

# Postmark: Japan

Photos and story by Lucy Birmingham

**D**o you know where your mail is? The Japanese postal system has it well taken care of, be you in a country village, a busy city or a foreign country. Your letter, along with millions of others, passes through so many hands and so many machines that the efficiency of it all is astounding.

Once your letter reaches a main collecting point, it passes through a completely automated system, a series of massive machines that culls, faces, cancels, reads and sorts.

Within Japan, in the final phase, the neighborhood mailman carries your letter by truck, motorbike or even bicycle (despite pouring rain or snowstorms). This job is no easy feat as many houses, buildings and streets in Japan are numberless or nameless. Each mailman knows his assigned neighborhood intimately and is expected to understand any address written in English. Additionally, in Japan the postal system covers not



only mail but also functions just like a bank. One can pay bills, have a savings account which earns interest and even maintain insurance.

Commemorative stamps are always popular in Japan with about 50 different types printed annually. Approximately 1.5 billion of these beautiful stamps are sold each year.

Don't worry about that mail. It's being well taken care of. ●





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