

## ABOUT US

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 TOM TOM ENGLISH



## Why don't people visit Japan?

### VOCABULARY

#### Articulate =

To explain a difficult  
thing in a clear manner

#### Get oneself out there =

To give others a chance  
to see something; to  
promote oneself

#### Woeful, Woefully =

Wretched, unhappy,  
very bad

#### Workaround =

A method used to  
bypass a problem

### Discussion questions

1. Would you like more foreign visitors to visit Japan? Why? Why not?
2. The article implies that the Japan Tourist Association has done a bad job of promoting Japan. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
3. Do you agree that Japan is expensive? Can you think of any "workarounds" for this problem?
4. What do you think about foreign language signs? Do you think we need more?
5. Can you think of any other ways to make Japan more attractive for foreign visitors?
6. Have you experienced any of the problems listed in the article in other countries? Which ones? How did you overcome them?

### VOCABULARY

#### A bit of a pain =

Casual expression for an  
irritating or  
uncomfortable situation

#### In a bind =

To be in a tight or  
awkward situation

#### Few and far between =

Scarce, infrequent, rare

#### SIM =

A smart card for use  
with mobile phones

You would think that a country like Japan would be a huge hit with tourists. But Japan is actually not such a popular destination. Tourism from abroad brings in around 900 billion yen per year for Japan. To put that in perspective, France makes around 5 trillion, the UK 3 trillion and Germany 3.7 trillion from tourism. So why is this beautiful country an unpopular holiday destination?

### **Publicity problems**

Firstly, Japan needs more and better quality advertising. Japan needs to be able to self-promote, and **articulate** to the wider world exactly why people should come and visit. China has size on its side, Thailand has its resorts and backpacker culture, Cambodia has its historical ruins; people visiting Asia for the first time have so much choice on where to go, so proper promotion is extremely important. Right now, Japan just isn't **getting itself out there** enough.

But what about cool Japan, the government drive to get more foreigners interested in Japan?

There have been attempts to come up with advertising campaigns, but they've fallen **woefully** short. Celebrities have huge star attraction here, but the PR gurus don't seem to have caught on that using Japanese stars to advertise Japan just doesn't work, since people outside of the country often have no clue who they are.

### **Skytree-high costs**

The top reasons people from Europe and the USA don't come to Japan is that it's both too far and too expensive. There's nothing that can be done about the former, but there could be some **workarounds** regarding the latter. Accommodation and transport are very expensive so with a high-valued yen people are bound to look to cheaper options in Asia.

### **Lost in translation**

Then there's the fact that it's not very easy to go on holiday here without knowing the language, because of the comparatively low

level of English of most native Japanese folks. Even in Tokyo you can find yourself stuck due to language issues, and outside of the city there are many sightseeing spots that don't have any English signs. Japanese also isn't like languages which use the Roman alphabet, so travellers can't simply type a written word into their dictionary. So the average traveler is severely limited when they can't even read restaurant menus or the names written on signs at train stations.

### **Japanese-only convenience**

Japan is often said to be an incredibly convenient place, but it can be very inconvenient for travelers.

Firstly, actually getting into the city can be **a bit of a pain** since its busiest international airport, Narita, is located quite far out of central Tokyo. Then, when you want to pay for your train or bus ticket you might find yourself **in** a bit of a **bind** since Japan is still a mostly cash society and there are many places that do not accept credit cards. On top of that, ATMs that accept foreign cards are **few and far between** and are often closed outside of regular business hours. And forget hopping online to check your route or research places to visit as, despite Japan's reputation as a technologically advanced country, there are still very few places with Wi-Fi, free or otherwise. You also can't buy cheap mobile phones with disposable **SIM** cards, making keeping in touch with other members of your group difficult.

All in all these factors all contribute to the reality that people aren't going to be inclined to come and visit unless they already have an interest in Japan.

With the 2020 Olympics coming, the country is going to experience a surge in foreign visitors. The question now is whether Japan will be ready for them.