

# Sightseeing in Kyoto: A Survey of Overseas Visitor Responses

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## 1. Sightseeing- A History

### 1-1 Definition of Sightseeing

Interestingly, there is no single common definition for the word sightseeing in the world as yet. There are various opinions about what sightseeing is, but in Japan it is basically defined as 'going somewhere and come back voluntarily.' Therefore it might be said that sightseeing is a form of travel. Travel is said to be the act of leaving land you got used to living temporary. Travel can be divided into by "travel for ones life," "a compulsory trip" and "voluntary trip." Sightseeing is most generally applied to the latter definition.

### 1-2 History of the term

The etymology of the Japanese word for sightseeing *kankō* comes from the Chinese character word *kankōnohikari*. It literally means 'to see a country's light.' Thus, it means that sightseeing is a person travelling to other countries and see and learn their good points. A mission took the ship to conclude a treaty with United States of America in the last stage of Edo era. This ship was named the "*Kankoumaru*." This is the origin of the word being used to mean "sightseeing" in Japan.

Until the Edo era, Japan was closed to inbound and outbound foreign countries, but this changed completely. This is a result of Commodore Matthew Perry's request that the Japanese government open the country to trade and visitation from foreign countries.

During the Meiji era, many foreigners got to come to Japan to make a trip. The reason for this is that Japanese government worked on America and

European countries and invited specialists about various fields to teach their ideas. In fact, it was at this time that Japanese government got to calling people arriving from foreign countries "foreign tourists." The term *kankō* began to spread around the country since this time.

### 1-3 The Origins of Sightseeing

Watson (2016) notes that 'the tourism business is thought to have started at least 2000 years ago, when wealthy citizens of ancient Rome began to travel to the countryside and the coast for pleasure. A tourist industry soon grew up round this need, but it ended along with the Roman Empire.' It is difficult to imagine that tourism business started from such a long time ago.

During the medieval era, however, tourism again appeared thanks to a growing interest in pilgrimages. From records such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, it is evident that many pilgrims were keen to relax and enjoy themselves as well as visit a holy shrine. In fact, it is from the Old English word *hāligdæg* (holy day) that the word "holiday" derives. I discovered the origin of the word "holiday" for the first time, so this made me interested in the origin of English words.

Watson states that 'because of two other factors: health and culture, hundreds of years later, those who could afford to encourage the start of more widespread and regular tourism began to visit the spa and seaside towns of eighteenth century Europe to benefit from the spring waters and fresh air. Straightforward leisure tourism took hold when industrialization across Europe gave rise to an affluent middle class with an increasing amount of free time. Entrepreneurs started to build tourist

hotels with an infrastructure of roads, carriages and ferries. Tourism began to take shape as an international industry.

The industry was popular and steadily successful from the early nineteenth century. Later, in the 1960s, reasonably-priced commercial aircraft were able to carry passengers to and from any airport in the world.

Tourism is now a huge economic boost to many developed countries. In 2006, the international tourism receipts for the three most popular destinations - France, Spain and the United States - came to a total \$179.7 billion. The number of visitors who contributed this sum was 188.7 million. With figures such as these, many countries around the globe work hard to encourage travelers to visit them. Japan is beginning to gradually find its place as a global tourism destination, and Kyoto, as one of Japan's tourist highlights, is already seeing the effects of this growth.

Unfortunately, it is this scramble to grab a share of the tourist industry that is sometimes damaging environments which cannot sustain large number of visitors. There are also concerns about the pollution generated by the ever-rising volume of tourist flights, cruise ships and road traffic. On top of these problems are increasing fuel costs. However, he is positive about the future, stating that the tourism industry will no doubt adapt to new demands and circumstances.

#### 1-4 History of Sightseeing in Japan

As noted above, there are several reasons for human travel, and the history of travel in Japan seems to cover most of them. The first reason for travel is purely to maintain one's own lifestyle. People lived simple lives, and were seeking provisions and places to live through moving. Another reason for travel was the "ordered trip" appeared by the Yamato Imperial Court. The relationship between controlling person and controlled person is established. The rulers began taking official trips to the outer territories. On the other hand, the ruled

were forced to make trips to pay their taxes to a city.

Moreover, it seems that at this time being able to travel by free will spread among the ruling class, who would often go seeing such as the cherry blossoms and to hot springs resorts. This is real examples of travelling for leisure.

Sightseeing as a pastime of the common people started from the middle of the Heian Period about from 901 to 1068. The origins of sightseeing in Japan, like in Europe, came from faith. The oldest examples of pilgrimage is the worshipping at Mt. Kumano which lies in the range from the southeast part of Wakayama prefecture. The area is known for its steep mountain paths. However, in the Muromachi Period, the center of faith changed to the Grand Shrine at Ise, which is located in Ise city of Mie Prefecture. The reason behind is this access the path of Ise Shrine is flatter than one of Mt. Kumano.

More common people were able to travel for sightseeing during the Edo Period, because the domestic fighting had ended and the common people could spend their free time safely. It became easier to travel thanks to infrastructure maintenance such as five highways called "*Gokaido*" and posting stations called "*Shukuba*."

However, in the Edo era, there were some barriers between regions, so common people couldn't pass without special permission. Issuing a traffic draft was basically required to be admitted. However, travellers needed a lot of money to travel across regional boundaries, so it was difficult to make the pilgrimage to Ise Shrine.

Thus, it was worked out one idea, which was making a group with some people to saving travel expenses when visiting a shrine. This is called *kou*, and was the first group travel in Japan. In addition to this, this idea was created by people called *oshi*. They are the people responsible for publicizing Ise Shrine and they looked for people each regions to gather members of group. This early version of tourism led to the popularity of the Ise Shrine pilgrimage. Tourist group discounts and the hotel reservation system

were worked out then. This can be thought of as the origin of travel agencies in Japan, and how the basis of tourism within Japan was created.

However, some people were still unable to travel, such as shopboys, servants and the second sons of a farmhouse, because they were not permitted by their shopkeeper or the head of a family. Thus, they sometimes visited the shrine in secret. This was called *nukemairi*, coming from the meaning “steal a watching and visit the shrine.” Some of these pilgrims were discovered at the gates, but the government official was good enough to overlook them by saying “I want to go visiting the Ise Shrine. I have only this feeling.”

Strangely enough, this *nukemairi* has come into popularity three times in sixty years, the first time in 1650. This happening was called *okagemairi* and the year is known as *okagedoshi*. In the Edo era, in fact, visiting shrines came to be a pretext. It seems that common people wanted to enjoy themselves by sightseeing or eating rare things apart from daily life. In the Meiji era, the maintenance of bridges and railways advanced and many inns and hotels were built.

Since people were able to now freely travel about the land, people come to enjoy sightseeing in a style similar to today without any pretext. This tradition connects with current-day customs of travel.

### 1-5 Background, Motivation and Purpose of this Study

According to the news data on TV, every year, the number of foreign visitors arriving in Japan is increasing. I feel this especially strongly in Kyoto, where I spent my college days. When I walk around Kyoto, I have noticed the growth in their numbers. I always think something when see foreign visitors. The following are the questions leading to my study’s motivation.

What are their images of Kyoto? They have how gap before they visit Kyoto and after they visited. I wonder how different sightseeing book Japanese wrote from the places foreign visitors actually visited.

They found how convenient or easy things and inconvenient or difficult ones. Are there any services they think Kyoto should adopt? These questions are what I would like to pursue in this study.

I would like to try to find answers to these this questions by conducting a simple questionnaire with many foreign visitors. Furthermore, I would like to discuss their responses, and make as many suggestions as I possibly can to Kyoto City with regards to foreign inbound tourists.

### 2-1 Respondent Profiles: Nationality, Age, Sex

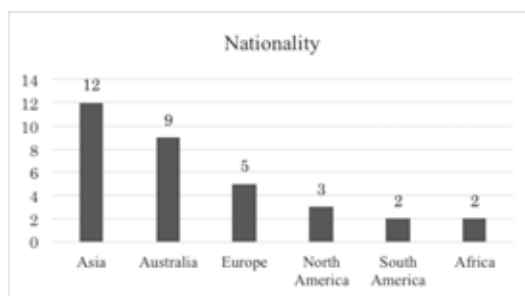


Figure 1. Respondents by nationality

Twelve of the 32 respondents were from Asia, while nine were from Australia. The Asian respondents consist of Japan, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan. Five of the 32 respondents were from Europe, while three were from North America. The Europe respondents consist of UK, France, and Finland. Two of the 32 respondents were both from South America and from Africa. The North America respondents were from USA, while the South America respondents were from Brazil. The Africa respondents consisted of travellers from Cameroon and Burkina Faso.

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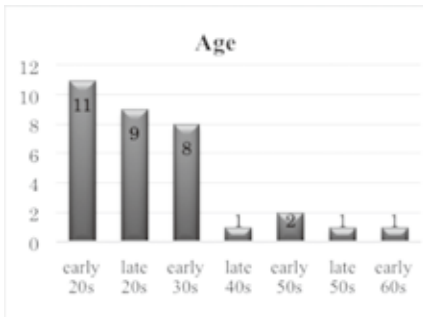


Figure 2. Respondents by age

The vast majority of respondents were in their 20s and 30s. The distribution between sexes was rather even, with 52% female and 48% male respondents.

### 2.2 Reasons for visiting Kyoto

The vast majority of respondents were in Kyoto for sightseeing or leisure travel, with a small minority of students.

### 2.3 Images of Kyoto (before and after visiting)

#### 2.4 Places visited (in Kyoto/in Japan)

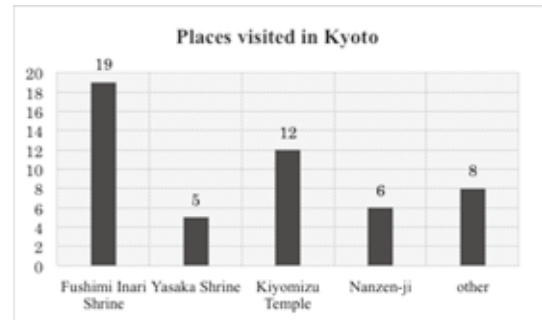


Figure 5. Places visited in Kyoto

The respondents visited various places aside from the choices provided, including Higashi Honganji Temple, Kodaiji Temple, Kinkakuji Temple, the Imperial Palace (Gosho) and Toji Temple.



Figure 3. Reasons for visiting Kyoto.

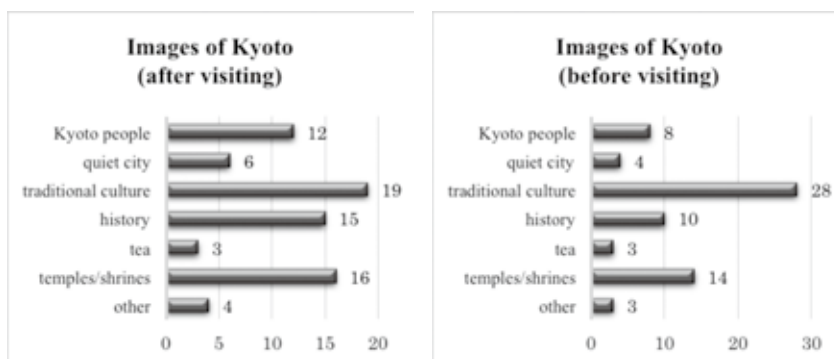


Figure 4. Images of Kyoto (before and after visiting)



Figure 6. Places visited in Japan

The respondents visited various locations in the rest of Japan aside from the choices provided. They visited Nara, Hiroshima, Okinawa, Kumamoto, Nagasaki Prefecture. They also visited Narita city in Chiba Prefecture, Onomichi city in Hiroshima Prefecture, Atsugi city and Yokosuka city in Kanagawa Prefecture, Kobe city in Hyogo Prefecture, Kanazawa city in Ishikawa Prefecture and Takayama city in Gifu Prefecture.

## 2.5 Perceived differences between Kyoto and the rest of Japan

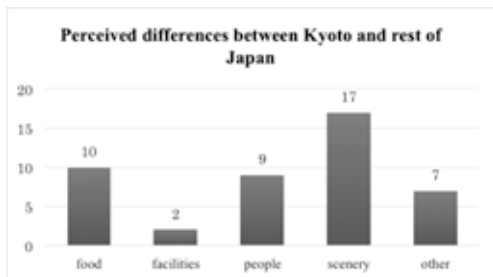


Figure 7. Perceived differences between Kyoto and the rest of Japan

## 2.6 Convenient and inconvenient aspects of Kyoto

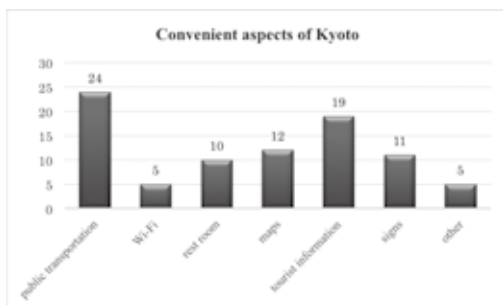


Figure 8. Convenient aspects of Kyoto

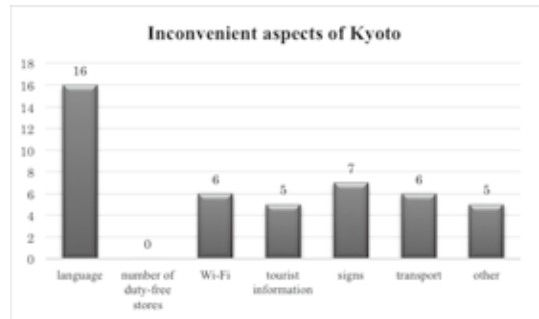


Figure 9. Inconvenient aspects of Kyoto

## 2.7 Suggestions for improvement of Kyoto as tourist city

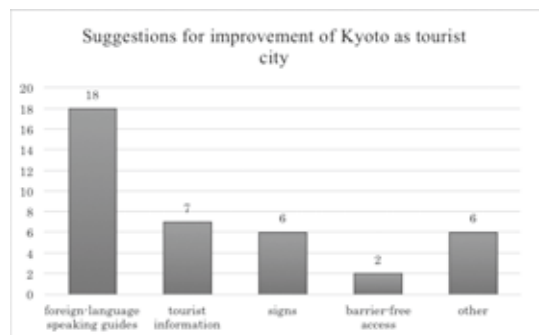


Figure 10. Suggestions for improvement of Kyoto as a tourist city.

The respondents suggest Kyoto should improve tourist information in English, signs with English and more free Wi-Fi. Some of the respondents indicated that they were completely happy with their Kyoto experience, responding with “Nothing” or “No, all ok.”

## 3. Observations and Discussion

Below are some of the responses to the questionnaire. Firstly, looking at the question “What is your strongest image of Kyoto? Has it changed since you visited?” I noticed that many of the answers for before and after images of Kyoto are similar. The image of traditional culture is the strongest, both before and after visiting Kyoto. This hints that Kyoto has a strong image of traditional culture.

Some of the comments to his question are as follows. For images of Kyoto before visiting, one respondent has image of being reserved, and mostly interacting with women, and not men. Another respondent has the image of Kyoto being still very impressive and more discoveries every day. Another respondent noted that downtown and Gion are now more modern.

After visiting, some of the respondents gave some slightly different images. One respondent had the image of more foreigners than twenty years ago. Another respondent has image of food, while yet another respondent has an image of Kyoto as a great bike-friendly city.

Secondly, in regards to the question "Which shrines or temples did you visit in Kyoto?" The result is the shrines or temples the most foreign visitors visited is Fushimi Inari. Following it, the second most visited is Kiyomizu Temple.

Next, in responses the question "Besides Kyoto, which Japanese cities have you visited?" Among the participants interviewed, it seems that Osaka is the most famous and popular places to visit in Japan for those visiting Kyoto. Tokyo seems to be just as famous and popular as Osaka.

In response to the question "Did you notice any differences between Kyoto and the rest of Japan?" The answers to this question force us to consider Kyoto through foreign visitors' eyes. According to their comments, the respondents have clear opinions about Kyoto people, such as "more people in Kimono here," "Kyoto people take more pride in culture," "Maiko-han," "people are also more laid-back," "Kyoto people are polite" and "Tokyo people are noisier than in Kyoto." The respondents have opinions about scenery in Kyoto such as "very old ways and look," "temples with autumn leaves," "more nature scenes," "more mountains, nature and pretty scenes" and "not as many tall buildings." The respondents have opinions about food such as "food in Kyoto is more focused on snacks," "Osaka has takoyaki and okonomiyaki," "Kyoto has a more sophisticated way of serving food" and "the typical bento is more nice-

looking." The respondents have opinions about other various things such as "more relaxing, not as rushed as Tokyo," "less busy than Tokyo," "Kyoto is more traditional" and "the way people dress in Kyoto is very classy."

Looking at the responses to the question "What did you find convenient or easy in Kyoto?" it is clear that for foreigners, the most convenient or easiest is public transportation. Also, tourist information is the second most convenient, hinting that Kyoto has done well to provide useful information in foreign languages. One respondent found bicycling the city convenient. Another respondent found Kyoto to be easy for tourists.

In response to the question "What did you find inconvenient or difficult in Kyoto?" it is clear from this survey that what the most foreign visitors are in trouble is language barrier. One respondent found walking the streets inconvenient when it is busy. Another respondent found no hand towels in some toilets inconvenient. Also, the other respondent found that booking tours because of the language barrier was difficult. The other respondent found that Kyoto people are very calm, so at times they are difficult to approach.

Finally, in response to the question "Are there any services you think Kyoto should adopt or improve?" The choice the most foreign visitors chose is "foreign-language speaking guides." One respondent proposes that Kyoto should improve tourist information in English. Another respondent suggests that Kyoto should improve signs with English. Yet other respondent suggests that the city of Kyoto should provide more free Wi-Fi.

#### 4. Conclusion

I felt two things when I went to Kyoto City to interview foreign visitors. Firstly, I sensed that the number of foreign visitors coming to Japan increasing compared with a few years ago. Secondly, I felt the number of young foreign visitors coming to Japan increasing compared with a few years ago.

The image of Kyoto both before visiting and after

visiting the most foreign visitors felt is traditional culture. Also, the number of foreign visitors having the history image of Kyoto increases compared with visiting before. In regards to this, it is possible that the foreign visitors felt Kyoto is more historical through their visiting of Kyoto's many historical locations.

The most foreign visitors visited Fushimi Inari among all of Kyoto shrines or temples. I have been to Fushimi Inari once and saw for myself the great numbers of foreign visitors. So I could accept this research result. However, there were some destinations that I was surprised to hear from foreign visitors. They have visited number of places I have never been to, such as Okinawa and Kumamoto Prefecture, Kanazawa City in Ishikawa Prefecture and Onomichi City in Hiroshima Prefecture. As a Japanese, I'm keen to go to these places that seem to have appeal to foreign visitors.

It seems that for foreign tourists, the biggest difference between Kyoto and the rest of Japan is scenery. Some of the various comments from foreign visitors included "I think Kyoto has a lot of places to watch beautiful scenery coexistence with both shrines or temples and autumn leaves from the comment, "temples with autumn leaves." With regards food, I noticed the bento is attractive to foreign visitors from the comment, "the typical bento is more nice-looking." Most foreign visitors found public transportation in Kyoto convenient or easy. Some foreign visitors felt bicycles to be most convenient. as a reflection of this, the increase in rental bicycle stores is noticeable.

Many of the foreign visitors noticed foreign-language speaking guides are inconvenient or difficult. This hints that many Japanese are bad at speaking English. I think foreign visitors are in trouble of communicating with Japanese people. Some foreign visitor have the idea that Kyotoites are "very calm people so at times difficult to approach." Most foreign visitors I interviewed think that Kyoto should adopt or improve foreign-language speaking guides.

Also, some of foreign visitors feel walking the

streets inconvenient when it is busy. It is possible that its cause is increasing the number of foreign visitors themselves. Another interesting opinion, "no hand towels in some toilets." Most Japanese, myself included, would not think of this because they always carry their own hand towel. I think it is bad for a person's health for everyone to use the same hand towel.

In conclusion, it is clear that Kyoto is increasingly famous and popular city for foreign visitors. Kyoto has a wealth of places to visit, and tourism is booming in the city. However, there are several problems that need to be addressed, not least the troubles created by the language barrier. Kyoto should do more to improve people's foreign language level. I suggest Kyoto should provide more opportunities for international exchange between Japanese people, especially Japanese people living in Kyoto, and foreign people living or staying in Japan. I think it is important to talk with real English speakers to improve our English skill. If the standard of basic communication improved, foreign visitors would find it even easier to come sightseeing to Kyoto than now. If Japanese especially Kyoto people could do so, the number of foreign visitors will increase even more.

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