

Hosting Japanese Visitors

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A Profile of the Requirements of Japanese Travelers

General Guidelines

In 2010 Japan and South Africa celebrate 100 years of co operation. According to the 2007 JICA market report on the "Japanese Travel Market to South Africa", Japanese travel agencies have identified South Africa as one of the few remaining "unexplored regions" in the world. Although the market has been relatively unexploited, South African Tourism and JATA the "Japanese Association of Travel Agents" predicts that the number of Japanese visitors to South Africa by 2010 would reach around 35,000 pax. Some of the following recommendations are intended for those expecting an increase in Japanese group business, while others will be more appropriate for those receiving individual visitors. The guidelines should prove helpful to all sectors of the hospitality and retail industries.

Starting up / Communication

If you wish to promote your product or service with Japanese companies, it is not sufficient to write them a letter or an E-mail. Japanese firms do not feel obliged to answer written queries regarding the development of a business relationship.

They prefer to have face-to-face discussions with non-Japanese firms in order to better evaluate business possibilities. They want to be well informed about your company's background and product performance. The South African Tourism office in Japan may be able to assist with introductions Face to Face, there are very strict Privacy laws that prohibit the handing out of information, so it is important to meet in person.

For various reasons, you should try to schedule your visit to Japan during one of the following periods:

- * Late January * February
- * Early March * Late May
- * **June - S A Tourism Workshops** * **September JATA Trade Fare**
- * October * November

Don't expect immediate business to follow your visit. Initial contacts should be followed up **promptly and regularly**. High quality promotional material in up-to-date Japanese is essential for active marketing. And once business has been established, follow-up contacts will encourage repeat business and recommendations.

Every organization with an interest in encouraging Japanese travel to South Africa should send representatives to Japan. In addition to making personal contacts with

Japanese businesses, it is essential to experience the high level of standards and services at Japanese hotels, department stores and other facilities.

The Japanese expect the same standards of service when they travel abroad, and it goes without saying that the upgrading of local standards will be appreciated by all markets - not just the Japanese.

Any organization which hopes to have ongoing dealings with Japanese visitors will find it extremely helpful to have at least one Japanese speaking staff member - preferably a Japanese national, Provinces & Tourism Boards should invest in Japanese speaking Guides. You probably know from experience in foreign countries how gratifying it is to encounter staff members who can communicate with you in your language. But, given the obvious difficulties of recruiting Japanese speaking personnel in South Africa, relevant staff members should be encouraged to master a few appropriate Japanese phrases as set out below by me. Whatever your field of operation, it's a simple courtesy to learn a few phrases such as 'welcome', 'good morning', 'goodbye' and 'thank you' in Japanese, and to learn something about their culture. In hotels, for instance, 'welcome' signs and or letters and a list of hotel services in Japanese are recommended, you can contact my office for these simple translations and if you are really serious about the Japanese business then we will put you in contact with our in country PR Agency who will be glad to give you a quote to translate your establishment or Transport companies brochure. To avoid embarrassing mistakes, make sure that translations are absolutely accurate, it is regarded as an insult, to spell wrong, and our office will assist in introducing you to a company that will do the translations accurately for you.

The Japanese need reassurance about personal safety. Efficiency and integrity are essential, as is close attention to detail, especially in tour planning. They are accustomed to polite, unobtrusive service and they prefer not to have to ask for help. Cleanliness and hygiene are vitally important - in all spheres. Complaints should be given swift, sympathetic attention. An apology costs nothing. **Never** argue, lose your temper or criticize a colleague in front of the Japanese.

In general, the Japanese tend to be **group-orientated**, although FIT is growing and when doing business with Japanese groups, you should establish contact and discuss arrangements with their tour leaders at the outset. It's obviously more practical to communicate with the group through the leader, as they are their official spokesperson. Always speak slowly and clearly and keep sentences short.

To further minimize the risk of confusion, it is good to remember that the Japanese seldom say 'no'. (In Japanese, there are two versions of the word 'no': one, roughly translated, means 'not at all', used when politely contradicting a compliment; the other

indicates disagreement.) If they don't understand what you say, they may respond with a nod and a smile. **(To admit lack of comprehension would involve loss of face.)** Also, the Japanese word for 'yes' (hai) does not necessarily indicate assent. It may simply mean that the person understands what you are saying. Don't automatically assume that he agrees with you. No wonder the Orientals have the reputation of being inscrutable!

Etiquette

Tradition is very important to the Japanese

- * Make a point of remembering their names or Surname, pronouncing them correctly followed by "San", and addressing them by their titles.
- * The exchange of business cards is essential when doing business with the Japanese. Your card should ideally be printed on one side in Japanese, showing your name, title, company name, address, phone & fax number. It should be handed to the recipient, Japanese side up, and preferably with both hands; **never with the Left or Right hand only.**
- * The bow, in varying degrees of duration and depth, is a key element in Japanese behavior, but for non-Japanese, all that is required is a handshake, with perhaps a token bow.
- * Gifts are an integral part of Japanese social and business behavior and should not be misconstrued as bribes. If you receive such a gift, it is customary to spend time admiring the wrapping, and to open it later, accept the gift with both hands, never with one hand.
- * Gifts to them should always be quality items, though not necessarily expensive. In business dealings, the most senior member of a Japanese company should receive the best gift, even if a more junior employee has been the closer or more helpful contact. Once again, your gift should be presented with both hands always.

Observing a few rules of Japanese etiquette will go a long way towards establishing good customer relations.

Guidelines for Hoteliers

A few simple arrangements can be made by hoteliers to make Japanese guests feel welcome:

- * A 'welcome' sign in Japanese at the reception desk would be much appreciated.
- * A senior staff member should be on duty to welcome Japanese visitors. He - She should wear a lapel badge and present them with business cards printed in Japanese or English. If possible, the same person should be their main contact in the hotel throughout their stay and be on hand to say goodbye when they leave. Farewells are very important in Japan.
- * The tour operator and tour leader should be advised in advance of the name and status of this staff member.
- * Checking in and out of the hotel should be a quick and easy operation, handled by an experienced staff member.
- * Try to employ at least one Japanese National or Japanese speaking staff member if you receive a lot of Japanese clientele. The duties of this person should include greeting guests on arrival, assisting with checking in and out, briefing guests about hotel facilities and acting as interpreter. Other staff should learn a few basic phrases and receive cross-cultural training.
- * For front office staff who do not speak Japanese, printed phrase cards would be useful. For instance, at an early morning check in, a card in Japanese saying: 'Your room is being prepared. The porter will take your luggage. Please sit down and we will call you when the room is ready', would avoid misunderstandings.
- * A letter of welcome and general information in Japanese on hotel services, **including security measures**, should be available at the reception desk or in rooms allocated to Japanese guests. A city - regional brochure and newspaper would also be appreciated.
- * The number '**4**' is considered to be very unlucky in Japan, as it signifies '**death**'. This superstition should be taken seriously. Avoid accommodating Japanese on floors or in rooms numbered **4, 44, 444**, at all costs.
- * Ensure a consistently prompt response to complaints or requests for service. The Japanese are used to large numbers of staff on duty and efficient service at all times. The extra expense of hiring additional staff members will pay dividends in terms of future business.

- * To the Japanese, every employee is a representative of the hotel, and they object to a response such as: 'Sorry, that's not my job, or I do not know;
- * Senior members of a group, e.g. tour leaders, "NOT Guides" should receive a better grade of accommodation than that allocated to other members, and preferably on a higher floor. Rooms allocated to ordinary group members should be similar to each other, no one should be seen as being treated better.
- * **Twin beds should be provided for Japanese guests when sharing, rather than double beds - even for honeymooners.**
- * Japanese travelers like to have green tea, tea bags, plum tea sachets and misso soup packets available in their hotel rooms, as well as a kettle, cups and saucers.
- * Bathrooms should have a constant supply of hot water and a bath with shower attachment or separate shower. The Japanese are accustomed to taking a shower, followed by a soak in a tub of clean water. They tend to splash quite vigorously, and for this reason, an outlet pipe in the floor would be an advantage.
- * A selection of toiletries and a hairdryer should be provided. Top international hotels also provide Japanese guests with 'Yukatas' (cotton dressing gowns) and slippers.
- * Although Japanese travelers are usually interested in sampling local cuisine, a few Japanese dishes on the menu would be a welcome addition. Menus, both for restaurants and room service, should ideally have subtitles in Japanese.
- * Ultimately, an accommodation reservation system in Japanese will greatly increase business.
- * Japanese adapters should also be available in all rooms & in Public Areas.
- * Hotel, Resorts and Lodges in SA are sometimes far out, and accepting Japanese "Yen" ¥ would go a long way and encourage more spending at the properties shops and curio outlets.

Feedback on South African Hotels Received from Japanese Travel Agents, Group Tour Leaders and Individuals in Response to a South African Tourism (Japan) Survey

- * Hotel staff are not kind enough and impatient with Japanese.
- * Hotel service for Japanese groups is too 'rough'. "Not Personalized"
- * South African hotels treat Japanese guests poorly and show no flexibility in business dealings. Some respondents to the survey wondered whether this is because South African hoteliers were not interested in the Japanese market.
- * Some hotels in South Africa, the facility (foyer - lobby) areas were very shabby, and therefore not suitable for use by Japanese agents or tourists.
- * Facilities at newer hotels were comfortable, but services still have to be improved.
- * A hotel service directory in Japanese should be provided.

- * Security in guest rooms should be improved, as safety is a TOP priority for the Japanese.
- * Hotel adjoining up-market shopping complexes are **very popular**.
- * Hotel concierge does not meet Japanese requirements in respect of changing "Yen" ¥, as they profess to handle limited amounts of cash. This is not service!
- * Most hotels do not change Japanese "Yen" ¥, This limits potential spending.
- * Japanese-speaking staff members should be available to act as liaison officers.
- * Room telephones should be operational immediately after check-in, this does not always happen.

Guidelines for Restaurants & Caterers

The following points should be borne in mind when catering for Japanese travelers:

- * In every sphere of your operation, an impeccable standard of hygiene should be a top priority.
- * When catering for groups, whatever arrangements / menus have been agreed upon with the tour operator in advance must be **STRICTLY** adhered to. There should be **no** changes, unless by prior written agreement.
- * Tour groups often travel on a tight schedule. Service should therefore be **swift** and efficient (sometimes, less than an hour from arrival to departure).
- * Japanese tour groups (and individuals) dislike being placed at inferior tables (near toilets, the main entrance, service entrances or in annexes away from the main restaurant). They prefer to have plenty of space.
- * Quality and presentation of food are very important.
- * Photographs of dishes and/or Japanese subtitles on menus would be helpful.
- * Waiters should be able to describe the various items on menus and wine lists, and **exercise tact at all times - even when inappropriate selections are made**.
- * Many Japanese know little about wine and appreciate knowledgeable advice when ordering. A selected drinks menu in Japanese will greatly increase sales.
- * A Jug / Bottle of still water should be placed on each table. Still mineral water (not carbonated) is a frequent request.
- * Check more than once with the group tour leader that everything is in order. Deal with requests - complaints immediately and efficiently.
- * Japanese preferences:
 - several small courses during a meal
 - fresh produce, especially fish and vegetables
 - Chinese or Thai cuisine if Japanese is not available
 - rice and other vegetables as side dishes
 - light puddings

* Dislikes:

- overcooked food, meat is normally eaten medium rare.
 - rich, creamy sauces
 - meat with bones
 - Lamb is not popular in Japan.
- * **Tipping is not customary in Japan.** If a service charge is to be made, this should be discussed in advance with the tour operator. Please inform all staff so they do not come across as soliciting for tips. This can be a Big Problem.

Feedback on South African Restaurants Received from Japanese Travel Agents, Group Tour Leaders and Individuals in Response to a South African Tourism (Japan) Survey

- * Service at breakfast is very poor. Lack of attendants, even at a buffet.
- * In addition to buffet breakfasts, à la carte breakfasts should also be available.
- * Menus are often poor; quality food does not meet Japanese standards yet South Africa has some of the Best food in the World according to Japanese (So why can some do well and others fare poorly).
- * The quantity of food is often excessive.
- * South African seafood has a good reputation among Japanese tourists.
- * The quality of Japanese foods served in South Africa is still to be improved.
- * Good Japanese restaurants should be established in major tourist centers in South Africa.

Guidelines for Retailers:

Some of the following suggestions are a matter of basic common sense, and should be implemented, not only for the Japanese, but for all customers, including South Africans:

- * A much higher standard of service is required. South African shops need to

compete for Japanese business with the best in the world.

- * In Japan, the customer is always right. Courtesy and efficiency are essential: the Japanese prefer a polite, unobtrusive approach, and they dislike having to ask for help. **Arguments should be avoided at all costs.**
- * Among the Japanese, up-market brand names are always in demand. They are keen to be shown unusual merchandise and to buy souvenirs on their visit.
- * They appreciate an efficient sales and wrapping service. The sales assistant should check each item for possible flaws before wrapping it. Gift purchases should be carefully wrapped in attractive paper and tied with ribbon. There should be no charge for wrapping items in house paper, Wrapping is an important part of Japanese culture.
- * Japanese customers are accustomed to having their change handed to them on a small plate, and not placed on a counter.
- * It's a charming Japanese custom to present any item to another with both hands. It would be a courtesy to hand them their purchases - change in the same way. Parcels should not merely be placed on the counter.
- * A Japanese-speaking staff member within the store is always an asset. Other staff could be encouraged to learn a few basic Japanese phrases when dealing with Japanese customers.
- * It's important to ensure that any sign or literature written in Japanese is correct and uses the appropriate level of courtesy.
- * Tour groups often have a limited time in which to stop; they should be given every assistance possible to enable them to make their purchases quickly.
- * At closing times, let customers finish their business. Don't allow staff to start packing up 10 minutes early.
- * Japanese customers often develop a personal loyalty towards their favorite shops. It may be worth implementing some sort of incentive programme for regular customers.

Feedback on South African Shops Received from Japanese

Travel Agents, Group Tour Leaders and Individuals in Response to

South African Tourism (Japan) Survey

- * Japanese tourists see South Africa as a shopping paradise.
- * Shopping hours should be extended where possible.
- * The fact that shops in South Africa do not accept foreign currency is a major drawback for tourists on tight schedules as they want to spend money.
- * Duty-free shops at most international airports it is hard to find items they wished to buy.

- * A guide to shopping in South Africa should be published in the Japanese language.
- * VAT refunds & information brochures should be placed at a major shopping centers and Shops, preferably in Japanese.
- * Original Tax Invoice for a VAT Refund Claims should be facilitated and provided to the tourists.

Guidelines for Tour Operators / Hosts of Japanese Visitors

The following recommendations should be borne in mind when entertaining Japanese visitors or arranging sightseeing tours:

- * Groups are often on a strict time limit, so everyone involved in implementing their itineraries should be prompt and efficient. It pays to double check arrival times.
- * Coach drivers should always ensure that they pick up groups on time. **The Japanese are always punctual, and they expect punctuality in others.** It's better to arrive early than to keep a group waiting.
- * In the event of unavoidable delays or cancellations, it's important to provide Japanese tourists with clear explanations concerning these. Lack of information causes unnecessary anxiety.
- * Cleanliness of coaches is vital. Ashtrays should be emptied regularly. Windows must be spotless, as Japanese like to take photographs during the journey.
- * Coaches should be fully air-conditioned.
- * Microphones should be in good order, and those who use them should speak clearly.
- * The choice of coach driver / courier is most important. He or she must be neat, willing, friendly, courteous, and well informed about the tourist attractions en route.
- * On long journeys, all coaches should have a Japanese-speaking guide. Tour operators will find it useful to keep a list of qualified Japanese-speaking guides they can call on when required.
- * Tour operators/drivers/couriers/guides should liaise closely with the Japanese tour leader. He - she is the spokesperson for the group and should be given special attention.
- * Tour operators should establish their Japanese guests' requirements in advance, so that they do not have to ask for service.
- * Couriers - guides should allow time for rest stops, shopping and photography, and should point out attractive places to photograph.
- * If food is to be provided, the catering recommendations on page 6 will be helpful.
- * Centrally situated restaurant - entertainment venues are preferred.
- * Avoid filling a venue with Japanese customers or audiences. **Japanese visitors do not like to feel segregated.**
- * Visual entertainment with little language involvement is recommended. Musicals

are popular.

- * At night, visitors and mixed groups enjoy restaurants, bars, casinos and 'live' entertainment.
- * **At a 'live' show which involves audience participation, Japanese visitors should not be subjected to any embarrassing 'loss of face' situations.**

How to Plan Itineraries for Japanese Holiday-makers

The maximum time which the average Japanese can spend on a South African holiday is between 10 and 12 days (home-to-home), preferably allocated as follows:

Johannesburg:

O R Tambo international airport is an important access point to other regions. Japanese group tours seldom include the city tour of Johannesburg and for an overnight venue due to personal safety and perceived security problems. As safety & security matters improve positively, this situation may change.

Gold Reef City and Sandton areas are however, popular for the Japanese visitors.

Pretoria (Lesedi Cultural Village)

The following can be included in a Japanese tour itinerary:

1. City tour combined with Johannesburg half-day tour i.e. (The Gold Reef City)
2. En route to/from Sun City
3. **"Jacaranda season is an Icon"** "October" in Pretorius and Schoeman streets in Pretoria, the City of Cape Town, and Pilgrims Rest in Mpumalanga.
4. Start - end point of the Blue Train and Rovos rail journey

Kruger Park / Mpumalanga area's

Japanese tour groups and FIT's allocate an average 2 to 4 nights in Mpumalanga, covering the following:

1. 1 Full-day tour of the Panoramic Route **"Blyde Canyon is an Icon for the Japanese"**
2. Horse Riding in the Blyde Canyon
3. 1 Day's Morning and Evening Game Drives in the Famous **"Kruger National Park"** **another Icon.**
4. Half-day tour of Either the Ndabele, Swazi or Shangaan Cultural Villages
5. Lunch at Harrie's Pancakes in Grasskop

Private Game Reserves

Private Game Reserves are sometimes included in packages, but these are perceived to be Expensive, so it is preferred to do Game Drives in Open vehicles in the parks.

Kwazulu-Natal

Due to time limitations, Kwazulu-Natal does not feature prominently on itineraries. Kwazulu-Natal has been identified by travel agents as a future region to be promoted in Japan.

Durban

Occasionally, included in Japanese itineraries, more attractions needed in KZN. Maximum two nights. Safety Concerns.

Greater St.Lucia Wetland Park

This is now one of the world heritage sites and one of three new recognized world heritage sites in South Africa. There is a possibility to attract more Japanese tourists, by introducing "world heritage sites tours" in South - Southern Africa.

Western Cape and Cape Town

100% of Japanese visitors to South Africa include the Western Cape (mainly Cape Town) or the Wine lands on their itineraries.

Cape Town

Japanese tour groups allocate an average 2 - 3 nights to Cape Town, covering the following:

6. Half-day city tour of Cape Town
7. Cable car ride to the top of "Table Mountain" another Icon
8. Half-day Wine land tour - either to Stellenbosch or Paarl
9. Full-day Cape Peninsula tour, including Boulders Beach.
10. Shopping in Cape Town, i.e.. V/A Waterfront
11. Boat Trip to Robyn Island

Oudtshoorn

Japanese groups prefer to arrive in Oudtshoorn in the morning and depart late evening for other destinations. Unfortunately, existing airline schedules do not cater for this travel pattern in general.

Plettenberg Bay / Port Elizabeth

Same as for Kwazulu-Natal.

Garden Route

Mainly forms part of wild flower tours.

Namaqualand

In spring, this wild flower - succulent area is very popular among Japanese tourists.

Kimberley

The 'Big Hole' is gaining in popularity and there have been requests to include a one-day tour of Kimberley in itineraries (arriving from point A and departing for point B format). Existing airline schedules do not cater for this travel pattern.

"Blue Train - Rovos Rail & Shongololo Express" perceived Icons in SA.

High priority among Japanese travel agents, supported by heavy demand from tourists and a few hours break, allows the passenger to glance at i.e. The Big Hole in Kimberley.

OTHER CONSIDERABLE TOURISM RESOURCES FOR JAPANESE VISITORS

- *Shopping is the key for the Japanese visitor and their spending on shopping is always High at an average of above of ZAR 15,000 per visitor.
- *Experiencing "Farm Stay", i.e. Wine Estate for i.e. picking grapes etc "voluntary".
- *English Language school (ESL programme) under home-stay programmes.
- *Whale watching tours
- *Self-driving tours -subject to Safety and Security.

Useful Hints for Golf Promoters

There are some Tour Operators -Agents specializing in promoting golf tours both domestically and internationally identified in the Japanese Travel market.

Despite reports you may have read about golf in Japan, and the number of Japanese you may have seen on South Africa's courses, attracting Japanese golfers to South Africa is not a viable proposition at this stage. Most visiting Japanese golfers do not pay their own fees. They are usually **hosted by South African companies** or local branches of Japanese companies.

You should approach them in South Africa and contact the Japanese Mission in South Africa for the name of contact persons.

A Japanese tourist requires a minimum of 8 to 10 days for a South African holiday, and his traveling costs will amount to between R30, 000 and R40, 000. He is not going to spend that kind of money just to play golf. South African Tourism Japan office promotes golf in South Africa as a leisure activity for golfers on group holiday tours. Due to time limitations on holiday tours, it does not feature prominently on an itinerary. Even this type of promotion does not attract very much response. This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa. After extensive advertising, an airline and a well known Japanese wholesaler only managed to sign up a few golfers for three days - to play at St.

Andrews!

If you are interested in promoting your product in Japan, you should establish business relations with one of the Japanese ground operators who work closely with wholesalers and retailers selling group tours to South Africa. The cost of a full page color advertisement in a Japanese golf magazine will be between R 65, 000 - R 85, 000 - possibly more!

Guidelines for Publishers/Printers of Brochures and Other Promotional Literature in Japanese

More tourist-related literature should be available in South Africa in the Japanese language: welcome letters, pamphlets on hotel services, menus and wine lists, guide booklets, etc.

- * When compiling a brochure, clarity is important and it's a good idea to ask yourself what you would want to know if you were visiting a foreign country where your own language is not spoken. Practical information on 'how', 'when' and 'where' should be provided.
- * Because accuracy is **essential**, translations should ideally be **handled in Japan**. Japanese nationals who have lived away from their country for several years may be using idioms which are out of date.
- * Instead of using a rigid, literal translation from English, information should be transposed into Japanese in a way which is relevant to the Japanese market.
- * To ensure accuracy and the most effective typeface, database is also best handled in Japan.
- * The Japanese are accustomed to printed material of a high standard. Quality is vital as far as paper is concerned, layout is important, and the design should be pleasing to the Japanese eye. Clear print and color are important. Red and black are popular colors among the Japanese people.

This should assist you greatly in the Japanese Market

Useful Japanese Phrases

(ó denotes long vowel)

Greetings

Good morning	Ohayó gozaimasu
Good afternoon	Konnichi wa
Good evening	Konban wa
Good night	Oyasumi-nasai
Goodbye	Sayónara
How do you do	Hajimemashite
My name is / I am	Watashi (no namae) wadesu
Pleased to meet you	Dózo yoroshiku
This is my name card	Kore wa watashi no meishi desu
This is a gift for you	Dózo, purezento desu
May we speak in English	Eigo de yoroshii deshó ka

Daily words/phrases

Yes	Hai
No (in turning down a compliment)	Iie
No (you're wrong)	Chigaimasu (use carefully)
Excuse me (but)	Sumimasen ga....
(at beginning of sentence usually before a question)	
Please	O-negai-shimasu
(at end of sentence usually after requesting a favour)	
Thank you (very much)	Dómo arigató (gozaimasu)
You're welcome (=not at all)	Dó itashimashite
Sorry/My apologies	Gomennasai or Sumimasen
I don't speak Japanese	Nihongo ga dekimasen
Do you speak English?	Eigo ga hanasemasu ka