

TO BOOST LUXURY TRAVEL, JAPAN EASES RULES FOR SUPERYACHTS AND PRIVATE JETS



To compete with opulent Asian destinations such as Singapore, Japan hopes to lure wealthy foreign visitors by reducing obstacles that prevent last-minute arrivals by private planes and superyachts.

The government wants more of these guests to come regularly, as they account for more than 10% of Japan's tourism profits.

Travel agents say the program could attract multimillionaires traveling around the Asia-Pacific region who suddenly want to visit a temple in Kyoto or spend an afternoon skiing in Niseko.

And Japan's luxury tourism market is booming, with some opulent establishments that charge guests over 100,000 yen (US\$700) per person for dinner. However, they caution that Japan still lacks the amenities that wealthy travelers expect, such as departure lounges, concierge services, and limousine services widely offered in Monaco, Dubai, or Singapore.

To attract high-spending visitors, the Japanese government has announced plans to make it easier for foreign-registered jets to land at Japanese airports.

The time frame for giving a foreign private jet 10 days' notice before landing will be reduced to just three days. A procedure for requesting a dock up to 24 hours in advance under "unavoidable circumstances" is also being implemented by the Japanese Ministry of Transport, Construction, and Housing. The Civil Aviation Law is currently under revision, according to the ministry.

A total of 5,962 passengers flew privately to Japan in 2019. The coronavirus pandemic caused that number to drop to 1,332 in 2021, but it rebounded to 3,142 last year as travel picked up again.

Similarly, the federal government is working with local governments in port cities to develop strategies to attract owners of superyachts, described as superyachts, and are at least 24 meters long.

Japan hopes to offer new locations in the Pacific after realizing that many communities in the Mediterranean and Caribbean have built their tourism industries on catering to the needs of yacht owners.

The Tokyo metropolitan government plans to send a team of representatives to Mediterranean port cities to assess the needs of superyacht owners, including mooring facilities.

Local authorities are looking to develop port facilities on the Ogasawara and Izu islands, just south of the capital, and several berths within Tokyo Bay, such as the Odaiba district in the center of the city and Yokohama to the south. Hiro Miyatake, the founder of Bear Luxe Corp, a network of upscale travel companies, said there had already been a significant resurgence in demand at the high end of

the travel market in the country and that "making it easier and smoother for people to arrive by private jet is a positive step. However, customs and immigration procedures need to be made quicker and easier because these people do not want to be kept waiting, and luxury lounges need to be available for transfers to helicopters or limousines to their final destinations," authorities said.

The government is easing regulations for foreign-flagged boats entering Japanese ports, including customs restrictions and allowing crew members to stay in Japan for extended periods.

Experts point out that the government would like to develop a "one-stop shop" where anyone planning to visit Japan could go for guidance and assistance with the necessary paperwork. This one-stop-shop could be under the Ministry of Transport's governance.

The Japanese government has set a short-term goal of 5 trillion yen (US\$35.6 billion) in annual foreign tourist spending.

Wealthy visitors spend proportionally more than the average, with 287,000 visitors in 2019 spending 1 million yen (US\$7,100) or more. And while they accounted for just 0.9% of all international visitors, their expenditure accounted for 11.5% of all tourism spending.

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