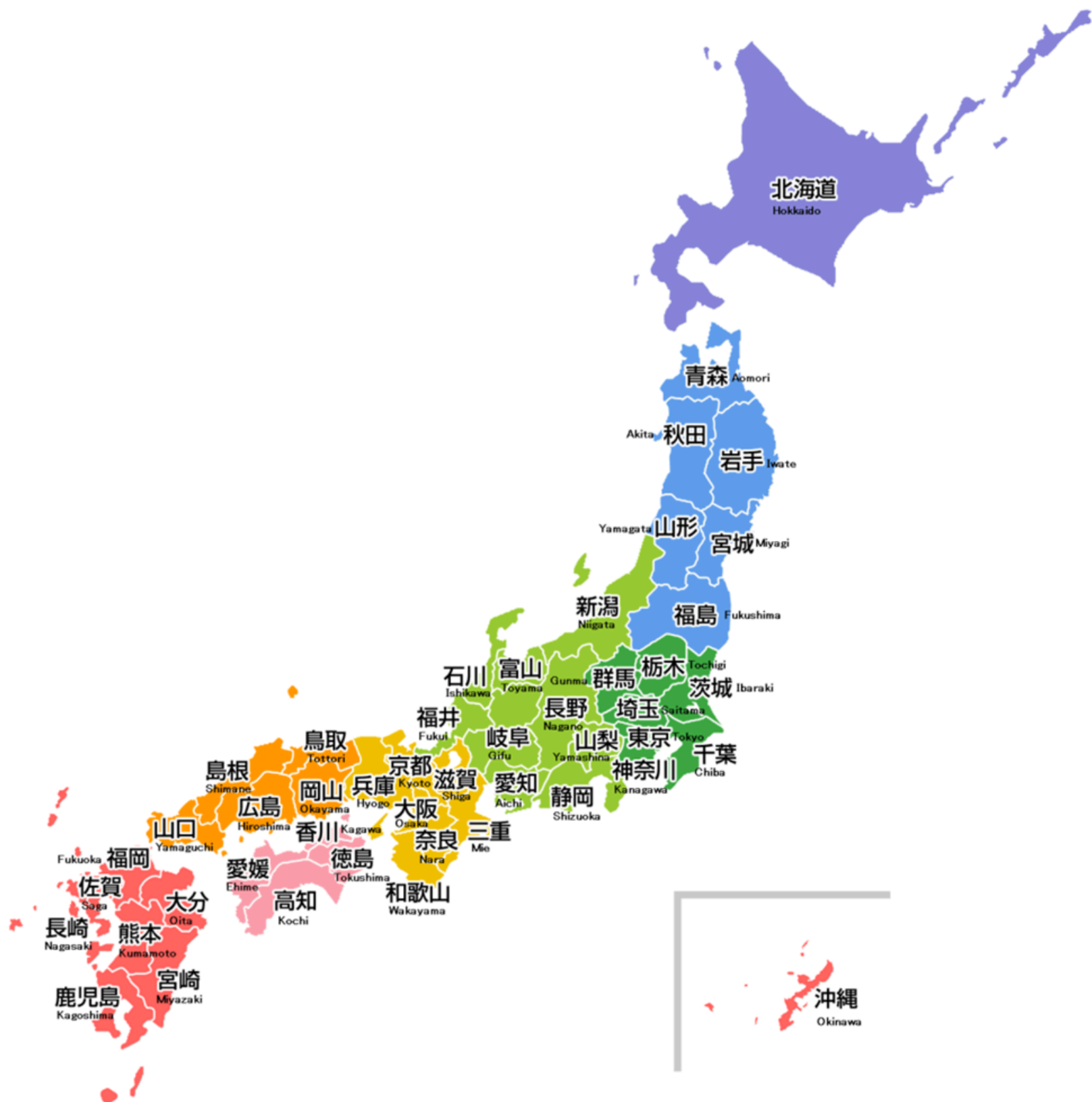
For anyone that has used Anki before, I made a flashcard deck for memorizing important kanji: (And I highly recommend Anki for anyone that hasn't used it before. I use it for school and language learning every day)

<https://ankiweb.net/shared/info/1127837905>

Spiral made a great map for learning prefecture kanji:

<https://www.geoguessr.com/maps/61787162a5b17500011149cc>

Prefecture Kanji



Other Useful Kanji:

Here are a few good kanji to know besides prefecture and city names:

I made this in Word then took a screenshot because formatting is impossible in google docs lol

県

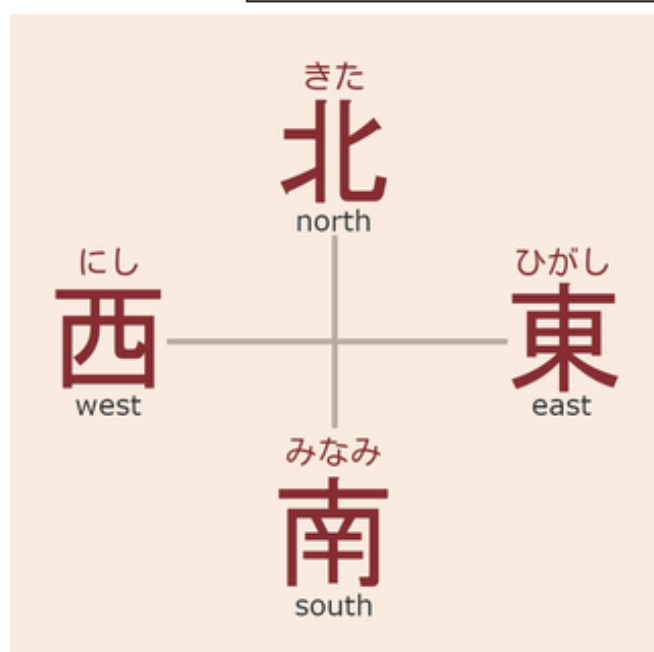
Prefecture

Always look for this kanji on signs because it's fairly common and makes picking out the prefecture kanji much easier on signs with lots of text

市

City

Makes identifying city names much easier. Just like 県, it's especially useful for signs with a lot of text.



Cardinal Directions

Mostly useful when accompanied by 区 or other kanji on this page.

区

Ward; Borough

Tokyo is split into 23 wards and the names are plastered everywhere so especially useful there (the ward name precedes this kanji) Many other cities have at least north/south/east/west wards

町

Town

Used to mark town names outside city areas and often used to mark area/neighborhood names within cities

丁目

District of Town; City Block

Mostly useful for 5k-ing when you know the city. Typically preceded by a number that marks the district

Roads

Road Types and Signs:

(Likely at least a little variation in appearance across the country)	Shield	On Exit/Distance Signs
National Highway		The highways are pretty obvious
Prefectural Highway (Always see prefecture kanji written under the number)		^
Expressway		
Urban Expressway		
Circular Expressway		or 

National Highways:

If you're going to bother memorizing any highways, these are the most significant:



(Sorry if this is at all hard to read)

I never found this graphic particularly useful, but for completeness sake: (All National Highways)

numbers	Main area	direction of increase	numbers	Hokkaido	direction of increase
1- and 2-d numbers					
1-4	from Tokyo	-	5	Hakodate-Sapporo	-
6-11	from Tokyo	-	12	Sapporo-Asahikawa	-
13-35	Akita-Sasebo	N-S	36-40	Sapporo-Wakkanai	S-N
41-43	Nagoya-Kobe	N-S	44	Kushiro-Nemuro	-
45-58	Aomori-Okinawa	N-S			
3-d numbers					
101-226	Aomori-Kagoshima	N-S	227-244	Hakodate-Abashiri	S-N
245-270	Mito-Kagoshima	N-S	272-278	Kushiro-Hakodate	N-S
279-332	Aomori-Okinawa	N-S	333-337	Abashiri-Sapporo	N-S
338-390	Aomori-Okinawa	N-S	391-393	Abashiri-Sapporo	N-S
394-449	Aomori-Okinawa	N-S	451-453	Takikawa-Sapporo	N-S
454-507	Aomori-Okinawa	N-S			

Prefectural Highways

I don't have much to say about these because they are not very helpful unless accompanied by the kanji of the prefecture. The shields with name and number are relatively common on thin poles on the side of the pole.

Expressways

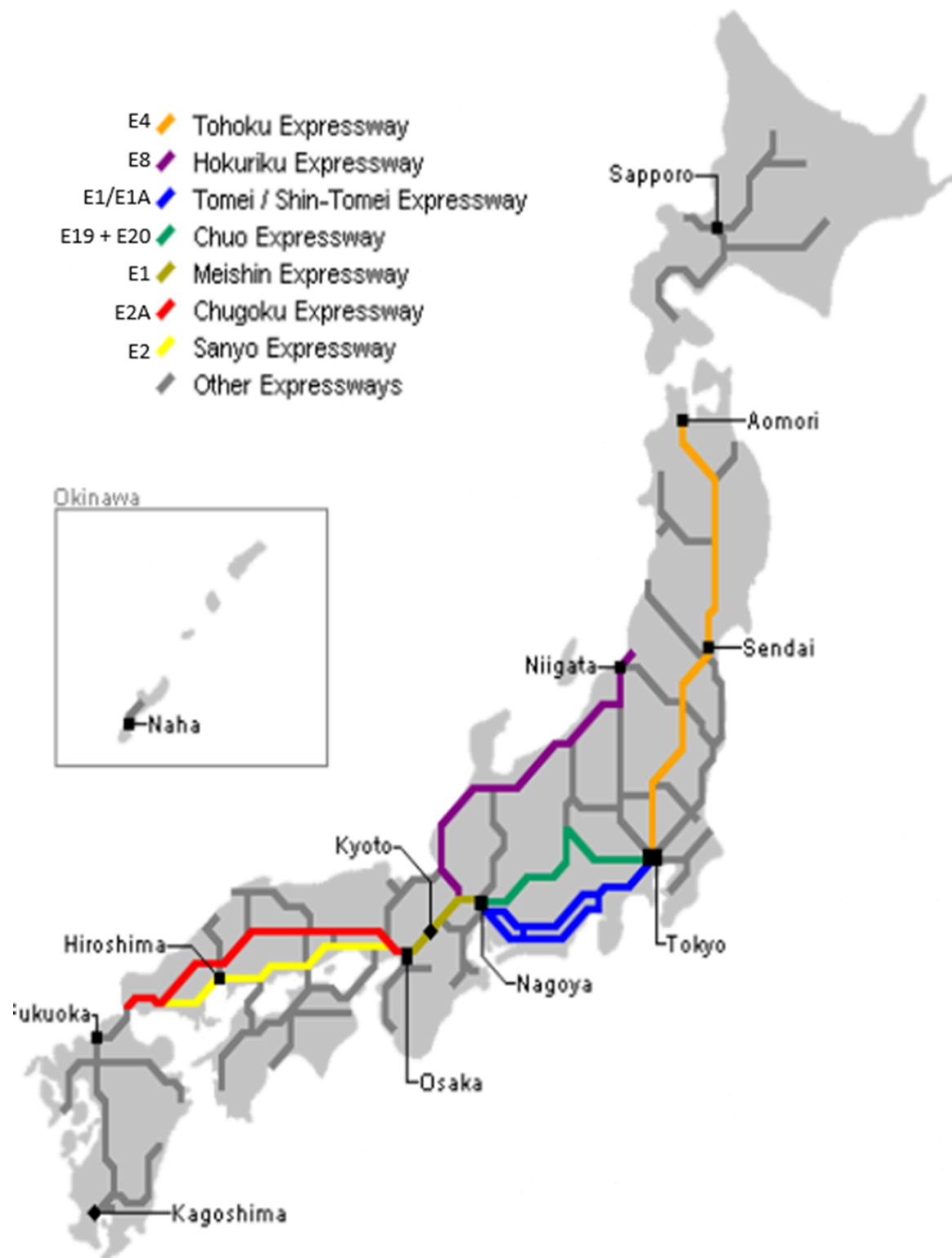
Quick Notes: 1) Road naming and system gets really weird around Tokyo and you can find several roads with unique labels. 2) The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism probably provides this info better than I can lol:

<https://www.mlit.go.jp/road/sign/numbering/en/about/index.html>

National Expressways:

These typically run parallel or at least near the National Highway of the same number. These exist for numbers 1 through 58. This info mostly just makes scanning easier because if you find the expressway you've also found the highway and vice versa. If there are multiple expressways along one national road, one of them has a letter added. For example: **E4A**

Major Expressways:



Urban Expressways:

Many cities have expressways that are marked with just a number. This means there are several marked as  (and other single digit numbers) across the country. These are mostly useful because signs also often have the city name. I guess this info is also useful for scanning/5ks.

Circular Expressways:

The circular expressways form rings around Tokyo and Nagoya with C1 being the smallest ring and closest to center-city and each higher number getting progressively wider.

Tokyo has C1-C4; Nagoya has C1-C3

Tokyo C3 overlaps National Highway 298; Tokyo C4 overlaps National Highway 468

Nagoya C3 overlaps National Highway 302

Note: I think Fukuoka has some kind of circular expressway just labeled C, idk what the shield or signs for it look like

Specialty Road Lines:

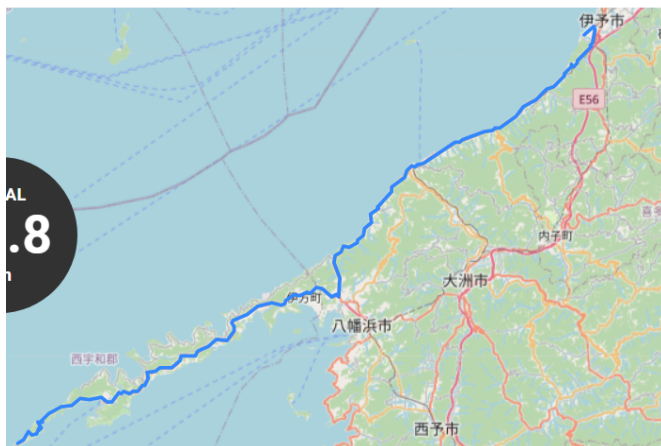
Blue Outside Lines

Blue outside lines as shown below are used on a series of cycling routes in Ehime Prefecture. These routes are distributed across the north/north-west coast of Ehime as well as on the islands off the north coast.

Examples:



National Highways 197 and 378 in Ehime Prefecture.



Iyonada / Cape Sada Setokaze Kaido cycling route

I've found at least one ACW location and multiple locs across other maps on this route and this tip obviously makes pinpointing those locs way easier.



Ehime Prefectural Road 51 (Omishima Island)



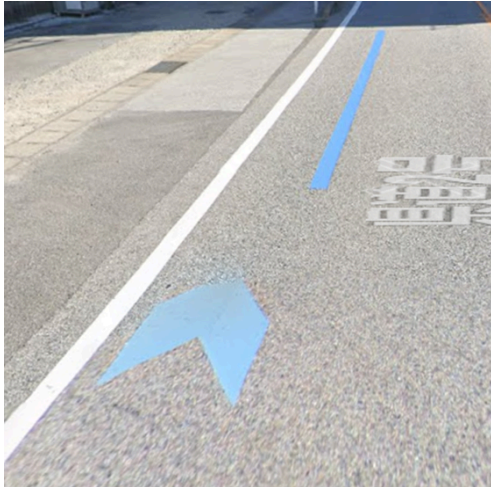
Shimanami Kaido - Omishima Loop cycling route

(**Edit:** Recently found a section of national road 175 in Kyoto that has **very** similar lines so officially use this with caution)

More Blue Lines

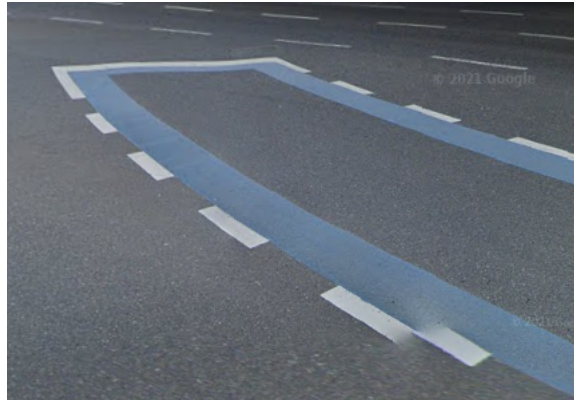
There seem to be two other types of blue road lines, which are both not region-specific. However, they are easily distinguishable from the above ones.

Arrows + Dashed Lines marks a bike Lane



Shiga Prefecture (around Lake Biwa)

This marks a right turn lane



Kitakyushu, Fukuoka

r

Pedestrian Crossing Diamonds

A diamond on the road marking a pedestrian crossing or a bicycle crossing zone.

These are different within each prefecture:



Hokkaido
Akita
Iwate
Yamagata
Fukushima
Tokyo
Kanagawa
Aichi
Nagano

Fukui
Osaka
Yamaguchi
Ehime
Fukuoka
Nagasaki
Kagoshima
Miyasaki



The "plain" diamond above may be findable in all prefectures, but the below are unique to each prefecture:



Aomori



Shizuoka



Kagawa



Miyagi
Kyoto
Hyogo
Okayama
Hiroshima
Tokushima



Ishikawa
Gifu
Mie
Kochi
Kumamoto



Gunma
Chiba
Yamanashi



Wakayama
Nara



Ibaraki
Tochigi
Saitama
Niigata
Shiga

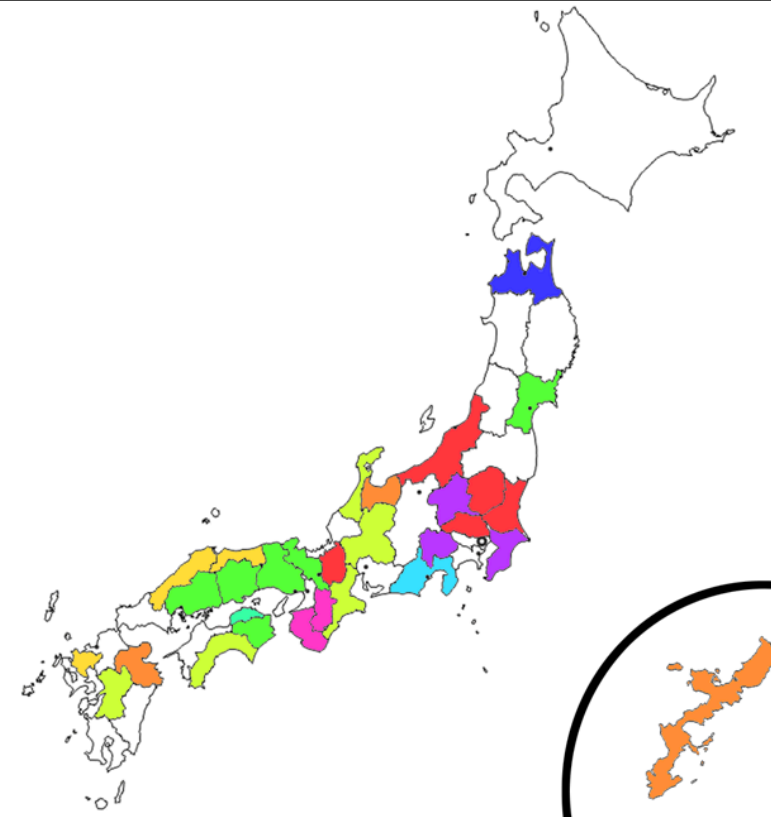


Toyama
Oita
Okinawa



Tottori
Shimane
Saga

With thanks to the JP community for the discovery



Notes: These are typically used to let drivers know when they are approaching a crossing and especially when the crossing is obscured in any way. It's very useful to at least memorize Aomori, Shizuoka/Kagawa, and Wakayama/Nara. There are definitely some inconsistencies, for example Gifu may belong in the purple category and Shizuoka and Kagawa are the same thing. Credit for making/ translating this goes to Spiral. I'll replace the above graphic when an updated one is made. [up-to-date graphic](#) (日本語で)

Hokkaido Detailed Examination

Hokkaido is probably the most unique/recognizable prefecture except for maybe Okinawa, so it's worth looking at tips that can help you get Hokkaido right pretty much every time.

Snow Arrows

This is a super well known clue and it's quite consistent. These signs are all over the prefecture and are used to show drivers where the road is when there's heavy snow. I think I've seen similar signs in other northern prefectures but seeing them outside Hokkaido should be extremely rare.



Hokkaido Cabbage Leaves

Another pretty well known clue is the cabbage that grows throughout Hokkaido. You can see somewhat similar plants in other northern prefectures but those often have noticeably smaller leaves than the Hokkaido ones. If you see these you're probably in Hokkaido (or Sakhalin but obv not low cam there).



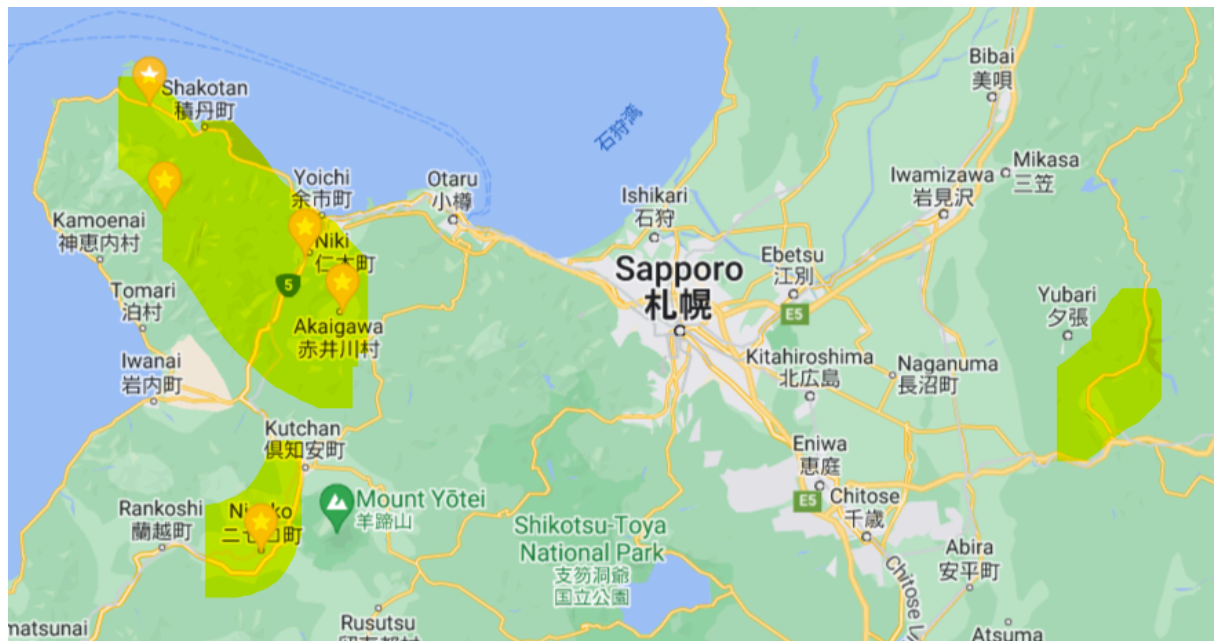
Coverage

I checked almost every major road across all of Hokkaido, a sample of streets from each city, and the vast majority of the mountain roads. So basically I took a mostly-random sample of every area of the prefecture, looking at the different years and months the coverage was taken.

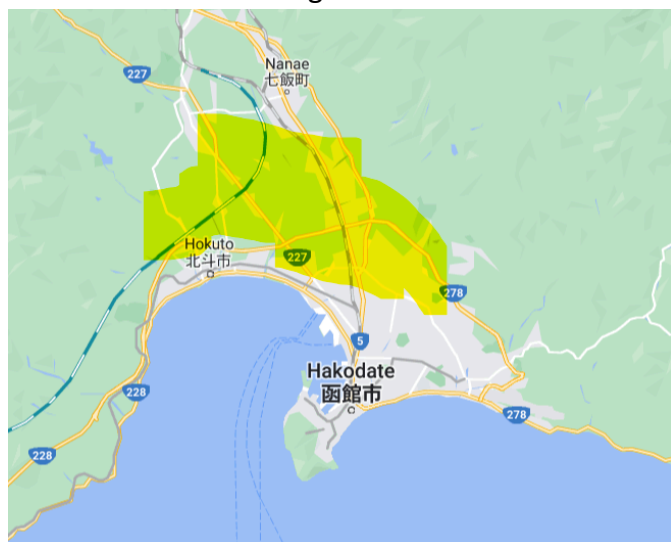
The takeaway is basically: if it's winter coverage, don't go Hokkaido. Here's what I found:

- 80%-90% of the coverage across Hokkaido was taken May through August.
- If you include April and October that easily goes up to like 99%, but Hokkaido has very long winters so the April/October coverage just looks like winter.
- A huge chunk of the coverage across the whole prefecture was taken in Summer 2014 and many roads only have coverage from this period.
- The roads with winter coverage (October through April) had summer coverage from a different year (often more recent year) basically 100% of the time, making getting a winter loc even less likely.
- Major cities had coverage upwards of ten different periods over the years, but never more than one or two of them was winter.
- The winter coverage that does exist:

April 2012 winter (also mostly snow) coverage in the highlighted areas:



November 2015 coverage outside of Hakodate:



(Also worth tagging on that there is sporadic October 2011 and November 2021 coverage across a few regions, but primarily in the southern half of the prefecture)

Snow Poles

Another thing I've studied in quite a bit of depth are the snow poles all across Japan. There is a section all about snow poles later in the guide. In Hokkaido they are more common than anywhere else, seem to be taller on average, and feature more color schemes than the basic red/white. Also, a whole bunch of signs are really tall so they can be seen over built up snow.



(I've also found snow poles with green or blue, but I don't know what happened to my screenshots of them) (Also found green/white ones in Aomori so not 100% consistent idk)

Multi-Language Signs

In and around Wakkanai (northernmost area of Hokkaido) you can find many signs written in Russian alongside the Japanese and/or English:



Guardrails

These white and red arrow stickers on guardrails are unique to Hokkaido. There are larger red arrows painted on guardrails in multiple prefectures, but clearly different from these. These stickers are not on every guardrail, but they are relatively common.



Roadways

This can vary a bit, but many major roads in Hokkaido are noticeably wider than average:



[Landscape](#)

I'm gonna move this info to the ecological regions section and have this section redirect there

Architecture

Architecture is a somewhat imprecise meta so should be taken into account with other clues whenever possible.

Chugoku Roofs:

You can find pretty distinct looking red tile roofs in western Chugoku and specifically Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Shimane prefectures.



These can also be found on Kyushu, Shikoku, and a bit farther north, but in much lower density.

North versus South Roofs:

There are differences between the north and south of the country in terms of shape and material of roofs. **However, this is most useful for identifying the southernmost and northernmost parts of the country.** Central Japan seems to use a mix that doesn't really line up with any correlation based on latitude.

"Southern" tile roof:

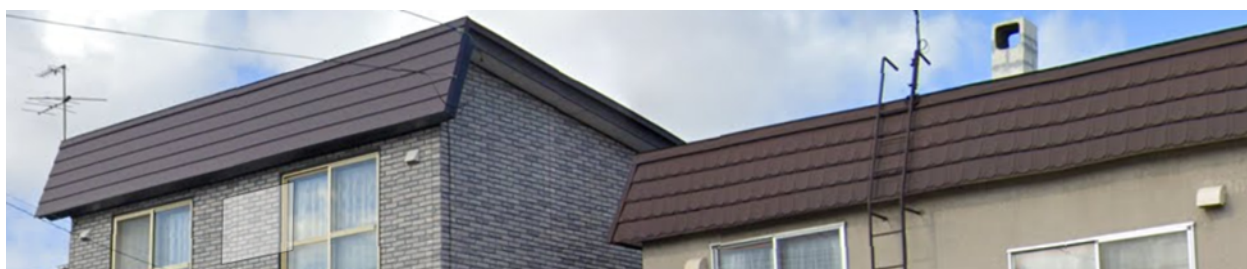


Tile roofs come in a few different colors and are often multi-tiered in the way shown above. The corners of the roof stick out at a point. I assume the reason these roofs are mostly used in the southern half of the country is because they don't hold up under heavy snowfall very well. I need to drive this point home again: **you can still find these roofs in the north just far less commonly**. Factor this in alongside other clues.

"Northern" roof:



I'm not actually sure what this material is, but the images above and below show very typical northern roofs. In terms of shape, they commonly have one long side and one short side or are basically flat. You can find roofs like these anywhere there might be a reason to not use traditional architecture, but they'll make up nearly all houses farther north.



Note: Guessing latitude based on roofs seems to be less consistent in urban areas so idk just something to keep in mind. Or maybe that's lumped in with central regions not fitting any pattern real well.

Buildings in Hokkaido and occasionally in northern Honshu can have ladders that go up the side of the building to the roof.



Basic Yamaguchi Clue

Not much to say here because this clue is super well known, but Yamaguchi prefecture primarily uses yellow guardrails that are easy to recognize. I'll just note that I also found yellow guardrails in Oita prefecture one time. Regardless, it's quite safe to just go Yamaguchi when you see these.



Kerosene Tanks

You can see these tank things (also nicknamed claymores, didn't know that before Alok's vid) outside of homes in northern Japan. I've seen them pretty far south (Chubu/Tokyo), but they definitely get more common the farther north you go.



I'm also trying to see if these fans outside homes (I assume they're just for ac) are similarly correlated with the south, but maybe it's more dependent on the season rather than region. Perhaps a decent thing to look into more.



Okinawa Examination (forthcoming)

I'm planning to add this section very soon, just haven't done much of the research yet. So in the meantime, go watch Alok's video for Okinawa clues because he hits on some of the main ones. Overall, the prefecture is pretty easily recognizable. Adding a section covering various other minor islands is also on my to do list.

Topography

Japan is an extremely mountainous country which makes particularly flat regions rather than particularly mountainous regions, especially recognizable. Taking this a step further, most of the flat areas that do exist are coastal, so the non-coastal flat areas are often extra recognizable.

Kanto Plain

The largest flat, low-elevation region, this region includes large parts of Tokyo, Chiba, Ibaraki, Saitama, Gunma, Kanagawa, and Tochigi prefectures. The area is also clear on the map below. The Kanto Plain is densely populated so it can be tricky to judge flatness/elevation, but this is a good example of what more rural Kanto looks like: (Saitama)

<https://www.google.com/maps/@35.9373969,139.739643,3a,84.2y,173.44h,82.38t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1smQ2qNO3hCZ-hiwiUCAD27Q!2e0!7i16384!8i8192>

Nobi Plain

Another recognizable flat, low-elevation region. This area includes most of Aichi and Gifu prefectures and is centered in Nagoya. It can be seen on the map below as the blue area on the west side of the Japanese Alps. Example location: (Aichi)

<https://www.google.com/maps/@35.0639668,137.026111,3a,75y,262.39h,78.85t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1stlAPUZjO3VfKCKmSB6gFiA!2e0!7i16384!8i8192>

I often have a difficult time telling the Kanto and Nobi plains apart, but even realizing when you have a 50/50 between the two is useful.

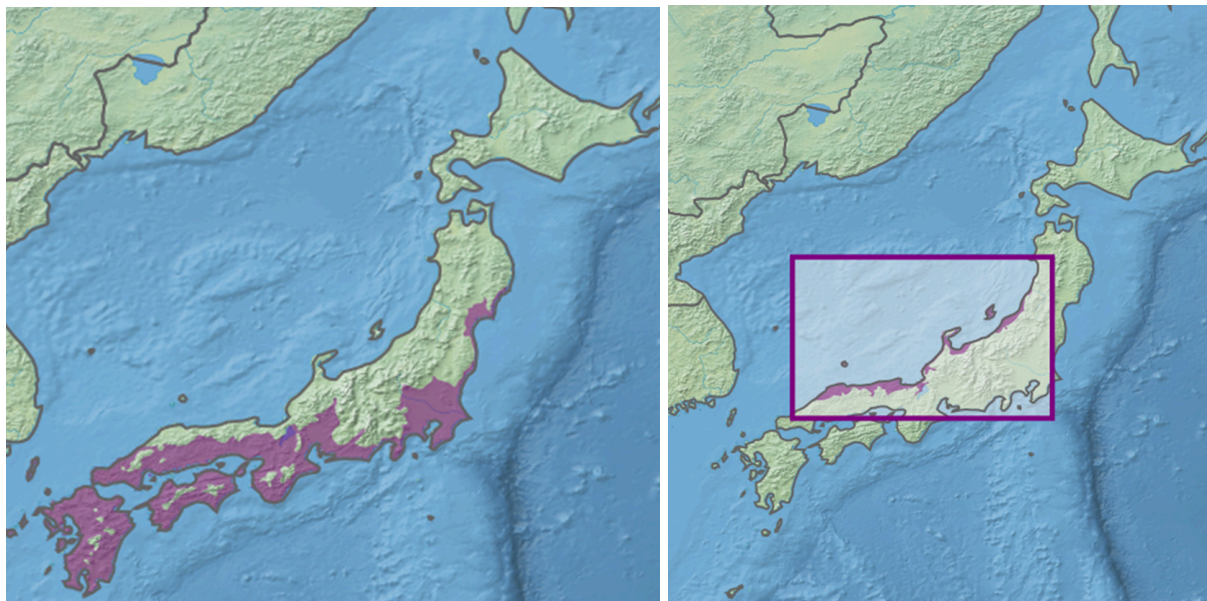
The flat regions of Aomori and Hokkaido are quite distinctive from other landscapes in Japan so watch out for and try to get a feel for those areas.

Refer to the map below if you want to get an idea of the elevation of any particular area of the country

Ecological Regions

–This section might be an example of something more interesting than actually applicable to games. Japan's flora is too diverse/inconsistent to ever "solve," so I'll try to highlight some important parts.

Taiheiyo Evergreen Forests (left) and Nihonkai Evergreen Forests (right)



Taiheiyo (太平洋) refers to the Pacific Ocean and Nihonkai (日本海) refers to the Sea of Japan. Each evergreen forest region (and montane deciduous forest regions below) is named for the body of water they face, but have largely minor differences. Hence why I combined them.

Common Flora:

One of the most common trees along the coast of this region is Japanese chinquapin (*Castanopsis cuspidata*):



Areas further inland are dominated by several variations of Oak trees:



Quercus salicina



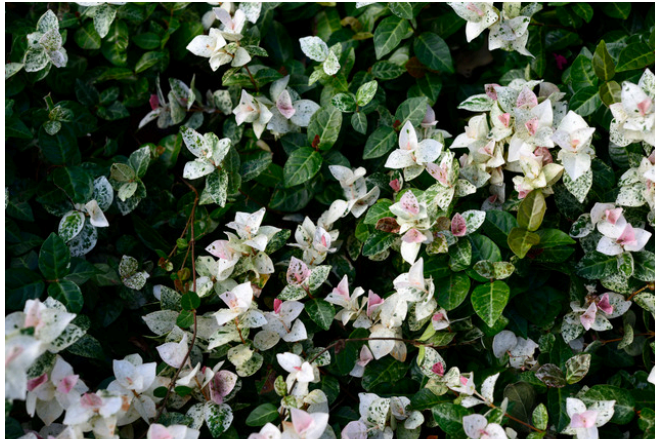
Quercus myrsinifolia

The shrub/ground layer is characterized by: (among many other plants)



Japanese Camellia (*Camellia japonica*)

(These are so common the region is sometimes referred to as the Camellietea japonicae region)



Asiatic jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*) A vine that can cover trees, walls, other surfaces



Dwarf lilyturf (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)

Kyushu Flowers Discussion:



I've heard Chinese Silver Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) referred to as Kyushu flowers, but while the plant and its variations do grow better in temperate climates (so are more common on Kyushu) they are very much not unique to the island. Finding them in large quantities can be an important clue that you are on Kyushu, just use with caution. One of the main areas you can find them outside of Kyushu seems to be Niigata-Yamagata-Akita.



Kumamoto



Akita

Personal Observation:

This region encompasses a large area so just knowing you're in these forests is only so helpful. With that said, some areas within the region are especially distinctive. Out of nearly all regions, Kyushu is the one I've had most success recognizing off of vibes.

Bamboo Distribution

(Shoutout to Sloor in the GeoTips Japan Discord for the map/source for this)

Bamboo is another recognizable plant that is fairly specific to the evergreen forests. Seems to be most common in Kyushu, but I've seen plenty in the Kanagawa/Chiba area.



Kagoshima

Rough distribution according to the Ministry of the Environment:

1 3. 竹林が分布する可能性の高い地域

凡例

竹林分布確率

解析領域外

0.0 - 0.1

0.1 - 0.2

0.2 - 0.3

0.3 - 0.4

0.4 - 0.5

0.5 - 0.6

0.6 - 0.7

0.7 - 0.8

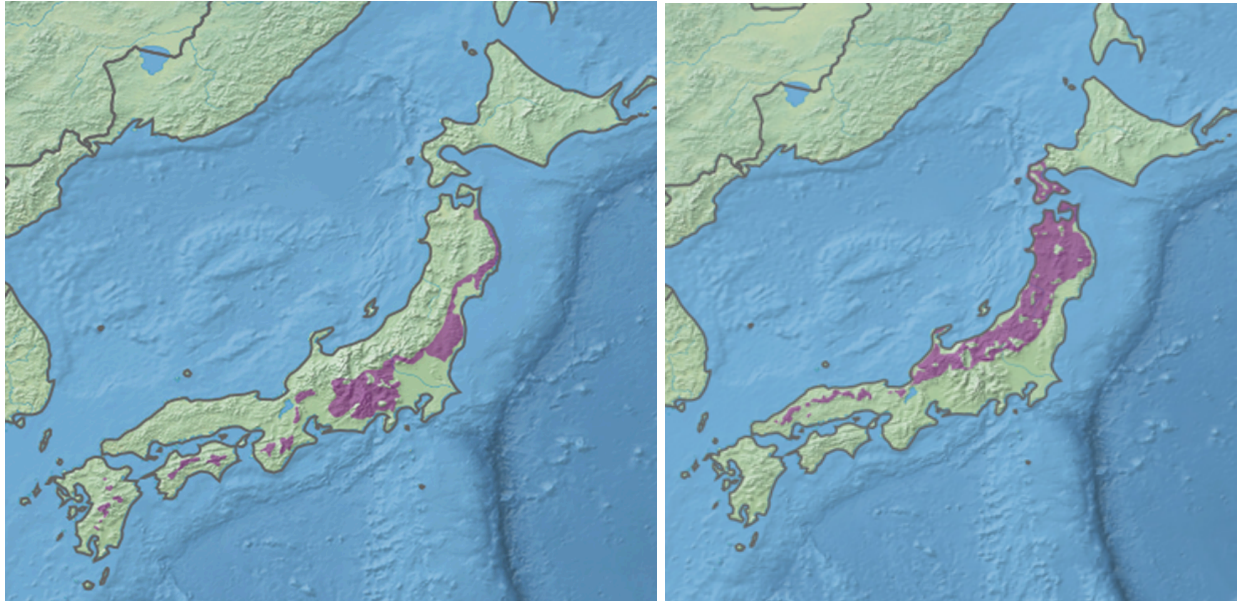
0.8 - 0.9

0.9 - 1.0



<https://www.biodic.go.jp/biodiversity/activity/policy/map/map13/index.html>

Taiheiyo Montane Forests (left) and Nihonkai Montane Forests (right)



Common Flora:

The Japanese Beech (*Fagus crenata*/*Fagus japonica*) is highly characteristic of these regions:



Common in Nihonkai Montane Forest region:



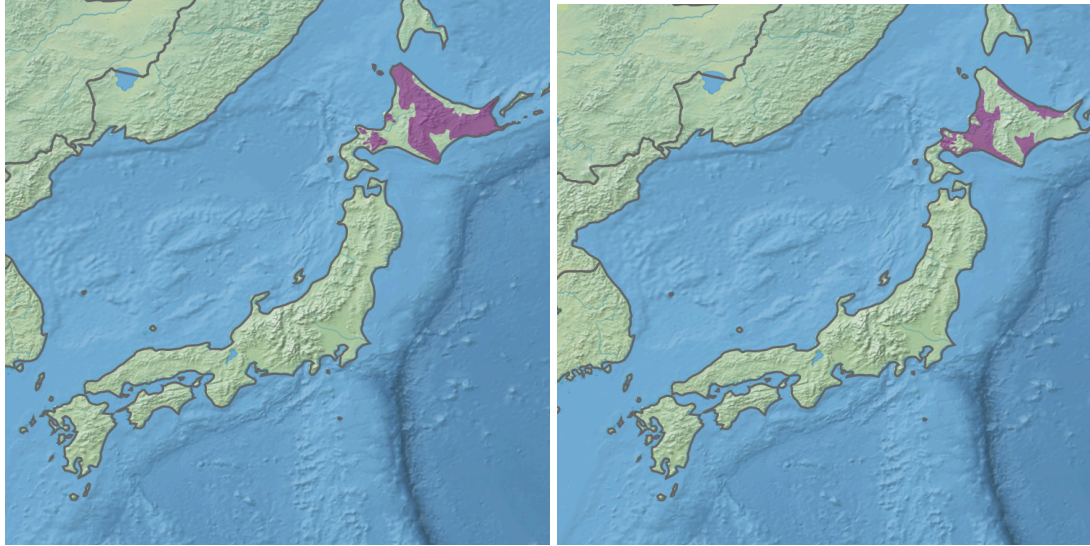
Daphniphyllum macropodum



Dwarf Japanese plum-yew (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia* var. *nana*)

Common on Pacific Ocean (Taiheiyo) side:

Hokkaido Alpine Conifer Forests (left) and Hokkaido Deciduous Forests (right)



(There is a moderate amount of overlap between these regions, but dividing them up still seems appropriate in this case)

Trees more common in the deciduous forests:



Mongolian Oak (*Quercus mongolica*)

Other deciduous forest plants:

The flat/lower elevation areas that make up much of this region feature a lot of tall and dense grasses. You also find most of Hokkaido's agriculture here as well.



Trees more common in the alpine conifer forests:

(Note: Some trees listed here can also be in the Honshu Alpine Conifer forests I talk about next)



Ezo Spruce (*Picea jezoensis*)

Honshu Alpine Conifer Forests



Subalpine needle-leaved forests refer to similar areas, just slightly lower elevation.

Common Flora: (trees)



Vietch's fir (*Abies veitchii*)

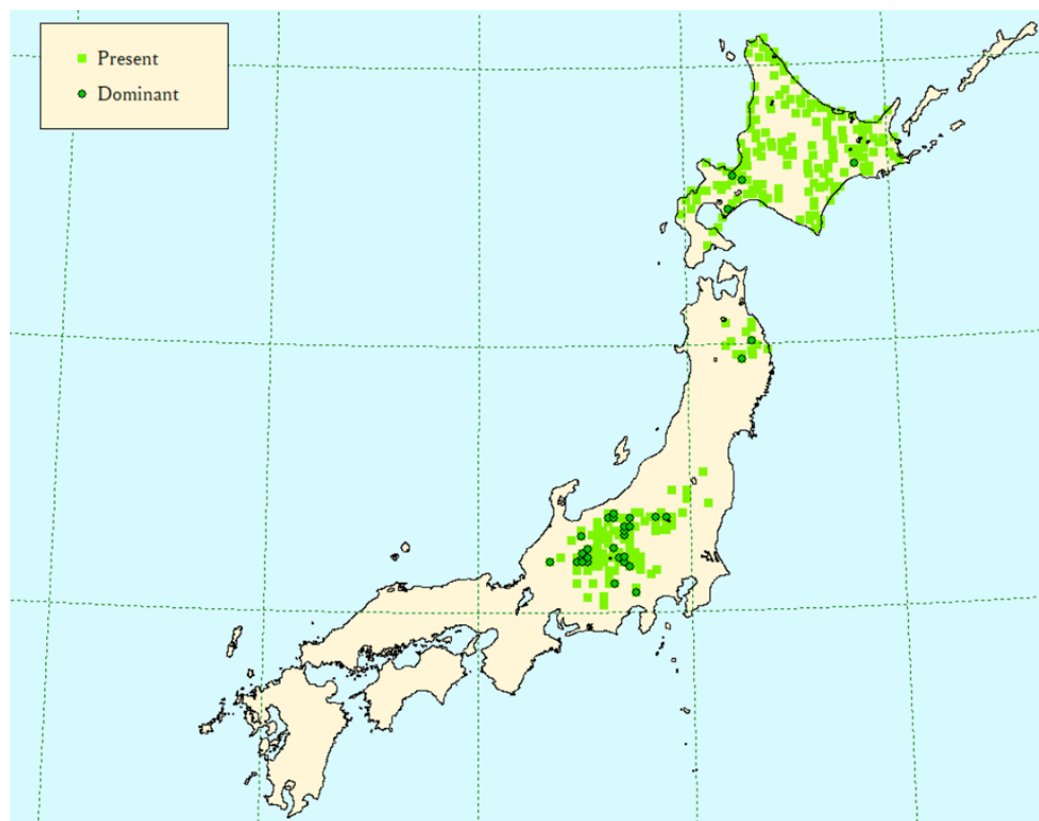


Maries' fir (*Abies mariesii*)



Japanese Larch (*Larix kaempferi*)

Japanese White Birch Distribution: (*Betula platyphylla* Sukaczew) doesn't adhere to one region very well, but it's easy to identify so I figured I'd tag it on at the end.
(First brought to my attention by someone in the Japanese GeoGuessr community)



https://www.ffpri.affrc.go.jp/labs/prdb/eng/betula_plat.html

(Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute)



(Japanese Beech have lighter/mottled bark, but birch are largely white, so don't mix them up)

Some Sources for Ecological Regions Section:

Miyawaki, A. (1984). 'A Vegetation-Ecological View of the Japanese Archipelago'. Bull. Inst. Environ. Sci. Technol. 11: pp.85-101

Krestov, Pavel & Omelko, Alexander & Ukhvatkina, Olga & Nakamura, Yukito. (2015). Temperate summergreen forests of East Asia. Berichte der Reinhold-Tüxen-Gesellschaft. 27. 133-145.

Bollards: (wip)

Tohoku:

Okayama:



Shikoku:



Note to self: put hokuriku bollards/snow poles somewhere

Stickers

Stickers seem fairly well known these days, so I'll start by linking a map that Alok and some other players made describing look and location for different stickers:

<https://www.scribblemaps.com/maps/view/Japan-Prefecture-Tips/3cptmvLxxV>

The rest of this section will primarily be my additions and corrections to that map. You should definitely approach these tips with a bit of caution as many can look very similar and not more than a handful are truly region specific.

Kumamoto red sticker



(can be found in rural areas, not just in cities like some other stickers)

Kochi, Ehime, Kagawa red and yellow stripes



(Should be unique to Shikoku at the very least)

Edit: welp found one of these in Kyoto, but really hoping that's an isolated case

Yamaguchi blue and yellow stickers



(typically just blue or blue and yellow together)

Miyazaki/southern Oita green tape



(a bit experimental still but green tape/reflectors on guardrails seem especially common in this region)

Aomori metallic sticker



(can be on poles or bollards and can be accompanied by yellow)

Hokuriku black and yellow spiral reflector



These stripes can be found in Fukui, Ishikawa, and Toyama. So yes that is a specific region, but I can't be certain they're not found in other prefectures.

Osaka blue sticker



(obviously can find blue stickers elsewhere but they are quite common in Osaka)

Chugoku/Kansai yellow and white tape



These yellow and white stickers can be found in at least Yamaguchi, Shimane, Tottori, and Kyoto and have the prefecture written on them. This is another one where I'm not certain it's region specific, but I guess it doesn't matter much as long as the kanji are legible.

Multiple yellow stripes



This is the picture for Oita on the map, but similar double yellow stripes can be found in several different prefectures across the country. That particular thickness definitely could be unique to Oita, but definitely be careful with this one. Also, note the green sticker on the pole and guardrail which I talk about above.

Examples of similar ones:



Fukui



Kyoto

Aichi horizontal stripes



(can definitely also be found in Mie just maybe a little less common)

Diagonal stripe reflectors

The map has these style reflectors under Aichi/Mie, and you can find these there, but approach this with a lot of caution because similar or identical ones can be found in several prefectures.



Aichi



Hiroshima



Mie



Okayama

Chiba yellow and white stripes



(this is a decent one, just watch out for similar things) for example:



Kanagawa



Aichi

The map talks about several more stickers which I haven't found any issue with and especially the Nara red arrow sticker is super useful. However, I'd like a larger sample size because some of them I've only ever seen like once.

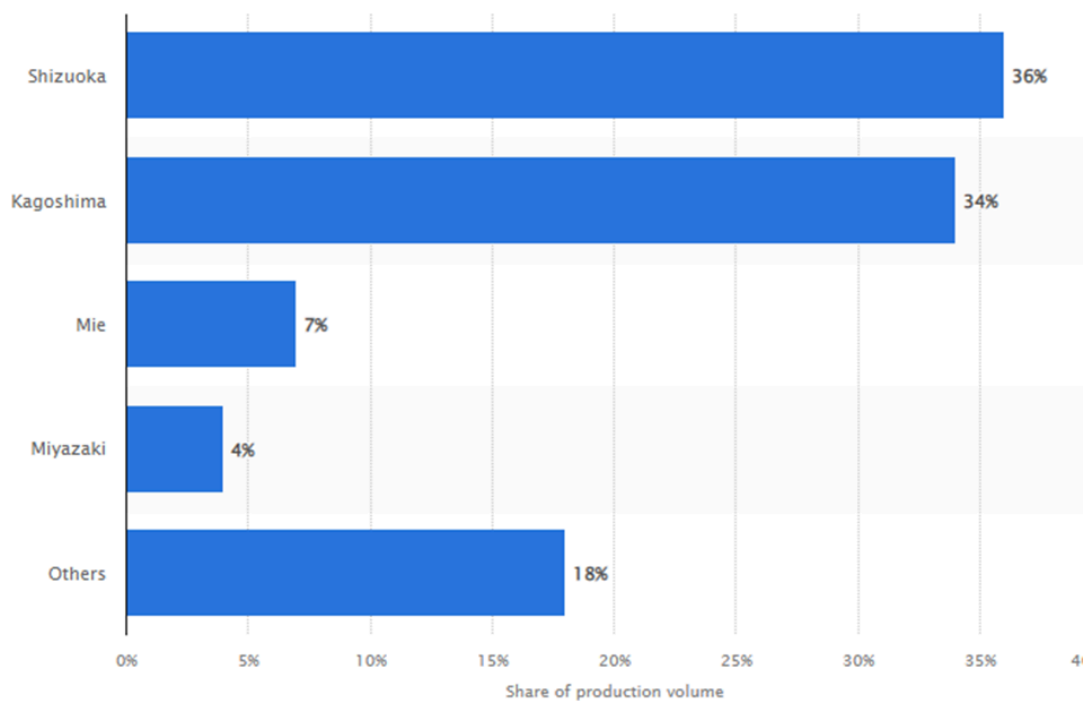
Edit: the orange/yellow "Shimane Stripes" can actually be found in a couple other prefectures including Hiroshima and Okayama.

Tea Plantation Distribution

Of the different crops grown in Japan that I looked at, green tea was the most concentrated in certain regions that also had a very recognizable plant. The tea plants look like this:



Most tea plantations can be found in Shizuoka or Kagoshima prefectures so especially when combined with other clues, you have a pretty solid chance of getting the prefecture. This is another clue that doesn't come up super often, but is fairly consistent.



Silver utility pole reflectors

There are some utility poles that have silver + white or silver + yellow reflectors rather than the normal black + yellow. These variations are shown below:

**Wire-guard/Guywire meta:**

For now just see the links in the Table of Contents

Traffic Lights (horizontal vs vertical)

Credit for this goes to Spiral. I'll continue to check this, but it seems consistent enough.

Vertical:

<https://goo.gl/maps/bFVi4XFk22FyaUKY6>

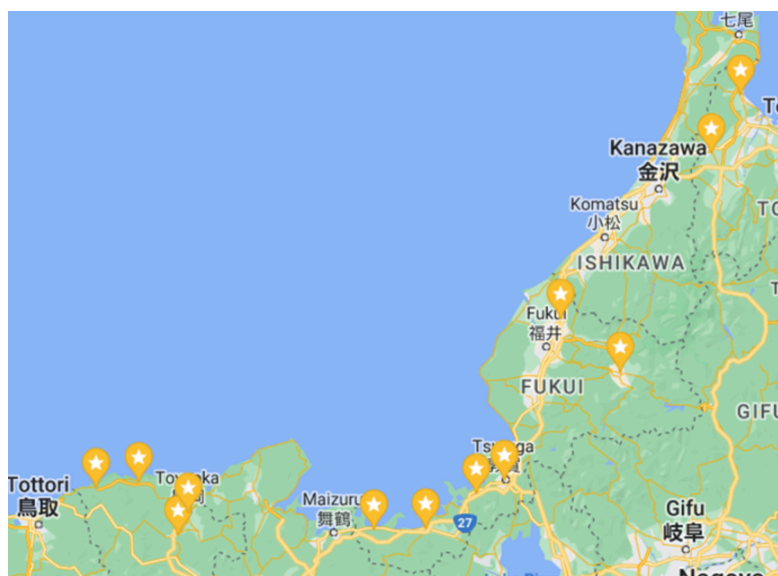
Horizontal:

<https://goo.gl/maps/BbUuhBoNRRmiBdow6>

The highlighted regions (Spiral did the green and I added the yellow) are where you can find vertical rather than horizontal traffic lights.



These are the cities where I found vertical lights that weren't already highlighted by Spiral.



I don't really know why this meta exists (like what reason could there be to skip all of Ishikawa or to have them in north but not south Hyogo?), but it seems to check out. I'll keep an eye out for new places with vertical lights and I'll make an update if I find any.

Edits:

An interesting addition to places with vertical lights:



(Shiga Prefecture)

The vast majority of Shiga uses horizontal so these are just localized areas that can have vertical.

Snow Poles: (gonna redo this section soon)

I explored the mountain roads of almost every prefecture looking at the snow poles and trying to find any that were prefecture/region specific. Unfortunately, there's a lot here that I'm not confident in, but here are some observations:



This type with no reflectors is especially common in **Akita**. Can occasionally be found elsewhere in Tohoku but rarely.



Similar to the Akita version above, these are especially common in **Aomori**, but I'm not 100% sure whether they can be found elsewhere. I actually also described these in the stickers section



Crazy tall type in **Nagano**. Currently looking through the other alpine regions in central Japan to see if I can find them elsewhere. (looks like Niigata and Gifu as well)



This variation that's basically a bollard with a red/white pole and no reflector on top is particularly common in **Iwate** prefecture. But this isn't the only type found in Iwate and you can

see this type in a couple other places. Specifically the middle image above I've seen in at least Yamagata, Ishikawa, and Toyama (see below).



Toyama



Ishikawa



Shiga



Gifu

I've seen this kind, which is similar to the Iwate ones but with a reflector on the top, very often across Chubu and Kanto. Specifically, Tochigi, Gunma, and Gifu prefectures (though yes the one image is from Shiga so occasionally there).

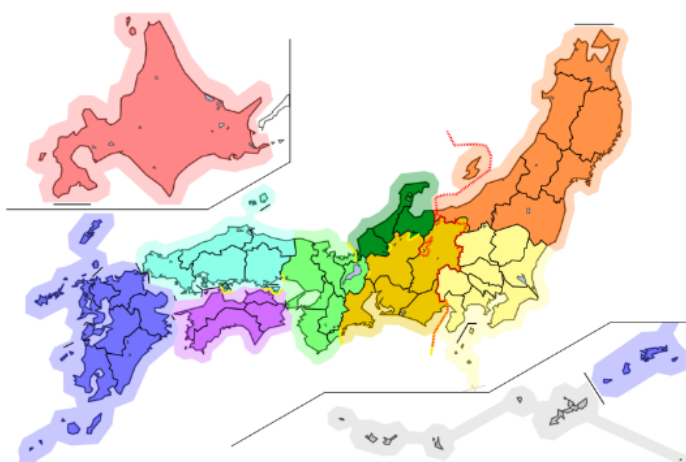
At first I thought it intuitive that snow poles would get taller the farther north you get and maybe that's true on average, but I saw very little evidence of this except for Hokkaido.

It's also worth mentioning that (though probably obvious) snow poles get rarer the farther south you go. They're nearly non-existent on Kyushu or Shikoku and I've only seen them in Chugoku at particularly high elevation.

Utility Pole Metal Plates:

The Japanese Geoguessr community made a whole guide to the region specific utility pole plates. This is just gonna focus on one aspect. Here is the original doc, def check it out:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/16IVvh3sLCnHLh_itpEsvXrHHCR_EPzArBmb4bg6TUTU/edit?usp=sharing



Electric Power Companies

Hokkaido Electric Power Company
 Tohoku Electric Power Company
 Tokyo Electric Power Company
 Hokuriku Electric Power Company
 Chubu Electric Power Company
 Kansai Electric Power Company
 Chugoku Electric Power Company
 Shikoku Electric Power Company
 Kyushu Electric Power Company
 Okinawa Electric Power Company

Different plates can be distinguished by the shape of the plate, power company logo, and/or arrangement of numbers/characters on the plate. Shape is the most useful if you want to get the most out of only studying for a few minutes. Go to the original doc for the complete explanation.



Chubu (rounded; white or yellow)



Hokuriku (longer horizontal)

Basically

Hokuriku

vs.

Tohoku

If it's hard to tell



Tohoku (shorter horizontal)

The rest are all similar vertical rectangles. You tell them apart via small differences in the size or what's on them (logos/arrangements). For example, Hokkaido plates are larger and have long columns of characters.

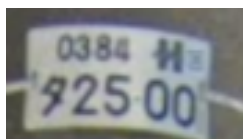
Hokuriku plate numbers:

Anytime you see a Hokuriku plate with a four digit number in the top-left corner you can use that number to tell the exact prefecture:

Toyama = 0000 - 3999

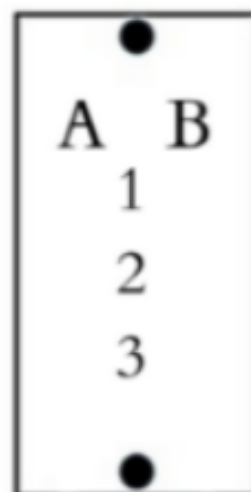
Ishikawa = 4000 - 7999

Fukui = 8000 - 9999



This is the same Hokuriku shown on the last page. In this case 0384 means this is Toyama.

Tokyo plates are the normal vertical rectangle shape, but are easily identifiable because they are often made of a silver metal and the characters on the plate consistently follow this pattern:



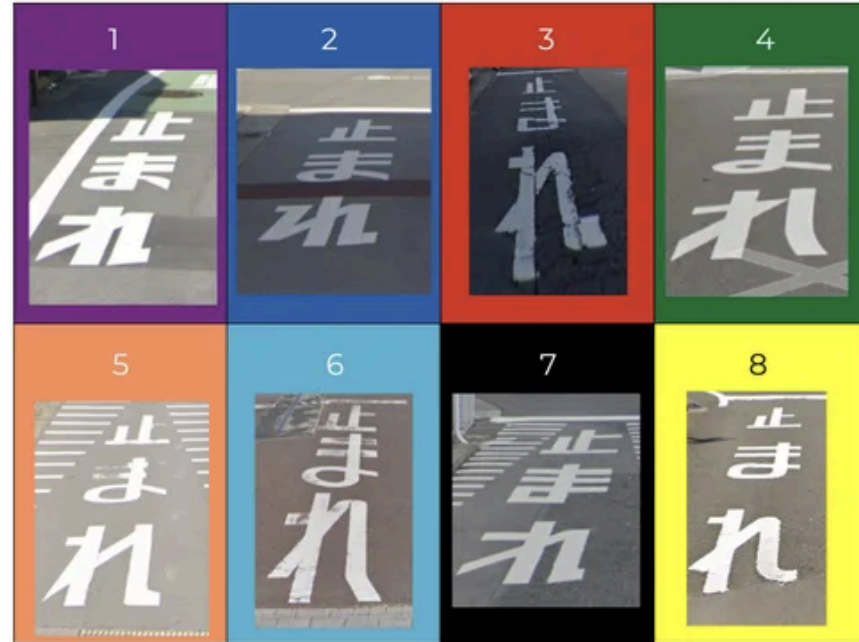
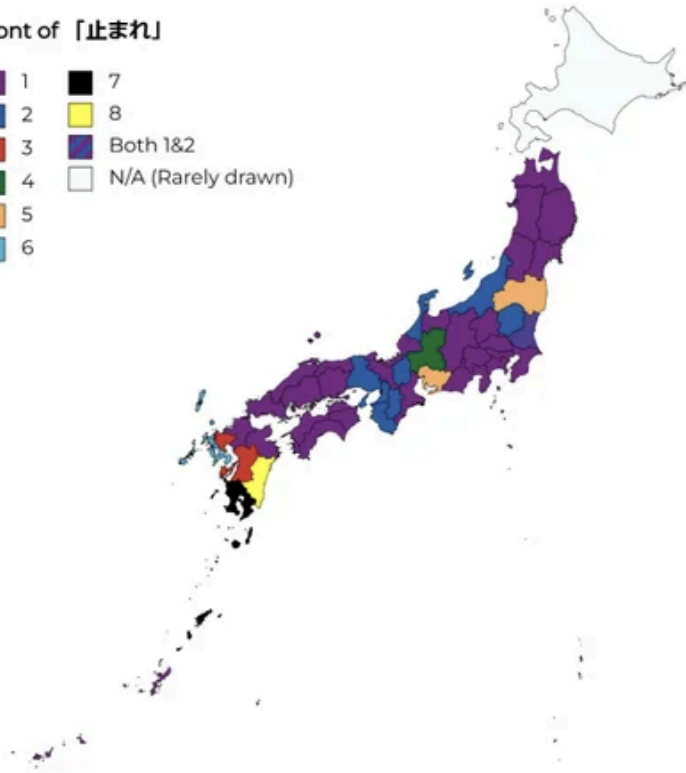
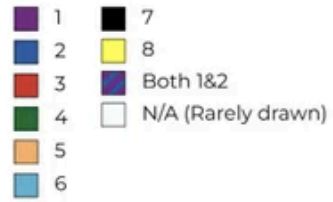
Bottom = Tokyo plate

Top = National plate

Note: Kyushu is the the other region where the silver metal plates are common-ish

止まれ styles:
(tomare means “stop”)

Font of 「止まれ」



Sourced from Google Earth/Street View by Jonathan Chen

A Note on Unique Google Cars:

Just on my own I've seen at least a dozen unique google cars in Japan and I assume there are even more. Probably the most common one is a white truck that I've seen in small areas along the coast of Iwate (example below), Miyagi, and Fukushima. However, most coverage with unique cars has been written over multiple times and each covers such a small area that they're not particularly useful to learn.



Other prefectures I've seen unique google cars in, just off the top of my head: Nagasaki, Kagoshima, Shizuoka, Saitama, Hokkaido. So either don't bother much with car metas or be very careful with them.

Wrap-up:

Unfortunately, this guide is not enough to be super consistent at Japan and even a huge amount of practice will only get you so far. Japan is very difficult to region guess, no doubt about it. However, because so many people don't bother to learn much of anything about Japan and it's a large country, you gain a massive edge by learning what you can. I hope this guide is helpful in that process.