

JAPANESE TEMPLES TO CLOSE DOWN FOR GROUPS OF FOREIGN TOURISTS



The impoliteness of foreign tourists forces Japanese temples to ban the entry of tours with large groups.

Several temples in Japan ran out of patience with cruise tourists. The lack of courtesy of these visitors forced some establishments to ban the entry of tours with large groups of people.

Furthermore, a number of restaurants now decline reservations of foreign tourists due to their lack of manners.

The Nanzo-in Temple located in the city of Sasaguri (in Fukuoka Prefecture) is famous for its gigantic statue of a reclining Buddha. Now, it is also possible to see a large poster warning foreign tourists in 12 different languages that they cannot visit the place in groups of more than five people.

According to a local newspaper, Kakujo Hayashi, the Buddhist temple's high priest, explained that the place is overrun by visitors that come, above all, from cruises.

Some 20 to 30 passenger buses arrive each day at the temple, and many visitors commit one disrespectful act after another: listening to loud music on their mobiles, entering under a waterfall reserved for monks practicing meditation, or climbing to the roofs to take photographs.

This ban has also affected tours run by Japanese residents, so the only way to visit the temple is individually, whether you are a foreigner or a Japanese citizen.

The Yatsushiro-gu shrine, located in Kumamoto Prefecture, also banned visitors arriving in cruise ships. The religious facility was flooded by the increase of cruise arrivals to its nearby port, which multiplied by six.

The newspaper Asahi Shimbun reported the anger of a restaurant in Kyoto, one of the largest cities in the country, whose owner refuses to accept reservations of groups of more than five. The decision was made after noticing how tourists left the premises without paying, or that they used their dishes as ashtrays, among other impolite types of behavior.

Mass tourism in some parts of Japan led its residents to coin a new word: 'kankō kōgai', which could be translated as 'tourism pollution', as reported by the Lonely Planet.

This term has also been used to describe the weariness of residents of cities such as Kyoto or Kamakura, where the increased arrivals alter their customs and increase the prices of services; a phenomenon also experienced in Barcelona, Venice, Dubrovnik, and other European cities.

Last year, Japan broke its record of foreign tourists number, with more than 31 million arrivals. **This is the country's seventh consecutive year of growth, largely boosted by cruise tourism, the greater ease in obtaining a visa, and the increase of low-cost flights.**

As a measure to face the flood of tourism, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) is

developing strategies to promote the least popular sites in the country and minimize the impact on places that suffer from visitor congestion.

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