

JAPANESE TOURISM SETS NEW RECORD



In December 2023, Japanese tourism authorities announced a record 2.73 million travelers. This figure marks a year of rapid tourism recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. The number is about 8% higher than in the pre-pandemic period in 2019 and represents the highest number of tourists for December.

According to the JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization), just over 25 million travelers visited Japan in 2023. **The agency also reported that in November of the same year, 2.44 million travelers discovered the Land of the Rising Sun.**

This year's record of 31.9 million visitors, set in 2019, is expected to be surpassed. Due to increased average spending per visitor, tourism spending may have already reached the government's target of 5 trillion yen (\$31.1 billion). This is partly due to regular travelers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other Asian countries. These days, spending levels are very high.

According to JNTO, there was a significant increase in the number of tourists arriving from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Australia in December, reaching a record high. This helped to balance out the slow recovery in arrivals from mainland China. Despite the gradual improvement, the number of Chinese visitors in December was still 56% lower than the pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, Chinese travelers constituted almost one-third of all visitors and 40% of all tourism spending in Japan.

Since the pandemic, inbound tourism has become crucial to Japan's economic recovery. However, the industry faces a severe shortage of workers, hindering its ability to meet the high demand. **Experienced staff members are exhausted and overworked and lack time to train new employees.**

During the pandemic, Japan implemented one of the strictest border control systems in the world, resulting in the Japanese tourism sector coming to a complete halt for two years. However, tourist arrivals quickly rebounded when the government resumed visa-free travel to several countries in October 2022. As of June 2023, there have been over two million arrivals each month, partly due to the weakening of the yen, making Japan a more affordable destination than others.

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