

Exploring traditional and modern Japan



Article and photos by Luz Saez

每年都有许多游客前往日本。日本的吸引力到底在哪里?是人们的礼貌热情,是优美洁净的景观,还是好吃的寿司?作者在研读了一些专家文献并采访三位外国游客后亲临日本,探究问题的答案。

Modern Japan is fast becoming one of Asia's most popular tourist destinations, with the number of foreign tourists quadrupling between 2011 and 2018.

According to the JTB Tourism and Consulting Company, Japan welcomed almost three million overseas tourists in April for the cherry tree blossom season. The Japan Tourism Agency expects the country to receive more than 30 million tourists in 2018.

Contributing factors to the surge in tourism include the relative weakness of the Japanese yen and the relaxation of visa requirements for Chinese citizens, who were Japan's biggest source of tourism for the past three years.

One of the main reasons to visit is "Japanese hospitality," according to Juan Miguel Ortega, a Costa Rican student currently based in Xiamen who visited Japan last April.

Mario Honrubia, a Spanish tourism analyst based in Beijing, visited Japan for the first time last May. He noted that Spanish tourists are increasingly visiting Japan because of a change in the perception of the country. "A few years ago, Japan was an expensive destination for some European visitors but, now that the euro has been devalued, Japan is more accessible for the average tourist," said Mr. Honrubia. "Plane tickets are the largest portion of the [travel budget to Japan], which is why it is not such a popular destination among Eu-



ropean backpackers," he added.

One of Japan's primary selling points is the diversity of tradition and experiences available to tourists. A stroll around any neighborhood in Tokyo yields an emblematic temple or sanctuary linked to a modern tree-lined avenue. The capital city offers a taste of tradition and modern city life, such as the Japanese teenagers who hang out in Harajuku dressed as goths, lolitas or anime characters.

"Visiting Japan is a magical and mysterious journey full of both natural and cultural wonders," said Mr. Ortega. "After a tiring day walking around any Japanese city, it is a pleasure for your senses to visit the nearest local onsen, public baths with

saunas," he added. "You can follow that up with a good night's sleep at a ryokan, the typical Japanese hotel where beds are tatami mats carefully placed on the floor."

Travelers can also discover an inexpensive but delicious meal of sushi and miso soup or Kobe beef while surrounded by wood panels and lanterns in Kyoto's legendary Pontocho Alley.

Japanese tourism is also boosted by the country's excellent transport infrastructure. Bullet train routes thread throughout the Japanese archipelago, whisking tourists to their destinations in comfort at speeds of up to 320 kilometers per hour. Japan's high-speed rail system is widely seen as a key symbol of modern Japan.

The country's fast trains (Shinkansen) speed to destinations such as Gion, Kyoto's famed geisha district, which is soaked in the timeless traditions of ancient Japan.

The Japan Rail Pass grants tourists unlimited use of the country's intercity and urban rail system at a fixed price for blocks of seven, 14 or 21 days, pending the availability of seats.

The pass even extends to ferries servicing islands such as Hokkaido and Itsukushima, popularly known as Miyajima or Shrine Island.

Japan's must-see scenic spots are legendary and include destinations such as Kyushu, Kanazawa and the iconic Mount Fuji.

Other attractions include Kumano Kodo, a 1,000-year-old pilgrimage route once used by emperors, aristocrats and people from every social class. This UNESCO World Heritage network of routes stretches across the mountainous Kii Peninsula. The highlight of the route is the Kumano Sanzan, the collective name for three shrines within 40 kilometers of each other that are regarded as the most sacred places in Japan.

Upcoming Events
活动预告**Swan Lake on Ice, ballet**

Performer: The Imperial Ice Stars
Time: 2:30 p.m., August 3 to 5
Place: Banlam Grand Theater

芭蕾《冰上天鹅湖》

表演:英国冰上芭蕾舞团
时间:8月3日-8月5日下午2点半
地点:闽南大戏院

Sound of Music, musical

Time: 8:00 p.m., August 23
Place: Jiageng Theater

音乐剧《音乐之声》中文版

时间:8月23日晚八点
地点:嘉庚剧院

Do It Like This, music concert

Performer: Song Bingyang
Time: 7:30 p.m., August 4
Place: Shanggu Culture Park courtyard, Wuyuan Bay

宋秉洋“就是酱紫”歌友会

时间:8月4日晚七点半
地点:五缘湾上古文化园中庭

18th Birthday Cello Tour, classical music concert

Performer: Nana Ou Yang
Time: 7:30 p.m., August 22
Place: Xiamen Cangjiang Theater

欧阳娜娜18跨界巡回演唱会

时间:8月22日晚七点半
地点:厦门沧江剧院

