

# Foreign Tourists: Changes in the Tourism Landscape

By Kobori Mamoru

THE Welcome Inn Reservation Center in Tokyo has been very busy receiving reservations this travel season, running from spring to fall 2004. The Center is operated by the International Tourism Center of Japan (ITCJ), a non-profit organization that runs a reservation service for approximately 300 lodging facilities across Japan providing rooms to foreigners for under ¥8,000. Many foreigners are reluctant to visit Japan because of the assumption that traveling in Japan would be expensive. However, Japan has many reasonable lodgings that always have plenty of foreign visitors.

The Japanese Inn Group is an organization made up of inexpensive accommodations such as inns that take in foreign tourists, with 86 members nationwide. While the rooms may be somewhat small, they are popular among travelers for their cleanliness and their average price of about ¥5,000 per night. The Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) website provides information on 1,500 affordable places to stay across Japan that

will accept foreign tourists, and can also be used to make reservations.

The popular ski resort, Niseko, known for its high-quality snow, is located in Kutchan-cho, Hokkaido, about one hour by car from Sapporo. This ski resort, right at the foot of Mt. Youtei, has attracted a growing number of Australian visitors. In the 2003 winter season, more than 7,000 Australians visited Niseko for their skiing holidays. A direct flight service from Australia to Sapporo is planned for winter 2004.

At the same time, groups of American ski tourists have begun visiting Hakuba in Nagano prefecture every winter, the site of some winter Olympic games. Hakuba has been chosen as one of the official tour locations for the member clubs of the National Ski Council Federation (NSCF), which has close to 1 million members in the United States. When they are not skiing, the participants in these tours visit nearby Zenkoji Temple and Matsumoto Castle, as well as places in Tokyo and Kyoto. Foreign

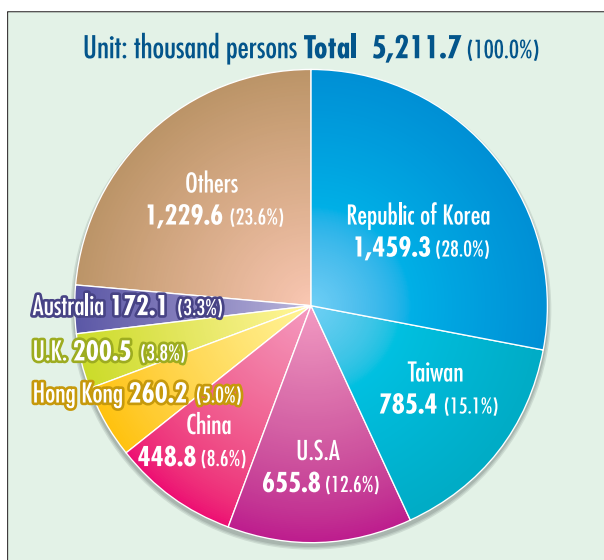
tourists are now visiting many areas in Japan other than the temples and Mt. Fuji in the spring and fall like they used to.

Tourists are also coming from a wider variety of countries. Most tourists were from Europe and the United States until the early 1980s, but these areas currently account for less than 30% of overall visitors. Two-thirds of all tourists are now from other Asian regions, particularly South Korea, Taiwan, China and Hong Kong.

The Japanese government launched the Visit Japan Campaign (VJC) in April 2003 to double the number of foreign visitors from 5 million to 10 million. The number of foreign tourists has been rising steadily since August 2003, and JNTO estimates that it will reach 6 million for the first time in 2004.

The number of visitors from South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong has been particularly strong. The number of tourists from South Korea has continued to increase by double digits since 1998.

Figure 1 Visitor Arrivals to Japan by Nationality  
- Top 7 Countries/Regions (2003)



Source: Japan National Tourist Organization



Photo: Japan National Tourist Organization

South Korean tourists have often come to Japan to visit the hot springs, but they have recently started coming to play golf at sites around Japan. The Japanese and South Korean governments announced that 2005 – the year of the Aichi World Expo in the Nagoya suburbs – would be designated as the year to boost tourism and cultural exchanges. Twenty-two cities in Japan handle regular flights from South Korea. Kyushu, Tohoku and Hokkaido have high expectations for South Korean tourists. Over 4 million visitors are expected to travel between Japan and South Korea every year within the next few years.

Since mid-September 2004, the Japanese government has lifted the ban on the issuance of visas to tourists from four provinces and one city in China. Now, 360 million people living in China's coastal regions and major urban areas are able to travel in groups to Japan. JNTO has opened an office in Shanghai as its third location in China. Recently, tourism promotion delegations from local governments in Japan have often met by chance in Beijing and Shanghai. Soon, China will be the country sending the most tourists to Japan. **JS**

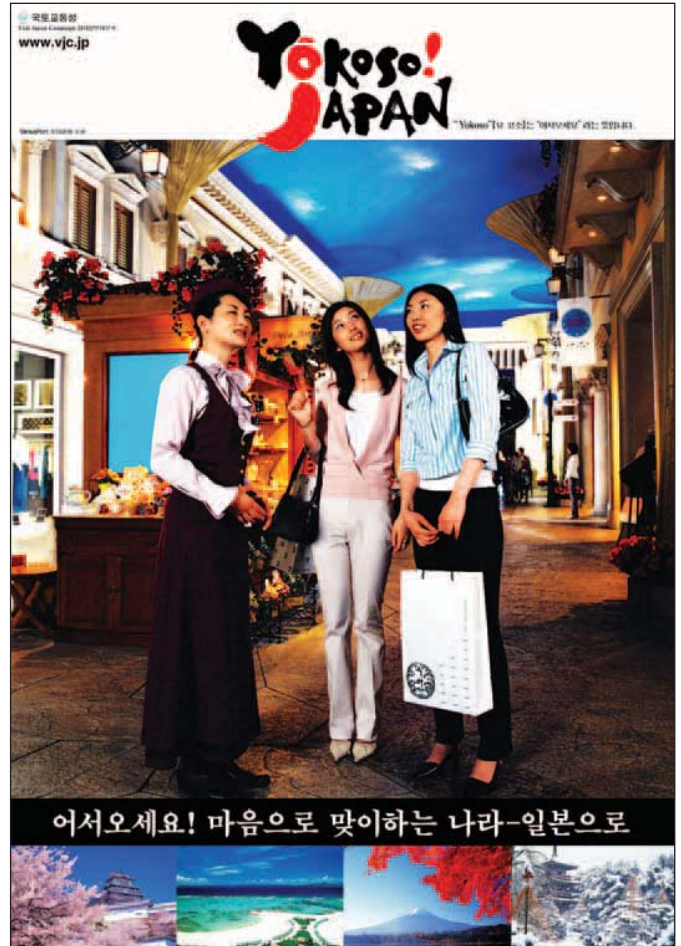
Websites of organizations mentioned in this article:

JNTO: <http://www.jnto.go.jp> ITCJ : <http://www.itcj.or.jp>

Japanese Inn Group : <http://www.jpinn.com>

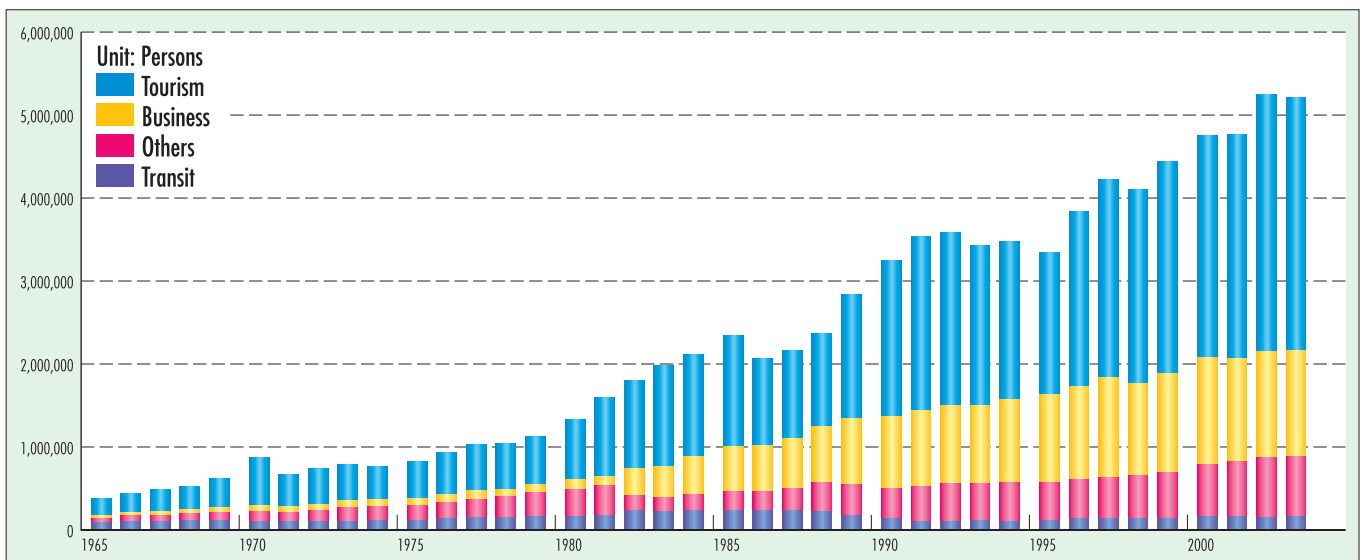
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Photo: The Secretariat of Visit Japan Campaign Headquarters



"Visit Japan Campaign" Poster in Korean

Figure 2 Visitor Arrivals to Japan by Purpose (1965-2003)



Source: Japan National Tourist Organization