

Search for rent house



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# Starting your new life in Japan

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist you when leasing a property in Japan.

It contains information about finding a property, lease contracts, guidelines to follow during your stay, paperwork and procedures for moving out, preparations in case of emergency or disaster, and more.

Please read through the guidebook and make sure you understand the information contained within before beginning your search for a property. Pay special attention to the **Glossary of real estate terms** and **Guidelines during your stay** since these likely differ from what you are used to at home.

We look forward to helping you make the most of your time in Japan!





# Contents

# **English**

Finding a property	. 2
Before you get started (property search checklist)	. 4
Visiting the real estate agency	. 5
2 Signing a lease ·····	. 6
Moving in	· 7
4 Guidelines during your stay	. 8
When the lease ends ······	11
6 Emergency and disaster preparedness	12
Glossary of real estate terms	15
Other useful information, etc.	16

# • Finding a property

In your search for a place to live in Japan, you'll probably notice a number of differences between business practices here and in your home country.

Here is a quick look at what to expect along the way, from beginning your search, to moving in, and all the way to moving out. Please refer to the page number listed for detailed information.

#### Before you get started

— Property Search Checklist

p.4

# 1 Visiting the real estate agency

- Once you've determined your preferred search conditions, inquire at the real estate agency
- Communicate your preferences to the agent and then visit any possible matches
   p.5





# 2 Signing a lease

- Preparing the lease
- Signing the lease

p.6

# **3** Moving in

- Inspect the property
- Set up electricity, gas, and water services
- Hook up your washing machine and get situated, etc.
  p.7



# 4 Guidelines during your stay

- Paying rent and maintenance fees
- Property usage guidelines
- Etiquette and general guidelines for daily life, etc. **p.8**

# **5** When the lease ends

- When the lease ends
- Restoration to original state
- Turn off electricity, gas, and water services, etc.

p.11





# **6** Emergency and disaster preparedness

- Earthquakes
- Fires
- Power outages, gas leaks, water leaks, etc.

p.12

Glossary of real estate terms p.15
Other useful information p.16

# Before you get started

- Use the checklist below to help determine your preferred search conditions.
- If you are a student, consider discussing the options with someone at your school.
- Once you've determined your preferred conditions, pick which ones you want to prioritize most. Is rent your most important consideration? Or is it the distance from the station? Determining your preferences and priorities is a crucial part of your search, so be sure to give it plenty of thought.
- If you don't understand Japanese, get help from a friend or acquaintance that does.

# — Property Search Checklist —

Occupation	□Student · □Company employee · □Self-employed · □Other ( )				
Can you speak Japanese?	□Yes · □Only at a conversational level · □No · □I have a friend who can				
Can you read Japanese?	□Yes · □Only basic Japanese (e.g. hiragana) · □No				
① Rent	( ) yen $\sim$ ( ) yen				
② Move-in date	Day/Month/Year ( / / )				
③ Commute	Within ( ) minutes from the ( ) station				
④ Area	Near the ( ) station / within a ( ) minute walk from the station				
⑤ Type	□Apartment · □House				
6 Floor plan (see p.5)	□1R · □1K · □1DK · □1LDK · □2LDK · □3LDK · □Other ( )				
7 Floor	□1st floor OK · □2nd floor or above ( ) floor				
® Bath/shower	□Included · □Not included · □Shower only OK				
9 Toilet	□Western style · □Japanese style OK				
Air conditioning unit	□Included · □Not included				
11) Vehicle parking	□Included · □Not included				
<sup>®</sup> Bicycle parking	□Included · □Not included				
(3) Other	Pets □Allowed □Not allowed · Musical instruments □Allowed □Not allowed				

# Which conditions are most important to you?

1		2		3	
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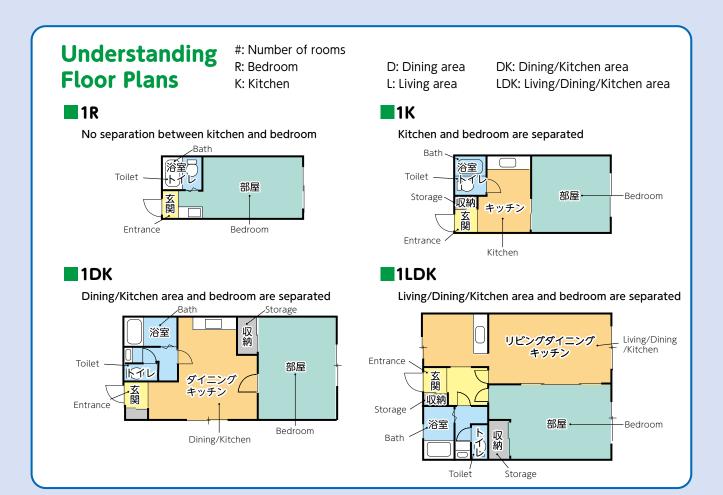
# 1 Visiting the real estate agency

Once you've determined your preferred search conditions, it's time to visit the real estate agency and find a property. If you're not comfortable using Japanese, ask a friend who is to accompany you. Refer to the **Property Search Checklist** when inquiring at the agency.

Once you find an available property that matches your conditions, have the agent take you to inspect the property.

# **Inspection Considerations**

- Floor plan (kitchen size, number of rooms, etc.)
- Surrounding area (proximity of public transport, supermarkets, convenience stores, the hospital, etc.)
- Building construction (wood, steel, reinforced concrete, steel-framed reinforced concrete, etc.)
- Sunlight exposure (direction property faces, hours of sunlight per day, etc.)
- Storage space (how much, ease of use, etc.)
- Property layout (adequate space for your washing machine, air conditioner, furniture, etc.)
- Cell phone reception (check for reception inside the property, etc.)



# 2 Signing a lease

Refer to the **Glossary of real estate terms** on p.15 for information about terms underlined in red.

# Preparing the lease

Once you've decided on a property, you'll need to submit a rental application to the **real estate agency**.

After the application has been approved by the landlord, preparation of the lease will begin. Ask the person in charge of preparing your lease what documents you will need to bring when signing the lease, and then prepare them in advance. Common documents include your certificate of residence, resident card, passport, certificate of income, and a certificate of enrollment from your school. You will also be required to pay the first month's <u>rent</u> and <u>maintenance fee (management fee)</u>, a <u>deposit</u>, <u>key money</u>, an agency fee, property insurance fees (see below), and/ or other fees when signing the lease. Be sure to ask the person in charge of your lease ahead of time how much money you will need to bring when signing the lease.

When signing a lease contract, you will usually need to a family member, friend, or other acquaintance to act as a **joint guarantor**. If you are a student and can't find a guarantor on your own, ask for help at your school. If your school participates in the Comprehensive Renters' Insurance for Foreign Students Studying in Japan program offered by Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (see p.16) then the school may be able to act as your joint guarantor. It has also become more common in recent years to use a **rental guarantee system** instead of specifying a joint guarantor.

#### Property insurance

You are required to have a property insurance policy while renting to protect yourself in case of fire, water leakage, etc. Should you accidentally cause a fire, water leak, or other damage, you will be required to compensate the landlord and/or other residents. This can be very expensive. If you have insurance, you can file a claim and receive a payout. There are various types of insurance, so be sure you understand what a plan covers before enrolling.

# Signing the lease

When signing the lease at the real estate agency, the person in charge of your lease will provide an <u>explanation of important items</u>. If anything is unclear, be sure to ask. Have a friend or acquaintance who understands Japanese accompany you if needed.

Two copies of the lease will be prepared. Once you have verified all of the details and made sure that everything is clear, it's time to sign the lease. You will also need to stamp the lease with your seal if you have one.

Be sure to find out who to contact in case you have any issues after moving in. The person or company in charge of

managing the property may differ from the real estate agency that prepared the lease.



# 3 Moving in

# Inspecting the property

After signing the lease and before moving your belongings in, you will inspect the condition of the property along with someone from management. It's important to make sure that everything at the property works properly and you should check the walls, floors, etc. for discoloration, marks, or any other damage.

### OSet up electricity, gas, and water services

You may be required to set up service before moving in. Ask someone from management for contact information for your local electric company, gas company, and the municipal waterworks bureau.

You will be required to meet someone from the gas company in person to turn the gas on. Contact the gas company in advance to set up a time to do this on the day you move in. It is probably best to have the representative from the gas company help set up any appliances that use gas during this meeting.

### Oldentify telecommunications options and connect your phone/internet service

The telecommunications services available to you will vary by property, so check with management to find out what your options are. Be aware that how you connect your phone and/or internet service will depend on whether a telephone or optical line is available, the type of line, and the servicing telecommunications company.

## OHook up your washing machine

Due to the considerable weight of washing machines and the fact that water is drained through a hose, improper installation can lead to a number of problems such as water leaks. If you are installing a washing machine on your own, be sure to properly connect the water tap and drain outlet hoses.

A washing machine should only be installed in the designated area.

#### ©Postal service

etc.

Each property should have its own mailbox or mail slot, usually located on the door or at the entrance. Be sure to write your name on some type of label and affix it to the mailbox or mail slot.

# ORemove shoes when entering

Shoes should be removed at the entrance before proceeding inside the property.

### ORound up the daily necessities

As a general rule, furniture, curtains, and other furnishings are not included with a property.

You will need to acquire any furnishings and other daily necessities on your own. This includes furniture, electronic appliances, bedding, kitchenware, bath and restroom products,





# Guidelines during your stay

# **During your stay**

This section will outline a few of the things you should keep in mind during your stay at the property. You should also make sure you understand the details of your lease and ask someone from management ahead of time if anything is unclear.

### 1) Paying rent and maintenance/management fees

The amount, method (bank transfer to a specified account, direct payment to the landlord, etc.), and deadline for payment of rent and maintenance fees should all be predetermined by your lease. Be sure to follow these guidelines. If you don't pay your rent and/or other fees on time, you will receive an overdue notice from management and you risk termination of your lease.

#### ② Property and facilities usage guidelines

There are predetermined guidelines for the proper usage of your property and the facilities. If you break something as a result of ignoring these guidelines, you will be responsible for any repair fees and risk termination of your lease. Read over your lease contract, the **new tenant information**, and any other relevant documents to familiarize yourself with these guidelines.

### 3 Etiquette and general guidelines for daily life

Keep in mind that things like loud noise and odors caused by certain lifestyles or habits can be a burden on your neighbors. There are also guidelines for how to separate your garbage, where to dispose of it, where to park your bicycle, etc. Read over your lease contract, the new tenant information, and any other relevant documents to familiarize yourself with these guidelines and ensure that you don't cause any issues with those around you.

#### Noise levels

Inappropriate noise levels often cause issues. As a general rule, you should avoid making any particularly loud noise before 8am in the morning and after 10pm at night.



#### Trash guidelines

Guidelines for disposing of waste are predetermined by the municipality you live in. This includes specific dates, times, and methods of collection that vary by waste type, so be sure to familiarize yourself with these guidelines when you move in.

If you fail to follow these guidelines your waste will go uncollected, often leading to trouble.



#### • In the kitchen

When cooking, be sure to use the ventilation fan to help keep your living space odor free. When frying foods and cooking with oils, in particular, it's easy to cause oil stains on the sink or walls if you're not careful.

You should never wash cooking oil, food scraps, or other kitchen waste directly down the kitchen sink drain. This can lead to a clogged drain and water blockages, which can result in water leaks and foul odors.

#### Bath/shower and toilet areas

The bathing area is a prime spot for mold growth, so be sure to keep it clean and well ventilated.

Keep the toilet area tidy and clean as well. Never flush anything other than toilet paper down the toilet. This can lead to a clogged toilet and overflowing, which can result in water leaks and foul odors.



#### Corridors and stairways (common areas)

Corridors and stairways that are located outside of your rented property and shared by all tenants are called **common areas**. Never leave your personal belongings or trash in these areas as they also function as evacuation routes during emergencies such as earthquakes or fires.

Also, it's always a good idea to greet your neighbors when you see them in these common areas.



#### • Balconies

Balconies function as an escape/evacuation route during emergencies. Do not place anything in front of the divider between your balcony and the balcony next door.

#### Smoking

Unless explicitly prohibited, smoking inside of a property is allowed, but keep in mind that it may cause tobacco stains on the walls or ceilings which can result in additional cleaning fees that you may be responsible for.



Avoid smoking in common areas such as corridors and stairways, and always make sure to properly put out and dispose of cigarettes.

#### Vehicle and bicycle parking

If you own a vehicle you will need to rent a parking space. Parking on the streets is not permitted. Most parking spaces are not free. You should never park in a space other than the space you are renting, even if it is unoccupied. Bicycles and motorcycles should also be properly stored in the bicycle parking area or other specified area.

#### 4 Living with others without permission

Other people, including friends and acquaintances, are not allowed to live with you at the property you are renting without having first received permission. This type of arrangement may be forbidden by the lease contract. If you are considering having someone live with you at the property, you should discuss it with someone at management before taking any action.

#### (5) Pets

Although it may depend on the type of pet, pets are prohibited as a general rule. Check with someone from management for details. Even if pets are allowed at the property, note that there are usually guidelines regarding the type of pet and size, as well as rules to follow when taking your pet into common areas.

#### 6 Issues with other tenants

If you have any issues with other tenants, such as neighbors being too noisy, you should discuss it with someone at management. Don't try to handle the issue by speaking directly to the tenant you are having problems with. You should always contact management and have them handle the issue on your behalf.

#### 7 Going away for extended periods of time

You should let someone at management know ahead of time when you are planning to be away for an extended period of time, such as during a visit back home. Going away without letting anyone know can lead to serious trouble should some kind of issue arise in your absence.

#### ® Moving before a lease has ended

If you decide that you want to terminate your current lease contract early to move to another property, you will need to contact management in advance (usually at least one month in advance) and follow the proper procedures.

# When the lease ends

## When the lease ends

This section will outline a few of the things you should keep in mind when your lease contract approaches the end of its term. You should also make sure you understand the details of your lease and ask someone from management ahead of time if anything is unclear.

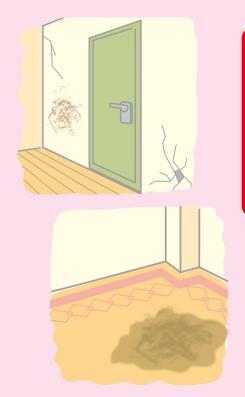
Also, be sure to let management know as soon as you know when you'll be moving out.

# ① Vacating the property (inspecting the property and restoring it to its original state)

You cannot leave behind furniture, appliances, or other personal belongings that you obtained on your own when vacating the property. You will have to move them to your new place of residence or dispose of them properly.

When vacating the property, you will inspect the condition of the property along with someone from management. Check for discoloration, marks, or any other damage and, if found, explain what caused it.

The property will also undergo a process called <u>restoration to original state</u> when vacated. This process will be taken care of by the landlord, and you will be responsible for the cost of any repairs and/or cleaning done. This is usually deducted from your deposit, but if the cost is greater than your deposit then you will be required to pay the difference. If you have any questions about the restoration to original state process, don't hesitate to ask someone from management.



## 2 Renewing your lease

If you decide that you want to continue renting a property when your lease approaches the end of its term, **renewal** of the contract may be an option. In such cases, you will normally receive a renewal notice from management that outlines the process. If your lease specifies that a fee is required upon renewal - called a renewal fee - then you will pay this fee at that time.

Note that a type of lease contract called a <u>fixed-term lease</u> cannot be renewed. If you have a fixed-term lease and you wish to continue renting the property then a new lease must be drawn up.

## 3 Turning off electricity, gas, and water services

Contact your local electric company, gas company, and the municipal waterworks bureau at least one week before moving out to cancel your service. Your bill will be adjusted to include service only up until the day of termination.

## 4 Taking care of phone/internet service

Contact your telephone and internet service providers to cancel or transfer service to your new place of residence.

## **5** Vacating and returning your keys

Make sure to return your keys upon vacating the property.

# 6

# **Emergency and disaster preparedness**

# **Earthquakes**

#### 1 Obtain a disaster prevention map and evacuation route information

- Obtain a copy of any information pamphlets or disaster prevention maps provided by your municipality and determine which evacuation area is closest to where you live.
- Your municipality may also provide a road map that specifies evacuation routes to help you get to evacuation areas. It's important to obtain one of these as well if available.

## 2 Be prepared in case of emergency

■ Place all necessary items in a backpack that can be worn while keeping your hands free and keep it somewhere easily accessible.

#### Example of items to have with you in case of emergency

[Try to keep your emergency backpack around 15kg or less for males and 10kg or less for females]



- · Drinking water · Emergency rations
- · Valuables (bankbook, seal, cash, health insurance card, passport, resident card, etc.)
- · First aid kit and medicine
- · Surgical masks · Gloves
- · Blankets and towels · Rainy/cold weather gear
- · Cell phone charger · Disposable heating pads
- · Facial tissues and wet wipes
- · Contact information for family and friends

- · Helmet or protective headwear
- Flashlight
   Clothing and underwear
- · Portable radio and spare batteries
- Matches and lighters
- Toiletries
   Portable toilet

## 3 During an earthquake

Going outside during an earthquake can be dangerous. Be sure to assess the situation carefully before doing so.

The first thing you should do is find a safe spot. Hide under a sturdy desk or table and protect your head from any falling objects. Once the shaking has stopped, check for fire.

Check for disaster information on the TV, radio, or internet. It's important to stay calm and choose your actions deliberately.



# Safety confirmation and staying up to date during a disaster

During a disaster, telephone and mobile phone network congestion should be expected, and you may not be able to place or receive calls. You should familiarize yourself with safety confirmation methods ahead of time.

#### · Disaster Emergency Message Dial

During a disaster, dial 171 to record a message that can be played back by family members or other acquaintances that know your phone number. This service is only available in Japan.

#### · Disaster Message Board

Use the internet connection on your cell phone or PHS device to leave a text message that can be viewed by family members or other acquaintances that know your phone number.

#### Other methods

During a disaster, social networking services (SNS) are used widely as a means of communication. If available, you can also use the 1seg function of your smartphone or mobile device to view TV broadcasts and stay up to date. Find out which of these services is available to you ahead of time.

## **Fires**

Attempt to put out small fires immediately using a wet blanket or towel. If unsuccessful, notify the fire department by calling 119 and evacuate the area immediately. When evacuating the area, notify nearby residents by shouting that there is a fire.

Also note that closing doors and windows can help prevent the spread of a fire.

# **Power outages**

In the event of a power outage, first check to see if the whole neighborhood is affected or if it is only your property. If it is only your property, check your breaker box and make sure the circuit breaker hasn't tripped. If the circuit breaker has tripped, unplug all of your appliances and reset the circuit breaker. If it trips again, there may be a short circuit and you should contact someone from management.









# Gas leaks

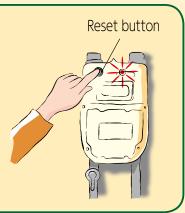
If you smell gas you should open the doors and windows to ventilate the area and shut the gas off at the meter. Sparks, flame, etc. should be avoided to prevent explosions. Do not turn on ventilation fans or lights. Contact the gas company immediately.

Check the connections on gas appliances regularly and make sure that the rubber gas pipes stay in good condition. If anything seems out of the ordinary, contact the gas company immediately.

# Resetting the gas meter

While this does not apply to gas leaks, you may not be able to use your gas appliances after substantial shaking due to an earthquake, etc.

You may be able to resolve this by pressing the reset button on your gas meter. The gas meter is usually located inside of a meter box found outside near the entrance or in the corridor.



## Water leaks

Turn the water off immediately and wipe up any excess water. If the water has seeped into the floor, notify the person living below you immediately. The majority of water leaks are a result of washing machine drainage issues or rain coming in through a window left open. You should regularly check to make sure that your washing machine, sink, and other drains are functioning properly.

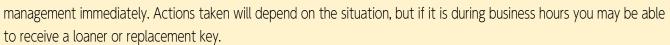
# Burst water pipes due to freezing

Water pipes may burst due to freezing in cold areas. Talk with someone at management about measures you can take to prevent this.

# Lost keys

Lost keys can result in you being a victim of burglary.

If you lose your keys, you should contact someone at





# **Burglary**

If someone has broken into your property, notify the police immediately by calling 110. If your bankbook, credit cards, cash cards, etc. have been stolen, contact your bank or financial institution immediately to prevent unauthorized usage.

It's important to lock up properly when going out, even if only for a few minutes.

# •Glossary of real estate terms

### 1) Real estate agency (fudōsan-ten)

These agencies specialize in houses and other real estate and are licensed to engage in related business transactions such as preparing lease contracts. The official term for these agencies is "building lots and buildings business operators". A dove mark center denotes that an agency is a member of a real estate agency association and the National Building Lots and Buildings Transaction Guarantee Association (approximately 80% of all agencies are members).

## 2 Rent (yachin)

Rent refers to the money that you must pay the landlord every month when renting a property. In Japan, rent is generally paid in advance on a monthly basis.

# 3 Maintenance fee (kyōeki-hi) / management fee (kanri-hi)

These fees - paid in addition to rent - are used to fund the maintenance and management of areas used by multiple tenants, including the building entrance, stairways, and corridors. The fees are usually paid monthly along with rent.

## 4 Deposit (shikikin)

A deposit is a sum of money that is paid to the landlord in advance in case the tenant cannot pay rent or other fees. The deposit is returned to the tenant when the lease ends, minus any unpaid rent or other fees. Some leases may specify that a predetermined amount will be deducted from the deposit before it is returned to the tenant.

### 5 Key money (reikin)

A lease may specify that a sum of money referred to as key money must be paid to the landlord in addition to the deposit at the time of lease. Unlike a deposit, key money is not returned to the tenant when the lease ends.

## 6 Joint guarantor (rentai hoshōnin)

A joint guarantor is a person designated to pay rent and/or other fees on behalf of the tenant when the tenant cannot do so on his/her own. The tenant should always reimburse the joint guarantor in such a case. Not doing so would place an undue burden on the joint guarantor.

# Rental Guarantee System (yachin saimu hoshō seido)

Under the rental guarantee system, a specialized company is designated to pay rent and/or other fees on behalf of the tenant when the tenant cannot do so on his/ her own. When signing the lease contract, a separate contract of guarantee is made with a company providing rental guarantee system services and a premium must be paid. The tenant must reimburse the company in the event that the company is forced to pay any overdue rent and/or other fees.

# ® Explanation of important items (jūyō jikō setsumei)

A real estate lease specialist (officially referred to as a "real estate notary") will present the tenant with a copy of the lease and explain details about the property, lease conditions, and any other important information.

## New tenant information (nyūkyo no shiori)

This is a pamphlet or collection of documents that details information about the property and facilities. In addition to the lease, it is often given to the tenant by a member of management at the time of lease.

## (10) Common areas (kyōyō bubun)

Common areas are areas shared by all tenants. This includes the entrance, corridors, stairways, elevators, etc.

# 11) Restoration to original state (genjō kaifuku)

This refers to repairs and cleaning as outlined in the lease to restore the property to its original state when your lease ends and you move out. This usually includes fixing any damage and removing any marks, stains, etc. made intentionally or otherwise.

#### 12 Renewal (kōshin)

Renewal refers to following a predetermined procedure to renew a lease at the end of its term rather than drawing up a new lease contract.

## 3 Fixed-term lease (teiki shakuya keiyaku)

A fixed-term lease terminates at the end of the lease term. If the tenant wishes to continue renting the property then a new lease must be drawn up.

# Other useful information

#### 1) Council of Local Authorities for International Relations

http://www.clair.or.jp/tagengo/

#### (Multilingual Living Information Website)

Find helpful information for renting a property available in Japanese, English, German, Chinese, Korean, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Thai, Russian, and simple Japanese.

## 2 Japan Educational Exchanges and Services

http://www.jees.or.jp/crifs/index.htm

#### (Comprehensive Renters' Insurance for Foreign Students Studying in Japan)

CRIFS is a system that provides support for foreign students studying in Japan that designate their school as a joint guarantor and the schools designated.

Phone: 03-5454-5275

# **Emergency Contacts and Information**

## Emergency Contact Info

	Name	Phone Number
Property Management		
Waterworks		
Gas		
Electricity		
Municipal Office		
Hospital		
Bank		

## Family & Friends Contact Info

Name	Place of Work/School	Phone Number

## Regional Evacuation Area







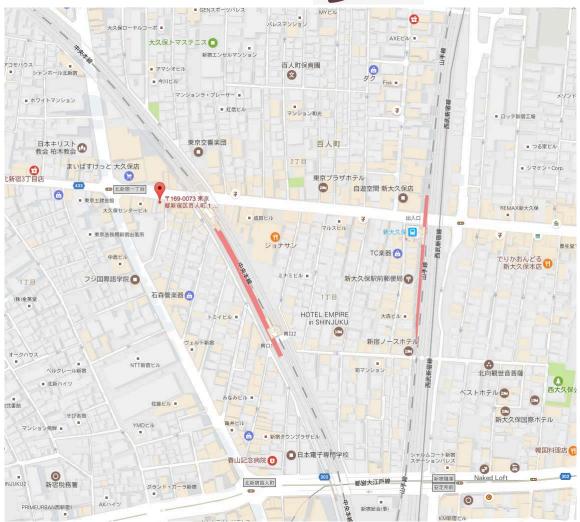












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