

Japan welcomes record 42.7m int'l visitors in 2025

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Dhaka: Japan's tourism industry reached a historic milestone in 2025, drawing a record 42.7 million overseas visitors. The figure represents an increase of 6.7 million travelers from the previous year and marks the highest annual total of international arrivals the country has ever recorded, underscoring the sector's strong rebound and continued expansion.

Officials attribute much of the growth to Japan's rising status as a must-visit global destination, combined with favorable economic conditions. A weak yen has made travel, dining, and shopping more affordable for foreign visitors, encouraging longer trips and higher spending. International tourists spent an estimated JPY 9.5 trillion (about EUR 51 billion) in Japan during 2025, up from JPY 8.1 trillion a year earlier, providing a significant boost to hotels, retailers, transportation providers, and local economies.

The surge has exceeded earlier expectations, prompting the government to revise its long-term outlook. Tourism Minister Yasushi Kaneko said Japan is now on pace to achieve its goal of welcoming 60 million visitors annually by 2030. However, the rapid growth has also intensified pressure on popular destinations, particularly Kyoto, where residents have complained of worsening traffic congestion, overcrowded public spaces, and disruptions to daily life.

To address these issues, Kyoto plans to introduce the country's highest hotel tax for tourists in 2026, with proceeds earmarked for infrastructure improvements and crowd management. The city has also restricted access to parts of its historic Gion district after repeated incidents involving tourists blocking narrow streets and harassing geiko and maiko. Violators face fines of up to JPY 10,000 for trespassing in restricted areas.

National and local authorities are taking additional steps to manage overtourism elsewhere. A new government body has been established to coordinate policies related to foreign visitors, while measures at Mount Fuji now include control gates, daily limits on climbers, and entry fees on several trails to reduce overcrowding and protect the environment. In Otaru, a port city on Hokkaido, security personnel have been deployed to prevent dangerous behavior by tourists taking photos near railway lines. The move followed the death of a 61-year-old visitor who was struck by a train, highlighting safety concerns tied to overcrowding.

Looking ahead, Japan plans to increase visa fees and tourism-related taxes in 2026, including higher departure charges. Authorities are also accelerating the rollout of a new electronic travel authorization system for citizens of 71 visa-exempt countries, aimed at streamlining arrivals while strengthening border controls.

Japan's record-breaking tourism year reflects both the resilience and the growing strain of its travel industry. While strong global demand and economic factors continue to fuel growth, managing overtourism, safety risks, and geopolitical uncertainty will be critical as the country moves toward its ambitious 2030 targets.

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