

Amazon Prime Instant Video to launch in Japan next month

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Netflix isn't the only streaming service that has its sights set on Japan. Rival Amazon will launch Prime Instant Video in the country next month.

The expansion, which will come at no extra charge for members to the free-shipping program, enables the streaming service to have a hand in the Japanese market just as its main competitor Netflix is set to launch in the country Sept. 2.

Amazon Prime members in Japan will have access to popular Japanese and U.S. dramas, anime series, music concerts and variety shows - as well as Amazon Studios' slate of original series such as "Transparent" and "Mozart in the Jungle" and new Japanese originals.

The only other markets outside the U.S. to offer Prime's [video](#) streaming arm are the U.K. and Germany - as of last year. The e-commerce giant is not yet as aggressive in the global expansion efforts for its streaming platform as Netflix, which expects to complete a 200-country expansion by 2016.

Roy Price, vice president of Amazon Studios, said of the expansion: "We are passionate about making distinct, exclusive entertainment that will become Prime members' next favorite TV show or movie, and we know Prime members in Japan will love what we introduce just for them."

Amazon launched Prime in Japan a decade ago. A membership costs JPY3,900 a year (\$32.48) - or the equivalent of JPY325 per month (\$2.71). That's a lower fee per month than Netflix, which starts at JPY650 per month (\$5.41).

Video streaming aside, Prime members in Japan receive free unlimited expedited shipping and scheduled delivery, a Kindle book to read for free each month from the Kindle Owners' Library, and early access to Amazon Lightning Deals.

"As we've shown with the launch of Prime Video in the U.S. and around the world, we are investing significantly to bring high-quality, local and popular programming to Prime members, and our customers in Japan should expect the same investment," Jasper Cheung, president of Amazon Japan, said in a statement. "We've been offering videos and DVDs in Japan for 15 years - we know the entertainment customers want - and we plan to deliver it with Prime Video, all at no additional cost."

Subscribers in Japan can access Prime Instant Video on the Amazon Video app for Android and iOS phones and tablets, Fire tablets, game consoles and smart TVs. Select titles in 4K Ultra HD, which has four times the resolution of standard full HD, will also be available to stream.

To help spread the word about Prime Video in Japan, a digital billboard promoting the service is on display at the famed Shibuya crossing in Tokyo.

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