

TOURISM IN JAPAN: CORONAVIRUS CAUSING LONG-LASTING EFFECTS



The main damage caused by the Coronavirus has been definitely its appalling mortality, with nearly 1.8 million victims worldwide at the very end of 2020. But at the same time, the pandemic has created unprecedented health, economic and social crises at a global level. Many aspects of the world's structural functioning have been disrupted and, while for various reasons the Japanese archipelago was one of the countries least affected by Covid-19, traveling to Japan is simply impossible since the end of March 2020 and will continue for several more months in 2021.

Tourism in Japan has suffered greatly despite domestic incentive campaigns. The statistics of the Japanese National Tourist Office show a striking drop in the number of foreign visitors to the archipelago as early as February when the Chinese, upstream from the rest of the world, was hit hard. **From April to September inclusive, since the peak of the world confinements and with the rigor of the closure of the Japanese borders, there was a fall of more than 99% visitors to Japan arriving from abroad,** and still -97% in November.

For the year as a whole, a drop of seven-eighths can be expected. By comparison, the financial crisis of 2009 had only caused tourism in Japan to stumble by barely 20%, while the accident in Fukushima in 2011 resulted in a drop of more than a third compared to the previous year.

Unfortunately, chances are that things will not recover as quickly as they did in the two previous crises. The year 2021 is expected to be much lower with respect to tourism numbers than the record-breaking year of 2019 due to the outbreak at the beginning of the year.

The new English strain of the virus arrived on the archipelago in mid-December, by Japanese people who had returned from the United Kingdom. The delay in the Japanese vaccination, linked to the internal phase 3 tests, which is not expected to start until the end of February at the earliest is also complicating any recovery of tourism in Japan. The real relief would only arrive by 2022, thanks to the affinity dimension of the destination and its sanitary control, and would only become effective from then on.

While the crisis is unprecedented in its severity, it has not affected all industries in the same way. **"Small" businesses have been the most affected, with more than 400 bankruptcies caused by Covid among Japanese companies** since the beginning of August. In Japan, 9 million people work in the tourism industry, a total of 2,800 of them people has lost their job during 2020. The statistics revealed that between April and September the industry lost about 615 million euros.

Date: 2021-01-11

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/tourism-in-japan-lost-97-of-visitors-news11831>