

The Geography of Japan

Lesson 8: Tourism

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Learning Objectives (part 1):

- To understand why Japan attracts tourism.
- To understand some of the positive and negative impacts tourism is having on Japan.

Learning Objectives (part 2 - optional):

- To recognise how sustainable tourism can be a solution to the problem of overtourism in Japan.

Curriculum Links:

This unit covers aspects of KS3 National Curriculum in England for Geography relating to: Location knowledge, Place knowledge, Human and physical geography, Geographical skills and fieldwork.

See the Scheme of Work or National Curriculum for further details:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239087/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Geography.pdf Department for Education, 2013.

Key Words: tourism, tourists, economy, society, environment, impact, overtourism, sustainable tourism.

Main Resources

- PowerPoint presentation
- Lesson Plan
- Impacts of Tourism Activity Worksheet
- Alternative Travel Destinations Factsheets
- Alternative Travel Destinations Fact File (for pupils to complete as activity)

Additional Resources:

The JNTO website is a great resource for this lesson on Tourism. See useful links below:

<https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/> (statistics on tourist arrivals)

For optional part 2 of the lesson on sustainable travel:

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/tohoku/akita/>

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kansai/wakayama/>

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kyushu/kagoshima/>

News article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1wzrlndzjro> (external resource, BBC)

Please note that there are Teacher's Notes you can access underneath each PowerPoint slide, which contain extra information and ideas of discussion questions that you can incorporate into your lesson. Click on the "Notes" button on the bottom bar to access these.

NB: This lesson is split into two parts. **Part one (slides 1-13) is intended as a general overview to tourism in Japan**, exploring statistics of visitor arrivals in Japan (JNTO); why tourists visit Japan and the types of tourism that tourists can engage in; as well as the positive and negative impacts tourism is having on Japan's society, economy, and environment.

If you are looking to extend your learning on tourism in Japan, continue onto **part two (slides 13-19), which explores the issue of overtourism in Japan**. Pupils will consider how overtourism has impacted the country in recent years; learn about sustainable tourism as a potential solution; and research an alternative travel destination in Japan for the main activity.

STARTER AND WARM-UP

- **Slide 1:** Introduce the topic of today's lesson. This lesson is intended to act as a case study for tourism. You could use this case study of Japan to compare to another country you have previously studied or will study in the future. Ideally, your class will have studied tourism as a topic previously.
- **Slide 2:** Ask pupils to discuss the questions on the slide and share ideas as a class. The types of tourism question will also be covered later in the lesson (see slides 10-11)
- **Slide 3:** Introduce the Learning Objectives and Key Words for this lesson.

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

PART 1: TOURISM IN JAPAN

- **Slide 5:** The graph on this slide is from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO); you can access their website by clicking the link on the slide or this Lesson Plan (see Additional Resources).
- Ask pupils to look at the graph and discuss what they notice about it with their partner/in groups, keeping TEA (Trend, Evidence, and Anomaly) in mind.
- Check pupils understand what the numbers on the X and Y axis are indicating.
- Encourage pupils to think about why tourism arrivals dropped in 2009, 2011, and 2020-2022. Also prompt pupils to consider possible reasons why tourism has increased so significantly post-COVID.
- **Slide 6:** explores the key points pupils may have noticed when discussing the graph.
- The teacher's notes on the bottom of **slides 5 and 6** explore some of the potential reasons for the anomalies in the graph and why tourist arrivals have significantly increased post-COVID.
- **Slide 7:** Now look at the table of data which provides a breakdown of the tourist arrivals to Japan by country/area from 2025 (JNTO); visit the website for a more detailed breakdown of the statistics.

- Once again, ask pupils to discuss what they notice about the data with their partner/in groups. Does the data surprise them or not surprise them? Why or why not?
- **Slide 8** covers key points pupils may have noticed when discussing with their partner/group. The majority of visitors to Japan are from East and Southeast Asia (65.2%), with South Korea ranking highest (22.2% of total visitors). Ask pupils to consider why. The Teacher's Notes on the slide provide some potential reasons.
- In addition, remind pupils these statistics count the *total number of visitor arrivals*, which means this could also include people travelling for business/work, visiting family and friends, or going to study in Japan: not exclusively tourists travelling to Japan for a holiday!
- **Slide 9:** Ask pupils to consider why a tourist might want to visit Japan, based on what they know or previously learned. Pupils could also base their answers upon their own personal reasons if they would like to travel to Japan in the future/have previously visited Japan.
- **Slide 10-11:** Click to reveal some of the different types of tourism/reasons why people might visit Japan.

Estimated Time: 15 – 20 minutes

ACTIVITY 1

- **Slide 12:** Before this activity, remind pupils of the first graph they looked at (slide 5). Naturally, a sudden and significant increase in tourism is going to make an impact on Japan. Check that pupils understand what social/ environmental/ economic impact means before beginning.
- Introduce the impacts of tourism activity and distribute the worksheet to pupils. Working in pairs/groups, ask pupils to read each of the impact cards and decide whether they think it is a positive or negative impact of tourism in Japan. They can indicate this by highlighting the card with different colours or symbols (e.g. smiley face / unhappy face).
- Pupils must then consider whether each card is describing something that impacts the society, environment, or the economy. Again, pupils can use different colours or symbols. Note that some of the cards might fit into multiple categories. You can discuss these as a class at the end.
- Challenge task: provide blank cards that pupils can fill in with their own ideas of potential impacts of tourism in Japan.
- **Slide 13:** Complete the reflection activity

Estimated Time: 10 – 15 minutes

PART 2: OVERTOURISM IN JAPAN

- **Slide 15-16:** Introduce the additional LO, then ask pupils to think about what overtourism means.
- Click on the slide again to reveal the definition and say we will now explore how it affects Japan.
- **Slide 17:** an example of how overtourism impacted one city (the cherry blossom festival in Fujiyoshida, February 2026). There are many other examples you could choose, so feel free to use a different or more recent example. As an alternative, you could print out an article and ask pupils to read through this independently/in pairs/groups, before discussing as a class.
- **Slide 18:** Ask pupils to discuss the questions. The Teacher's Notes explore some possible answers.
- **Slide 19:** There are many ways the Japanese government, local towns and cities, and businesses are tackling the problem of overtourism. This issue affects many countries – not just Japan – and the idea of sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly popular.

Estimated Time: 10 – 15 minutes

ACTIVITY 2

- **Slide 20:** One example of sustainable tourism happening in Japan (and elsewhere) is the promotion of alternative travel destinations.
- **Slide 21:** Introduce the activity. Hand out the fact file worksheet of your choice (there is a differentiated version) and explain the task. Pupils must select one of the prefectures on the slide (Akita, Wakayama, and Kagoshima) to research. You could give a free choice instead, however, it must be somewhere that is not currently affected by overtourism.
- You can print the pages from the JNTO website (see the Additional Resources section of this Lesson Plan) for pupils to use, or they can explore these pages by themselves if using a tablet, etc. Google Maps is also an interesting resource for pupils to explore the prefecture.

Estimated Time: 20+ minutes

REFLECTION

- **Slide 23:** As a plenary, pupils will do an “elevator pitch” of their alternative destination. If time, allow pupils to swap roles.

Estimated Time: 2-3 minutes