

# FOREIGN VISITORS NOT WELCOME IN JAPAN?



Japanese authorities announced that they want to attract more foreign tourists to boost the country's economy. Many people all over the world are fascinated by its culture and the country is also home to numerous sights as well as number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Japanese officials plan to attract some 10 million foreign visitors to the country by the end of the decade. Their final goal is to bring 20 million visitors by 2020. So far, Japan's efforts to lure more visitors proved to be successful. During the 1990 - 2000 period the number of foreign tourist arrivals grew by 47 per cent. The growth from 2000 to 2007 was even higher, during this period the country recorded a 75.4 per cent growth of foreign tourist arrivals.

There are however still serious obstacles to further growth of the tourism industry. The main problem seems to be the Japanese tourism business people themselves. According to a survey by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, particularly small inns and hotels prefer not to serve foreigners at all.

From the 7,068 surveyed, 62 per cent served at least one foreign guest last year while 38 per cent did not. From those who did not receive any foreigners 72 per cent preferred their doors to remain closed to non-Japanese. They claimed that the main reason why they refused foreigners was the language barrier. Other popular reason was a bit unclear assertion that they did not have the facilities for foreign guests. Other reason for not accepting foreign tourists was the uncertainty over payment methods. An activist against racial discrimination in Japan Debito Arudou wants the anti-discrimination laws to be enforced and the offending hotels and inns to be revoked of their business licenses.

Japan needs to deal with these obstacles if it wants to achieve the goals it has set for 2020. The body that is responsible for the fulfilling of the plan is the newly established Japan Tourism Agency.

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