

Japanese tourists, spending off in Britain

LONDON (Kyodo) Britain's tourism figures for 2006 were hit by a dramatic downturn in both visits and spending by Japanese, according to recent data from the country's tourist board, VisitBritain.

Compared with 2005, year-on-year visitor numbers for Japanese tourists coming to Britain have dropped from 332,000 to 323,000 and visitor spending has fallen by a massive 23 percent to £208 million (approximately \$ 414 million).

"Japan has been a declining market since its best year back in 1995. A lot of it has been down to the economic factors in Japan, but there's now also a lot of competition for the Japanese market from Asia-Pacific destinations," VisitBritain's Elliott Frisby explained, without touching on the soaring value of the pound.

"The opening up of China, Malaysia, Thailand and other countries which are closer to home and within the same region are competing with us for the Japanese traveler," Frisby said, adding that Japanese were also easily put off visiting faraway countries by security alerts and food scares.

With Japanese known as high-spending, long-staying visitors, the increasingly downtrend is something Britain is keen to turn around.

"The Japanese are our most important visitors from the Asia-Pacific so it's an area we want to make sure we're investing in because of their significance to this country's economy," Frisby said.

Hong Kong -- Britain's second-largest Asia-Pacific market -- falls far short of Japan's visitor numbers.

VisitBritain has launched a large-scale initiative called "Happy Britain," which is designed to focus on many different aspects of British tourism as well as send "reassuring messages about

the reception Japanese visitors will receive.

"If tourists are nervous about traveling long-haul, we want them to know that everything will be fine and that if anything goes wrong when they're here, that they'll have people looking after them," Frisby said.

The Japan Times: Tuesday, May 1, 2007
(C) All rights reserved

[Go back to The Japan Times Online](#)

[Close window](#)