

# Trends in Japan

## Fashion

When it comes to fashion, young people across Asia look to Japan's vibrant, innovative youth culture for inspiration. Be the first to discover the designers, clothes, accessories, and cosmetics that will be taking the world by storm in the months to come.

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# "Wa" Is with the Latest Fashion?

## Traditional Materials and Techniques Take a Modern Turn



Cherry-blossom-patterned jeans. (C)Kyoto Denim

Fashion items that use Japanese motifs and traditional techniques are enjoying newfound attention. *Wa* (Japanese) taste items are modern products that appeal to a contemporary sensibility while incorporating traditional elements, such as Japanese materials, decorations, or fabrication techniques. *Wa* touches are finding their way into various fashion products, from jeans and T-shirts to shoes and jewelry.

*Wa*-style items range far and wide. There are dresses and shawls featuring *Kyo yuzen* or indigo dyeing, kimono-inspired wrap cardigans, and stickers for decorating cell phones featuring *makie*, the Japanese art of depicting designs on lacquerware with gold, silver, and pigment dust that dates from the Nara period (710-794). On T-shirts, sneakers, and caps and hats can be found prints of various Japanese motifs, such as *sho-chiku-bai* (pine, bamboo, and Japanese apricot), a combination that is considered auspicious; *tsuru-kame* (crane and tortoise), which are often employed at celebrations as symbols of longevity; and ocean waves right out of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Pendants and other jewelry with *wa* designs are also popular.



*mimi pinson fu-ro-shi-ki*. (C)BIRDIE

## Fruity Colors Dominate the Season's Fashions



A berry-colored dress (C) PrimRose

The streets of Japan's major cities this winter are filled with colors that conjure up images of blueberries, raspberries, cranberries, and other purple- and red-hued fruits. In addition to brighter tones like violet and magenta, people are also showing a preference for burgundy and other deeper shades. Purple has emerged as the color of choice for knit tops and blouses, as well as for dresses, skirts, coats, handbags, shawls, boots, and even accessories, such as necklaces and corsages.

Berry purple began gaining prominence around two years ago, as teenage girls in neighborhoods like Harajuku and Shibuya began sporting bright purple insulated jackets. This appeared to be a reaction against the darker hues that had been common until then. Today, purple is being worn by women in their twenties and thirties, and it has become a popular color for men's scarves and neckties as well. Purple is this season's top trendsetter.



Berry-colored bags (C) Mainichi Communications Inc./ MARUI CO., LTD

## Fauna-Inspired Fashion Is All the Rage

As the cold weather sets in, clothes and accessories with animal prints, such as leopard stoles and bags, Dalmatian dresses, zebra boots, and other spotted and striped items, are enjoying huge popularity. Accessories that look and feel warm, such as hats and stoles with fur trim or lining, are also selling well. A touch of the wild and cute is the latest undercurrent in street fashions in Japan.



An animal-print stole.



Leopard prints are very popular.

(C) Color & Design Research Room of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College

The same animal prints that were once considered the exclusive domain of somewhat flamboyant middle-aged women began to catch on among young people in the 1990s. Growing opposition to the use of real furs at this time boosted the popularity of fake furs and animal prints. Then in 2000, the singer and fashion trailblazer Hamasaki Ayumi, an idol of many teenagers, released a CD whose cover showed her wearing leopard-print clothing. A mobile phone with a leopard print designed by Hamasaki was also put on sale, and soon, the leopard pattern was all the rage among young women.



## Merger of Contrasting Styles Produces New Look



The cute and punk style.(C) Zenmall

A new punk look is gaining ground among teenage girls in Harajuku and Shibuya. The style, however, is not a full-fledged, head-to-toe hardcore punk look but an eclectic mix of cute and punk, with pretty miniskirts and dresses coordinated with riders jackets, engineer boots, skull-motif accessories, stud belts, and other hardcore punk items. Black hair is also making a comeback, and black is becoming a trendy shade in makeup, with eye shadow and eyeliner in this tone applied for a cool "dark" effect.

One of the features of this year's look is the juxtaposition of hardcore punk-style clothing with frills and ribbons. Punk and cute stand at opposite ends of the style spectrum, but young people today are freeing themselves from preconceived notions, mixing styles as they see fit, and turning punk into something indigenously Japanese. Like anime-inspired *cosplay* (costume play), the cute-punk style is now attracting attention from overseas.



An attractive combination of a frilled skirt and boots.(C) Color & Design Research Room of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College

## Gilets Offer an Easy Way To Dress Up an Outfit



Combining a vest with a tie.  
(C) BUGSY AREA MARKET



A vest as part of a layered look.  
(C) BUGSY AREA MARKET

Vests (waistcoats) are enjoying growing popularity among fashionistas of both genders. The garments first appeared in street fashions a few years ago, when trendsetters found them in vintage clothes shops and began using them to create their own distinctive looks. Since then, they have become a standard item in the wardrobes of younger generation.



Vests are also popular among women.(C) MARUHA

This spring, the combination of a frilly or lacey dress with a vest was a hit among women. The vests are effective in toning down the feminine look and provide the attractive accent for an outfit. Their popularity carried over through the summer, and they are expected to remain an indispensable item in the fall and winter. To look boyish or sporty is getting their attention, fashion-conscious women create outfits with masculine shirts and vests in darker colors over shorts or jeans.

# A Winning *Combinaison*

## Work-Inspired Overalls Offer Flexibility and Style

An item of clothing called a *combinaison* has recently become popular among young women in Japan. This word, which comes from the French for "combination," refers to a single garment combining a top with pants. Dresses have dominated the streets for some time, but it seems that some women have shifted away from the one-piece dress. Tapping into a more general trend to emphasize less feminine and toward a more boyish ambience, the *combinaison*, which can be worn to give either a casual or chic appearance, is gaining more and more fans.

The *combinaison* is a garment that English speakers might call an "overall" or French speakers a "salopette." These items have their roots in work clothes worn over one's regular clothes to keep them from getting dirty while doing manual labor. Overalls tend to have buckles and buttons on the chest area, as well a number of pockets and loops around the waist to hang hammers and other tools. This functionality shows the origins of overalls as work clothes.



A *combinaison* with short pants. (C) Color & Design Research Room of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College



An elegant style. (C) Color & Design Research Room of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College



A casual *combinaison*. (C) Color & Design Research Room of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College

# "Salon Boys" Set The Trend

## Fashionable Hairdressers Inspire Their Own Style



A magazine that features a lot of salon style. (C) CHOKiCHOKi

Japanese men's fashion encompasses many distinct styles, ranging from designer-brand slaves to *gyaru-o* ("gal men"), meaning male versions of the dyed-brown-haired Shibuya "gals" who dress in tight T-shirts and ripped jeans. There are also the sporty "street style" men who favor sweats and sneakers. But currently the undisputed trendsetters are the "salon boys"—professional or apprentice hair stylists in their late teens and twenties. Their major turf is Harajuku, Tokyo's premier hair salon battleground. Known not only for sporting the very latest hairstyles, as one would expect of their profession, but also for mixing designer brands with vintage and second-hand clothes, they pay attention to the smallest items, including hats, glasses, belts and shoes.



An example of salon style. (C) CHOKiCHOKi

What is behind the boom in salon style? Keeping up with and setting fashion trends is a professional necessity for salon boys. Clients expect their hair stylist to adopt, model, and advise on the latest trends. And the salon boys' metrosexual style has proven to be popular with both men and women. Salon boys are credited with launching unisex trends symbolized by fedora hats, narrow ties, and long cardigans.