

COLUMNS

Four reasons why Japan is a top Gen Z travel destination

August 15, 2024

*Image courtesy of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo*

By **Gary Clark**

Since 2019, travel bookings to Japan have spiked an impressive 1,300 percent amongst Gen Z and millennials as the island country has quickly become the must-visit holiday destination across the two generations.

This trend positions Japan as the most coveted destination for young adventurers, and it's easy to see why. From its ultramodern cities to its ancient temples, Japan offers a unique blend of the past and the future.

Here's what makes Japan a favorite amongst Gen Z travelers.

Vibrant city life

Tokyo and Kyoto retain a magnetic pull for travelers, where futuristic skyscrapers stand impressively alongside ancient temples. Neon-lit streets pulse with energy, while serene gardens offer moments to pause for thought.

The work-from-anywhere Gen Z tribes have taken note as Tokyo was recently crowned the fastest-growing destination for digital nomads in the world.

High-speed accessibility and coworking spaces abound, so it's little surprise Japan's capital witnessed a 369 percent year-on-year increase in remote workers.

After hours, the city's neighborhoods, such as Shibuya with its famous crossing or Harajuku, known for its eclectic fashion scene, offer endless exploration opportunities.

So, whether you're sipping matcha in a traditional tea house or sinking beers in Shinjuku, Tokyo promises an exhilarating experience.

Culinary adventures

It only takes a quick scroll through Gen Z's preferred social media platform TikTok to discover a huge appetite for Japanese cuisine.

With various trends and different products, the land of the rising sun offers a vibrant eating and drinking scene that is totally different from that found in the Western world.

Japanese cuisine is celebrated worldwide for its quality, variety and unique flavors. From the bustling street food stalls of Osaka to the refined sushi restaurants of Tokyo, there's something to satisfy every palate.

Sushi, ramen, tempura and okonomiyaki are just a few of the many dishes that travelers can enjoy. Food markets like Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo or Nishiki Market in Kyoto offer an array of fresh and delicious options, allowing visitors to sample local delicacies.

Cherry blossoms

The allure of the cherry blossom, Japan's national flower, is strong for its approximately 63 million tourists. The season takes place at different times each year, with variations across countries.

However, the end of March to early April is usually a good bet. Cherry blossoms, known as Sakura in Japanese, are said to hold deep cultural significance, symbolizing renewal but also the ephemeral nature of life.

In 2023 alone, cherry blossom season brought a \$6 billion boost to the Japanese economy. As flowers bloom, the country is painted in shades of pink and white as families gather beneath the trees for sake and picnics.

For tech-savvy Gen Z, there's no prettier sight for the Instagram grid.

Skiing in Japan

For those who enjoy winter sports, Japan boasts some of the best skiing resorts in the world. The country is renowned for its powder snow, which attracts skiing enthusiasts from across the globe.

Resorts like Niseko, Hakuba and Furano offer world-class skiing and snowboarding facilities, with slopes catering to all skill levels.

Japan's skiing resorts are particularly appealing due to their combination of excellent snow conditions, modern amenities and unique cultural experiences. Japan's meteoric rise to the top of the travel to-do list is no accident.

The country's perfect blend of modernity and tradition, culinary delights, rich culture, and exceptional skiing resorts make it a versatile and exciting travel destination.

Gary Clark is the academy director at SIA, the largest ski instructor academy in Europe. He can be reached at info@siaaustria.com.