

# Destination —

# JAPAN



*WHAT exactly is Japan like? What is the way of life of its people? How does the climate compare with that of New Zealand? These are some of the questions that are exercising the minds of those New Zealanders who have been chosen as the Dominion's representatives in the British Commonwealth occupation force.*

When speaking of Japan one usually has in mind Japan Proper, consisting of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, thus excluding Korea, Formosa—a short distance from the Tropic of Cancer—and part of Saghalien in the north. Although Japan Proper is extremely mountainous, the landscape is of a picturesque nature rather than of an awe-inspiring character. Geographically it is situated similarly to New Zealand, Tokio being approximately the same distance from the equator as North Auckland.

The three volcanic ranges, the Kuriles, the Fuji and the Kirashima, contain many volcanoes, most of which are regarded as being extinct. Fujiyama, the loftiest and most sacred mountain of Japan, about 60 miles from Tokio, is over 12,000 feet high and has been dormant for many years; but Asamayama, south-west of the capital, erupted in May, 1942, and caused widespread damage. Lakes are numerous, many of them being popular holiday resorts remarkable for the beauty of their scenery rather than for their size. Some are contained in alluvial depressions in the river valleys, and others have been formed by volcanic eruptions, the lava damming the rivers until exits were found over cliffs or through gorges. In

the vicinity of these mountain lakes are thermal springs, reputed to possess remarkable curative properties.

Japan experiences numerous earthquakes, mainly along the Pacific coast near the Bay of Tokio. She also is visited by a vast number of smaller vibrations not perceptible without the aid of delicate instruments, and in a period of thirteen years suffered over 17,000 shocks—an average of about three daily.

Japan Proper extends from sub-tropical to sub-arctic zones, and the great length of country allows for every variety of climate, depending primarily on the monsoons. However, speaking broadly, the climate is very similar to that of England, although Japan has a more severe winter. There is a semi-tropical aspect of the Japanese climate, too, which comes into prominence when the regular rainy season arrives in June. There are three wet seasons—from the middle of April to the beginning of May, from June to the beginning of July, and from early September to early October. Although, as far as the quantity of rainfall is concerned, Japan is emphatically a wet country there are four sunny days for every three on which rain falls.

The north-eastern provinces are so situated that they are exposed to the cold wind from the continent, which condenses the moisture from the Pacific, and so are frequently subject to heavy snow storms in winter. In some localities the ground is covered with four or five feet of snow, making it necessary