Japan is one of the world’s most densely populated nations, at an average of 339 people per square kilometer. It is also one of the world’s most active seismic zones. More than 140,000 people died in the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, which leveled Tokyo. The Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami of 2011 was the world’s costliest natural disaster to date, at $235 billion. The combination of these factors has driven sophisticated design and engineering innovations that responded to Japan’s uniquely challenging conditions, including in the tall building field, which continue to this day. This survey examines a number of the most significant tall achievements in modern Japanese history.

Japan Totals

Total Population: 128,057,352
Total Land Area: 377,962 km²
Regional Population Density: 338.8 people/km²
Cities of 1,000,000+ Population: 12

Projected by end of 2015...
- Cities with at least one 150 m+ building: 22
- City with the most 150 m+ buildings: Tokyo-ku (114)
- Total 150 m+ buildings: 192
- Tallest building height: 300 m
- Average height of 150 m+ buildings: 178 m

Mapping Japan: Population and Skyscrapers

Map shows data on skyscrapers and population (see key for details). Building outlines show the tallest building in each city projected for the end of 2015.

Footnotes

1. The focus on buildings over 150 meters is driven by the need to ensure accuracy of data, rather than suggesting that this is the threshold for a tall building.
2. All tall building data is taken from the CTBUH Skyscraper Center as of March 30, 2015.
3. All population data and land mass data is taken from the Statistics Bureau, Japan, 2010 Census.

Nakagin Capsule Tower, Tokyo, 54 meters, became the world’s first example of capsule architecture for permanent use in 1972.

Upon completion in 1993, Landmark Tower, Yokohama, 296 meters tall, contained the world’s fastest elevator (12.5m/s) and Asia’s highest helipad.

Osaka World Trade Center, 256 meters, was completed in 1995 and became the tallest building in Japan outside of the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area.
March 11, 2011 – Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami (magnitude 9.0) kills 15,891 people; Tall buildings swayed significantly, but suffered no major damage, due to strict Shin-Taishin Building Code introduced in 1981

Japan has had bold skyscraper visions, including Sky City 1000 (1989) at 1,000m, and X-Seed 4000 (1995) at 4,000m, 224m; taller than Mt. Fuji, it is the tallest skyscraper ever conceived.