

# JAPAN CITY INTRODUCED A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TAX



Hatsukaichi, a city in Hiroshima Prefecture, has become the first city in Japan to introduce a sustainable tourism tax. The tax has been introduced to preserve the legacy of the centuries-old Itsukushima Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and create sustainable tourism communities. Starting from October 1, 100 yen (about US\$ 0.7) is collected from each visitor to Miyajima Island.

This fee is part of the boarding ticket fee for ferries to the island. However, visitors can also pay an annual fee of 500 yen for multiple visits.

Shunji Mukai, an official of Miyajima's planning and coordination division, emphasized the responsibility of preserving nature, history, and culture while passing them on to future generations. To address this challenge, stable financial resources are essential. Mukai also mentioned that many tourist cities, like the ancient capital, Kyoto, have already imposed a hotel tax. On a similar note, they also feel the need to create a hospitable environment for visitors while ensuring the livelihood of the islanders.

Hatsukaichi plans to use the funds generated from the new tax to maintain tourist information desks and restrooms. He also plans to preserve cultural assets and historic architecture, reduce impacts on the natural environment, and promote ecotourism. A survey conducted by the city three years ago revealed that about 93 percent of Miyajima tourists favored introducing the tax.

The sustainable tourism tax is also aimed at reducing overtourism, as the city has seen a surge in the flow of tourists since the central government lifted restrictions after the pandemic. Visitor numbers rebounded to 2.83 million last year and are expected to exceed four million this year.

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