

'Golden horde' of Chinese shoppers descend on Japan

- 1) The exodus of tourists from China during the lunar new year holiday began from Feb 19. This year the number of visitors from the Middle Kingdom is expected to set new records.
- 2) “In addition to the depreciation of the Japanese yen, the range of consumer items eligible for duty free sales has been expanded to consumables such as foodstuffs and cosmetics,” a journalist based in Beijing tells Shukan Bunshun (Feb 26). “What’s more, from January the restrictions for issuing of tourist visas to Japan have been relaxed. These are likely to set off a ‘visit Japan’ boom in China. “The local media in China is predicting a huge increase over last year, perhaps as much as doubling,” he adds.
- 3) Caravans of sightseeing buses have reportedly been parked along the street called Sakai-suji in the southern part of Osaka. On any given day, at least five buses are parked there, some even double- or triple-parked, interfering with the flow of traffic. Most of the buses are leased for shopping tours by Chinese tourists to Osaka’s famous Shinsaibashi covered shopping street. A local taxi driver says the congestion problem is compounded by shoppers who disregard the buses’ preset departure times, resulting in more buses piling up.
- 4) Most of the shoppers are steered to small, Chinese-owned duty free shops, stacked to their ceilings with electric rice cookers, electric shavers, watches and cosmetics. After visiting several similar shops the tourists are allowed time for their own free activities, which often descend into disordered forays into local shops. Are these kinds of frenzies, the magazine asks, really contributing to Japan’s economic well being?
- 5) A writer familiar with China says that the typical travel pattern from China is a package tour of five nights and six days to Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo, which sells for the equivalent of 150,000 to 170,000 Japanese yen. (“But some super-cheap deals can be had for around 40,000 yen.”) “The guides receive kickbacks for taking customers to certain shops,” he adds.
- 6) Apparently the items currently in high demand at the stores are bidet-type toilets. “According to Chinese, the items produced in their own country aren’t reliable. While TOTO-brand toilets are sold in China, perhaps out of concerns that they might be counterfeits, people prefer to buy them in Japan. “Another popular item is TOTO’s Portable Washlet,” he says.
- 7) The deluge of Chinese visitors to Hokkaido from the end of 2014 has led to considerable crush on facilities at Sapporo’s Chitose Airport. “Although Feb 13 was a weekday, the international terminal was mobbed with departing Chinese,” an airport employee tells the magazine. “They were pushing baggage carts piled high with rice cookers and various food items. The hand-carry baggage security inspectors were so overwhelmed, one flight to Shanghai was delayed more than one hour.” Non fiction author Keiko Kawazoe tells Shukan Bunshun most of the purchases carried back to China are either resold, or given to people as bribes.
- 8) “‘Sightseeing,’ in the mind of Japanese, is to go someplace and enjoy beautiful scenery and tasty food,” Kawazoe says. “But for Chinese, the main purpose is just to buy as much as they can carry back, which they will resell or pass along to people as bribes. Watching them always eating at the same Chinese restaurant in Kyoto, irrespective of their length of stay, suggests to me that the only reason they come here is to shop.”
- 9) Kawazoe noted that one store in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture which specializes in sales of famous “Nambu Tekki” (hand-crafted iron kettles), as a proactive move before a Chinese tour group arrives, goes so far as to take down its best items of merchandise from the shelves and conceal them, fearing they will either be shoplifted or left smudged with customer fingerprints. Kawazoe thinks that such customers need to be instructed in the rules for proper shopping, and served warning by sales staff if they fail to follow proper protocol.【Feb. 23, 2015/Japan Today】



Laos electronic appliance store in Tokyo's Akihabara district is packed with Chinese tourists. →
horde: 大群 exodus: 大移動 the Middle Kingdom: (昔の)中国 consumables: 消耗品 set off: 始動する
caravan: 一団 congestion: 混雑 be compounded: さらに増す disregard: 注意を払わない pile up: 山積
 みになる descend into: 果ては~になる foray: 急襲 frenzy: 熱狂 well being: 幸福 equivalent: 同価値のもの deluge: 殺到
bribe: ワイロ irrespective of: 関係なく proactive: 先取りする shoplift: 万引きする smudge: 汚す protocol: 外交儀礼
 ☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆

1. What is Lunar New Year Holiday? What is the difference from the New Year celebrated on January 1st?
2. What are the reasons behind the increase in the number of Chinese visitors to Japan?
3. What do you think about the shopping selection of the Chinese tourists?
4. Have you had any encounter with Chinese tourists? Please share your experiences.
5. What are the effects of the influx of Chinese visitors to Japan? Do you think the increasing number of visitors to Japan can help mend ties between countries?
6. What do you want Chinese visitors to learn about Japan?
7. Make sentences using the following words: exodus, consumables, congestion, disregard, foray, frenzy, equivalent and protocol.

中国では経済成長に伴い国外旅行者が増加している。日本の小売業界の「春節商戦」に、円安、2014年10月から始まった消費税の免税品目の大幅拡大、さらに今年1月に始まったビザ発給要件の緩和が追い風となり、百貨店やディスカウントストアでの売り上げは大きく伸びたという。