

International Views on Japanese Tourism

These are the results of JEF's survey conducted in August, 2004. The 20th-22nd JASPIE* invitees kindly answered the questionnaires. I believe that these will be very helpful for potential visitors to Japan. *By Tsuchiya Hiroshi*

Q1. What is the most effective way to increase overseas tourists to Japan?

- 1) People in Canada tend to associate Japan with the economic miracle and perhaps feel uneasy about actually visiting the country. Japan has a tremendous cultural history and the individual generosity of the people. Of course Japan is viewed as a very expensive country. But it is still possible to holiday there. (Canada)
- 2) **Making tour expenses (hotels, foods, transport) cheaper.** (Korea)
- 3) Japan is deemed to **concentrate on high-end tourism.** I do not know much about opportunities to do mountaineering and other sports, or swimming in bath resorts in Okinawa, i.e. all the kinds of things that European and American tourists prefer to do when on holiday. I could imagine that packages with a mixture of Japanese culture and (a) city tourism or (b) "wellness" could work well as a special offer. (Germany)
- 4) There might be several ways to achieve this;
 - 1, Specific **Advertising Campaigns** to targeted countries.
 - 2, General PR of Japanese cultural events, tourist destinations.
 - 3, Alternative and lower cost travel and accommodation arrangements.
 - 4, Relay cultural and sporting events in specific calendars
 - 5, Try to promote more "Congresses in Japan."
 - 6, **Promote more University Students to exchange.**
 - 7, Organize Japanese Days via Consulates in each target country. (Turkey)
- 5) Many foreign countries have Tourist Promotion Offices in Frankfurt and the surrounding area. If I wanted to support the initiative "VISIT JAPAN CAMPAIGN" I would do it in target countries, where you want to have visitors from abroad by doing promotional activities and events with a special view to the interest in Germany to participate in the 2005 World Expo in Japan. I could imagine that it would be possible to do something within the membership of DJW (German-Japan-Business-Circle). I myself have found valuable help in visiting foreign countries with the membership of DJW. Organizing cultural events in major cities would be another good idea. (Germany)
- 6) Any campaign needs to dispel misconceptions about Japan. Many people in the West feel Japan is expensive, overcrowded and has an alien culture. They do not see beyond Tokyo and the big cities and therefore do not see how relaxing Japan can be with many options. There is a need to demonstrate the diversity of options and promote more affordable, budget conscious ways for visiting. (UK)
- 7) Advertise the country in India as a tourist destination. From the Indian point of view Japan is seen as an expensive business destination. (India)
- 8) Via **advertisement campaigns in all types of media** (TV, Newsprint Ads, Radio, In-Flight Magazines, Travel & Lifestyle Magazines, Business Journals). (Singapore)
- 9) Most Europeans are not aware of the delights of Japan and probably believe that it is too far to travel and too expensive for a holiday. **Ready-made package deals with affordable prices** and a comprehensive awareness (TV) campaign would enlighten and encourage. (UK)
- 10) In the USA, we hear very little about travel in Japan. Many Americans think of Japan as a place too distant to consider for vacation. Coordinated advertising by the Japanese Tourist Authority in the US highlighting the many wonderful places to see in Japan and the relative ease with which they can now travel to Japan for low costs. I believe that now is a particularly good time to undertake a concentrated advertising campaign in this regard. Americans view Japan today entirely differently and will feel both safe and welcome when traveling in Japan. (USA)
- 11) Japan has a reputation of being very, very expensive. This is true in certain aspects. It is easy to find a not too expensive meal, if not going to famous traditional restaurants, but instead eating in small family restaurants. The same goes for hotels. Transport inside Tokyo is not expensive, transport to other parts of Japan is expensive. I think more tourists could be interested in visiting Japan if their perception of Japan being very expensive was moderated somehow. (Sweden)
- 12) **Focus directly on Japanese uniqueness and culture** to attract high-spending, cultural seeking tourists. Japan could successfully focus on the top-end of tourism, linking its image as a tourist destination to tradition and cultural heritage in the main. On the budget side, visits to Japan, on package tours ought to be clearly promoted in terms of total costs. It is unlikely that significant tourist volume could derive from individual travelers, and in package options the high costs of flights might be compensated by reduced tariffs for hotels. Japan might benefit from the renewed interest in East Asia as a distinct yet ancient and interesting culture/destination. If this approach is shared, promotion should be targeted mainly at tour operators of the countries with high-spending tourist per capita figures rather than countries with many tourists with low per capita spending. (Italy)
- 13) The most effective way to increase the number of overseas tourists to Japan is to **set up the "Japan tourist brand" and find the true interesting tourist.** (China)

Q2. Do you have any advice for the first-time visitors to Japan?

- 1) I think it is very important to do some homework before visiting Japan. In this regard it might be helpful if the Japan tourism authority made literature readily available or more effectively directed potential tourists to the various websites. It is just as easy to get to Tokyo from Narita as it is from Heathrow to London and the cost is about the same. It is important that the visitor tries to gain an understanding of those institutions that are fundamental to Japanese culture. However, the reality of Japan is 125 million people in a group of small islands producing the second largest economy in the world. The visitor should try to somehow experience the flow of the Ginza or the office people making their way to work. (Canada)

- 2) **“Do not be afraid of language barriers** and your inability to read signs.” In urban areas, this problem is really immaterial. (Germany)
- 3) More and better information about the country and its great countryside. (Germany)
- 4) It is not necessary to have any fear about language problems; it is possible to have a good orientation. Nevertheless, **it is important to know a few words in the Japanese language.** (Germany)
- 5) 1, Must seek and obtain translator help while in Japan. 2, **Check weather conditions, if possible go at the Cherry Blossom time.** 3, Check how they can experience a Tea ceremony. 4, Obtain the latest version of “the Japan Almanac.” (Turkey)
- 6) I would recommend **not only seeing the cities but the beautiful countryside as well.** (Germany)
- 7) Explore outside the cities and experience rural Japan. Also **travel on the bullet train.** (UK)
- 8) Do your homework and plan to see more than one city. Language is still a problem, so **carry a dual language translator.** (India)
- 9) To equip yourself with some basic Japanese vocabulary so that you can get around easily. (Singapore)
- 10) **Try to understand the people and their culture, try everything, understand the history.** (UK)
- 11) To relax, enjoy, and **learn from the many interesting differences between Occidental and Oriental cultures.** (USA)
- 12) Go outside the traditional traps, avoid expensive restaurants, try local ones – English is not always spoken but people are extremely friendly and you will have a fantastic experience. **Take time to just observe the daily city life,** do not overload with too many temples at a time. Night life is the same, avoid tourist discos etc, they are just like other ones over the world and are going to be very expensive for a tourist. (Sweden)
- 13) **Dive deeply into the local culture** for a full immersion and experience of Japan, Old and New. These days most tourists look for something “untouched,” yet some of the most distant destinations all look the same (Caribbean, Maldives, Seychelles, Fiji) and the “dislocation” feeling of something new can be better obtained with a really different culture (yet a reassuringly civilized one), as is the case for Japan. This aspect is in my view a useful one to promote and encourage. (Italy)
- 14) I think you can set up all kinds of ceremonies, including east culture, Japan geography to all kind of countries. (China)

Q3. Which places do you recommend most to visit in Japan?

- 1) My experience of Japan was limited but **Kyoto** is certainly recommended and in particular **the various temples.** (Canada)
- 2) **Atami & Nikko.** (Korea)
- 3) I certainly enjoyed visiting **Kyoto the most.** (Germany)
- 4) **Tokyo, Kyoto** and the Pacific Ocean. (Germany)
- 5) **Tokyo (Imperial Palace), Kyoto** (At least 2 days), **Travel by Shinkansen.** (Turkey)
- 6) **Fukuoka** and the surrounding area. (Germany)
- 7) **The temples** and palaces of **Kyoto** and **Nara.** (UK)
- 8) **Tokyo**, a great city with something for everyone. **Nara** for a flavor of history. (India)
- 9) **Tokyo & Kyoto.** (Singapore)
- 10) The golden temple and the wooden temples in **Nara** are extremely interesting but especially **the royal palaces.** (UK)
- 11) For a first visit, I recommend all of the usual tourist sites in **Tokyo, Kyoto and Nara.** For a second visit to Japan, I recommend the wonderful restaurant at the **Sake Brewery** in Osaka and **Mt. Fuji.** (USA)
- 12) **Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, maybe combined with a smaller city in between.** (Sweden)
- 13) **Kyoto and Nara** are the best. Yet, from what I learned there are other very interesting sites or “itineraries” worth a visit: **Spas**, for example, or monasteries in the North and in the South (e.g. Kyushu). (Italy)
- 14) **Tokyo.** (China)

Q4. What Japanese souvenirs do you recommend?

- 1) I am one of those people who really rarely purchases souvenirs but the one item that pleased my wife was the **kimono** that I purchased in Kyoto. Therefore textile items which display the traditional Japanese culture in art form would be my recommendation. (Canada)
- 2) **Traditional dresses** to be used as homewear, **electronic toys** for children that are always a bit advanced when compared to what is on sale in other countries. (Germany)
- 3) **Pearls.** (Germany)
- 4) **Traditional Gowns, Kimonos, Traditional Writing (Calligraphy), Pearls, Personal electronics** if compliant. (Turkey)
- 5) **Colorful traditional textiles.** From a JASPIE-visit I have brought along a red/gold **Kimono** for my daughter. She looks beautiful in it, with her golden-blond hair. (Germany)
- 6) **Pottery, wood block prints, lacquer ware.** Up to the minute electronics. (UK)
- 7) **Pearls** for the wife, a **doll** for the daughter and **hand fans** for friends. (India)
- 8) **Handicrafts** (like Handmade Lacquer objects of art / Paintings / Embroidery), **Electronic Products, Confectionery** (Singapore)
- 9) **Kimonos, swords, lacquered wood ornaments.** (UK)
- 10) **Cloisonné products, wood block prints, jewelry and different varieties and flavors of sake.** (USA)
- 11) Take the opportunity to visit normal department stores. Clothing etc is the same as all over the world, but you will find **fantastic kitchen knives, beautiful bowls, plates** at very good prices. Electronics are not always that much cheaper, but it’s an experience in itself to wander around to look at the variations and all the new things that in a year or so will hit the rest of the world. (Sweden)
- 12) I took with me small – relatively cheap objects to give as small presents to friends, relatives and colleagues (**lacquer ware, tea-sets** etc). I believe there should be a market for higher cost, higher quality souvenirs bearing in mind the need to be easily transported to the countries of origin (design items, traditional artisanal products, antiques). (Italy)
- 13) All kinds of **cultural souvenirs.** (China)

*NOTE: “JASPIE” is the abbreviation of “Japan Study Program for International Executives” sponsored and organized by JEF. The 20th-22nd “JASPIE” programs were held in 2001, 2002 and 2003.