

Akiya Pre-Purchase Checklist

The 10 checks that decide whether a ¥500,000 house becomes a ¥9 million one.

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1. Can it legally be rebuilt?

再建築不可 / 接道義務

Under Article 43 of the Building Standards Act, a site must front a road at least 4m wide for at least 2m of its boundary. A site that fails this is 再建築不可 — if you demolish the house, you can never build another one. Lenders will almost always refuse it and your pool of future buyers shrinks to cash investors.

Ask: Does this site meet the road frontage requirement (接道義務)?

This is the first question. If the answer is no, none of the other nine matter.

2. When was it built?

旧耐震 / 1981年6月1日

A building whose construction was approved on or before 31 May 1981 was built to the old seismic standard (旧耐震). Bringing it up to current standards runs into the millions of yen, and older buildings are often excluded from housing loan deductions and renovation subsidies.

Ask: What is the date of the building confirmation (建築確認), not the registration date?

3. Can you inspect it?

建物状況調査 (インスペクション)

Never buy a Japanese akiya you have not had inspected. A building condition survey costs ¥100,000–200,000 and finds what decides your renovation budget: water ingress, termites, foundation cracks, and whether the house is out of level.

If the seller or agent will not let you inspect the property, do not buy it.

There is no price low enough to justify buying a house nobody is allowed to look inside.

4. Water, sewer and the septic tank

上下水道・浄化槽

Where mains drainage has not reached the property, the house runs on a septic tank (浄化槽). Replacement costs around ¥800,000–1,500,000 and a statutory annual inspection continues for as long as you own it. If the water supply is a well, have the water tested.

Ask: Is it connected to mains sewer, or is there a septic tank? How old is it?

5. Is the extension registered?

未登記建物

Vacant houses frequently have extensions that were never registered. While the building is unregistered you cannot sell it cleanly and lenders will not accept it as security. Correcting it later means paying for a fresh survey and registration.

Ask: Does the registered floor area match the building as it stands today?

6. Where is the boundary?

境界未確定

Many rural sites have no boundary markers and no agreed survey with the neighbours. When you come to sell, the buyer will ask for a confirmed survey (確定測量), costing roughly ¥350,000–800,000. Encroachments — a neighbour's eaves or block wall crossing the line — have to be negotiated before that can happen.

Ask: Are there boundary markers, and has a confirmed survey ever been done?

7. What kind of right are you buying?

農地・借地権

Farmland (農地) cannot be acquired without permission under the Agricultural Land Act, which is effectively out of reach for a non-resident foreign buyer. With leasehold land (借地権) you never own the ground: rent continues, and so do renewal fees. Check the land category and the type of right on the registry, not the listing.

Ask: What is the land category (地目) on the register, and is the land freehold?

8. What would demolition cost?

解体費用

Clearing a small wooden house costs roughly ¥2,000,000–3,000,000. That figure matters even if you intend to renovate, because it is the cost of your exit if the building turns out to be beyond saving. On a ¥500,000 house it is several times the purchase price.

Ask yourself: if the inspection goes badly, can I afford to clear the site?

9. The 6× property tax trap

特定空家・管理不全空家

A neglected vacant house can be designated 管理不全空家 or 特定空家 by the municipality. That designation removes the residential land tax reduction, and the fixed asset tax on the land can rise up to sixfold. "Just hold it for a few years" is not a free strategy in Japan.

Ask: has the municipality issued any guidance or notice about this property?

10. What are you actually being charged?

仲介手数料・コンサルティング料

Agent commission is capped by law. For properties at or below ¥8,000,000 the cap is ¥330,000 including tax. Charges presented as a "consulting fee" or "administration fee" on top of that are outside the statutory cap and should be explained in writing before you sign anything.

Ask: what is the commission, and what is every other fee for?

All figures in this checklist are estimates for guidance only. Actual costs vary widely by region, building condition and contractor, and change over time. Confirm current figures for the specific property before you commit.

This checklist is general information, not advice on a specific transaction. For a property you are actually considering, talk to us: info@jpyespm.jp · jpyespm.jp