

# VISITOR NUMBERS AND REVENUES IN JAPAN ARE AT RECORD LEVELS



According to the latest data, foreign tourists spent approximately JPY 5.8 trillion from January to September 2024. Over the nine months, the number of foreign tourist arrivals was just shy of 27 million, based on preliminary figures from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

In September alone, nearly 3 million foreign tourists visited Japan. Notably, July recorded an all-time high of 3.29 million arrivals a month. By 2034, the growing visitor numbers are projected to contribute nearly JPY 48.64 trillion (\$320 billion) annually to Japan's GDP, accounting for 7.9% of the economy.

## The Most Important Source Markets

Japan welcomed 2.87 million tourists in September, slightly down from 2.93 million arrivals in August. **Visitor arrivals from China totaled 5.2 million in the first nine months, a 228% increase compared to last year.** In September alone, 652,300 Chinese tourists traveled to Japan.

Mainland China has become Japan's second-largest source market, just behind South Korea, which reported 6.48 million arrivals between January and September. The United States, with 1.9 million arrivals, is also among the top five source markets, alongside Taiwan and Hong Kong.

While still small, visitor numbers from Russia have more than doubled year-on-year, reaching 64,000 in January-September.

According to the agency, foreign visitor spending on accommodation, shopping, and other travel-related expenses increased to JPY 1.9 trillion (approximately \$13 billion) in the July to September quarter, up from JPY 1.4 trillion (around \$9.4 billion) during the same period in 2022, according to the agency.

Visitors from the Chinese mainland spent the most in the third quarter, totaling JPY 517 billion (about \$3.4 billion), followed by tourists from Taiwan, South Korea, and the U.S.

The average spending per visitor between July and September was JPY 223,000 (approximately \$1,490), compared to JPY 163,000 (\$1,089) during the same period in 2019. Italians had the highest average spending, at JPY 400,000 (about \$2,672) per person.

Increased flight capacity and lower airfares have bolstered Japan's record-breaking visitor numbers. In addition to direct flights to major cities in Japan, China Eastern Airlines also operates direct routes from Shanghai to regional destinations, including Shizuoka, Okayama, and Komatsu. Furthermore, Chinese budget carrier Spring Airlines, which provides direct flights connecting Shanghai to Takamatsu and Saga in Japan, recently reported that flight capacity on these routes has exceeded 90%.

Earlier this month, Korean Air announced the relaunch of its Seoul Incheon-Nagasaki route for the winter season, marking its return after a break of over 11 years. Last month, the airline indicated

that it would expand its network in Japan, as its flights to this market exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

Additionally, Air Canada started a new nonstop service between Osaka and Toronto earlier this year.

To further enhance travel options, Japan Airlines introduced an exclusive offer for international travelers from several countries, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Singapore, and Thailand. **This offer includes complimentary domestic flights to any destination within Japan when booking an international flight with Japan Airlines.**

However, there are challenges associated with peak visitor numbers in Japan. These include controversies about overcrowded streets in Tokyo and Kyoto, the regulation of hiker numbers on Mount Fuji, and concerns about potential rice shortages. The situation is not just a test of the infrastructure of these overcrowded tourist destinations but also about the patience and resilience of the Japanese people, who are coping with many related problems.

In response, authorities aim to attract 35 million foreign tourists by the end of 2024. They plan to achieve this goal by distributing tourist traffic evenly across the country.

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