

Japan - Big Gaming Nation

Japan is a world leader in video game technology. Despite language and cultural differences, Japan's gaming industry, which includes video games and consoles, thrives at home and abroad in terms of invention, production, sales and popularity. Developments in game innovation and interaction technology are raising the stakes of virtual play.



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The game shops and electronic districts like *Akihabara, Tokyo*, are usually packed, especially on the weekends, with crowds who come to buy the new games, as well as second-hand games. Keen users often wait overnight at the shop for the latest and most talked about game console, or games, to be released on sale.

The first hit video game in Japan was introduced in 1983, when one of the biggest Japanese gaming companies, Nintendo, launched the game console Nintendo Entertainment System™ (known in Japan as 'Family Computer' or 'Famicon'). Then the best-selling game 'Super Mario Brothers' was released in 1985 and its character 'Mario' has since become a national game icon in Japan. Japanese games have since been developing by taking advantage of the latest hi-technology. Super Nintendo™ Entertainment System ('Super Famicon' in Japan) began its sale in 1990 with a 16-bit CPU that enabled more complex games. They

later released Nintendo® 64, a new realistic 3D gaming system, and Nintendo Game Cube™ which used optical discs for its games rather than cartridges.

Japanese games' impressive world sales figures reflect the games' popularity overseas. Each gaming company has increased its shares through their subsidiary companies located in major cities around the world. To date, Nintendo has sold 60 million *Famicon* and 49 million *Super Famicon*, as well as 33 million Nintendo® 64.

Currently, one of Japan's next-generation game consoles, Nintendo's 'Wii' is widely popular and represents a shift in the notion of video games. Wii's players are not simply pushing buttons. The wireless controller, known as the 'Wii remote' and other accessories enable intuitive play by reacting to body movement and interaction with the screen. For example, in a tennis game, the Wii remote serves as a racket and all you need to do is swing it as the ball comes on the screen. Through the sensor, the character on the screen also swings his racket. It is a unique virtual world, simulating, closer than ever, the experience of actually being in the game space.



A tennis match in 'Wii Sports'
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Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection allows one to play the game with friends or users everywhere in the world and the Internet connection gives players various opportunities such as downloading Nintendo's old favourites. Wii was launched in 2006 in Japan and Australia and global sales climbed to approximately 20 million by December 2007.

It is a game for any age and skill level, so anybody can enjoy it.



Photos and Information:
Nintendo Australia Pty Ltd www.nintendo.com.au

note Basics About Japan

Capital: Tokyo

Geography: The country consists of four large islands namely, Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku, with many smaller islands around such as Okinawa. Japan Geodetic Datum: long. 139° 44' 28." 8759 E. lat. 35° 39' 29." 1572 N.1

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): US\$4,381.576 billion (Current prices, 2007)

Gross domestic product per capita: US\$34,296.061 (Current prices, 2007, estimated)

Land Area: 377,930km² - a twentieth of Australia (2007)

Major Industry: Manufacturing, Service, Wholesale and Retail Trades

Number of Foreigners that entered Japan (2006): Total: 8,107,963 persons, Australian: 199,251 persons

Official Language: Japanese

Population: 127.77 million (2007) 1.9% of the world population or 10th in the world after China (1.3 billion), India (1.1 billion), the US (300 million), etc.

Time Zone: +9 hours UTC/GMT with the same time zone in the nation and currently no daylight savings. -1 hour of AEST and +1 hour of AWST.

Sources

1. Geographical Survey Institute 2.3. International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2008 4.6. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Statistics Bureau, Statistical Handbook Of Japan 2008 5. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Statistics Bureau, Foreigners who Legally Entered and Departed from Japan by Nationality, 2006