

JAPANESE ANTI TERRORISM MEASURES CAN PUT TOURISTS OFF



Japan can witness a serious slow down in its tourism industry growth due to its new anti terrorism measures. Japanese government has introduced a new anti terrorism law, under which every foreigner entering the country has to provide their fingerprints. Japan has strongly supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Japanese are now afraid they may become a target for terrorists. Japanese officials believe that the new security measures will help to keep criminals out of the country. The fingerprints and photographs are compared with a terrorist watch lists and files on foreigners with criminal records in Japan. Visitors with a record in one of these are denied entry and deported.

The policy has, however, caused a wave of disagreement. Amnesty International sees these measures as discriminatory. The fact is that Japanese authorities require resident foreigners as well as visitors to be fingerprinted every time they re-enter the country. This makes the measures even more severe than the U.S. visitor policy. In the U.S. the fingerprints are required from short-term foreign visitors.

The Japanese Tourism industry was growing fast in the recent years. At the end of 2007 total arrivals are supposed to reach almost 8.3 million, which is a 13% increase on the previous year. The new policy can, however, put some tourists off in the future. Especially Asian visitors from e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China can be offended by the new policy. These are however very important markets for Japanese travel trade since visitors from these destinations account for over 64% of total inbound tourists. The policy is seen even as racist by some observers. Because of the harsh measures, Japan can lose its visitors to other tourism destinations like e.g. South Korea, China and India. Furthermore there will be competition from tourism industry of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, where the entry for foreigners remains much easier.

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