

Japanese Traditional Tattoos - NYC

Japanese Traditional tattoos are characterized by flowing, bold, and legible designs with high contrast between the background and main subject matter. The designs used are references to folklore, objects, historical figures, Shintoism, and Buddhism. Every motif has several meanings which vary depending on the background and combination of elements.



These images are cultivated with detailed line work alongside deep, vibrant saturated color, which makes the art pop off the skin. On this page, we will explore the history of Japanese traditional tattoos, examine the future of the tattoo style, and address questions frequently asked by individuals considering a Japanese traditional tattoo as their next ink.

History of Japanese Traditional Tattoos

Japanese traditional tattooing is one of the oldest styles that we have historical records of but exactly how old this practice is widely disputed ranging from 400 to 5,000 years ago. Historically in Japan, tattoos have been associated with criminals, and the practice of tattooing was banned - this ban has since been lifted - yet the Japanese Traditional style has withstood the governmental backlash, becoming one of the most iconic styles internationally. Traditional methods were hand-poked, however, today it is far more popular and accessible to use a machine.



What Are Japanese Traditional Tattoos?



There are many different categories within Japanese tattooing such as Irezumi and Tegaki. There is a main focus on the subject matter and how the overall composition flows with the body, usually designed for a large unified piece like a back piece or a body suit. Some of the main motifs depicted in Japanese Traditional tattoos are dragons, koi, and Hannya. Each design element holds its symbolic significance within Japanese tattoos. This iconic imagery is often referenced from Japanese wood blocks.

The Future of Japanese Traditional Tattoos

Japanese Traditional tattoos have become more accessible with artists worldwide specializing in and drawing influence from the style with more modern adaptations of Japanese Traditional becoming increasingly popular. This style is still defined by its bold contrast, illustrative style, and designs meant to flow with the body. However, contemporary takes on this style may stray a bit further from the historical subject matter, color palette, and shading. However, the purist traditional style has not been overshadowed and is still extremely sought after!



Japanese Traditional Tattoos FAQs



Do I Need to be Japanese?

No, you do not have to be Japanese to appreciate and want this style of tattoo for yourself! While it is not required to do research on the style before talking with an artist, it definitely can help you understand the style and narrow down what you want for your design!



Where is the Best Placement for a Traditional Japanese Tattoo?

Japanese Traditional highlights the form and flow of the body and historically were designed as full-body suits making this style best suited for larger pieces such as a sleeve or back piece.



What Colors Should I Use?

A staple of traditional Japanese tattoos is the deep, saturated color. However, in Japanese culture, not all these colors mean the same thing. We recommend discussing the color palette with your artist!



Japanese Traditional Tattoos & Cover Ups

Japanese traditional tattoos may not be your typical cover up style, but a skilled artist can certainly use them as stunning cover-ups in certain situations. The dark, saturated color and larger nature of Japanese traditional pieces gives an opportunity for them to be used to cover smaller, lighter pieces. A skilled artist is the best resource for this decision; the artists at First Class can be that resource to send you home happy with a perfect coverup.



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Ask us a question or inquire about booking a time for your Japanese Traditional Tattoo!