

Toward a timely reading of “the signs of change” in tourism

The Number of Foreign Visitors and Visit Ratio by Prefecture

Advance estimation of monthly indexes: March report

Yoshihisa Inada, Director of Research &
Director of Center for Quantitative Economic Analysis
Yoichi Matsubayashi, Senior Research Fellow
Ryosuke Nomura, Research Fellow
For inquiries, please contact: nomura-r@apir.or.jp

Main points

● Review of data published by JNTO in April

▶ According to JNTO estimates (Figure 1 and Table 1), the **total number of foreign visitors in March was 12,300 (-93.6% YoY)**, marking the **17th consecutive month of negative growth**. While the figure improved from the previous month (7,400), it remains low. Considering that the number of visitors in March 2020 was already low due to the spreading COVID-19 pandemic, a comparison with March 2019, which is more appropriate, shows a -99.6% decline.

▶ The top five inbound nationalities were: China (4,000 visitors), Korea (2,000 visitors), India (700 visitors), Taiwan and the USA (600 visitors each). While the number of visitors from China, Korea and India increased slightly MoM, it is still negligible.

▶ The number of visitors from China, India, Taiwan and the USA decreased for the 14th consecutive month, while the number of Korean visitors dropped for the 21st consecutive month.

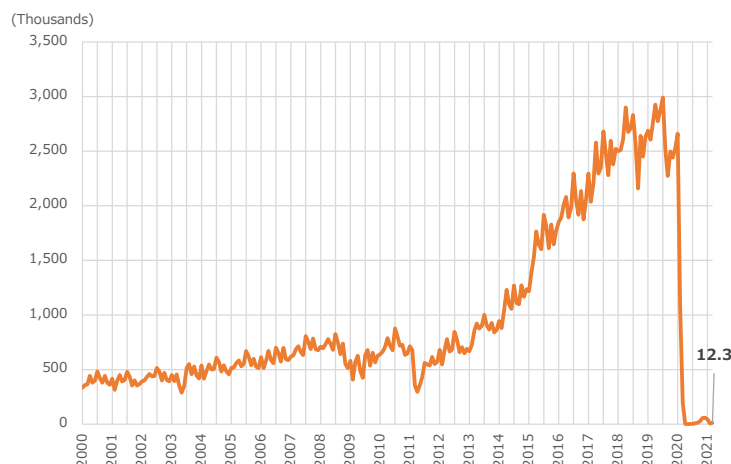
▶ Considering that new variants of COVID-19 are spreading worldwide, and the strict entry restrictions are expected to remain in place, the number of foreign visitors is likely to stay insignificant for the time being.

▶ According to JNTO, the **total number of foreign visitors in January was 46,522 (provisional figure, -98.3% YoY)**. By travel purpose, the numbers are as follows: tourism, 547 (-100.0% YoY), business, 3,099 (-97.3% YoY), and other purposes, 42,876 (-83.4% YoY) (Figure 2 and Table 2). By travel purpose, the number of foreign visitors decreased for 16 consecutive months in the case of tourism and business, and for 12 months in the case of the “other purposes”.

▶ The top five inbound nationalities by travel purpose in January are listed below. Tourism: USA (130 visitors), China (83 visitors), Korea (76 visitors), France (20 visitors), Canada and Vietnam (both 19 visitors). Business: China (649 visitors), Korea (585 visitors), Thailand (218 visitors), USA (138 visitors), Philippines (118 visitors). Other purposes: Vietnam (19,963 visitors), China (9,493 visitors), Korea (1,874 visitors), USA (938 visitors), Indonesia (883 visitors).

▶ The number of visitors from Vietnam traveling for “other purposes” exceeded 10,000 for three consecutive months, as the border restrictions were relaxed for business travelers. The “other purposes” category includes studying or training in Japan, so it is likely that technical interns form the bulk of foreign visitors. However, starting January 14, the government reimposed strict entry restrictions, temporarily halting business travel. Accordingly, the number of foreign visitors will likely return to decline next month.

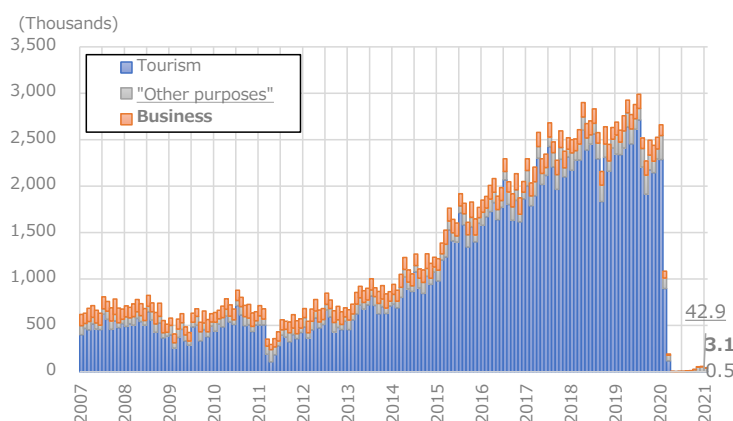
Figure 1 Number of foreign visitors



Source: based on data published by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

Note: the numbers are final for 2019, provisional for 2020 and January 2021, and estimated for February and March 2021.

Figure 2 Number of foreign visitors by travel purpose



Source: JNTO

Note: the number of “tourists” is obtained by deducting the number of “business travelers” from the total number of “short-term visitors” and it also includes those who are visiting relatives or friends. “Other purposes” refers to those other than tourism and business, including studying, training, as well as diplomatic and official ones.

*Please note that the contents of this report have been partially changed starting with Nov 2020 due to the fact that the statistical survey used so far, the *Foreign Visitors Survey* (Japan Tourism Agency), is not currently being conducted.

Topics 1

● Kansai's goods and services foreign trade in March

▶The number of foreign visitors arriving at Kansai International Airport (hereinafter referred to as KIX) in March totaled 3,129, increasing from the previous month (1,879). The decline was -91.2% YoY, marking the 14th consecutive month in negative territory (Figures 3 and 4). By comparison with the pre-pandemic March 2019, the decline is -99.6%. The number of Japanese departures was 2,411, decreasing for the 15th consecutive month. The decline was -95.2% YoY, and -99.4% relative to March 2019, indicating that outbound tourism demand too continues to be insignificant.

▶Over one year has passed since Japan implemented the first entry restrictions to limit the spread of the virus. After banning visitors from parts of China and Korea last year in February, in March Japan added some parts of Europe to the entry ban list. Consequently, the number of foreign visitor arrivals at KIX decreased drastically to 35,696.

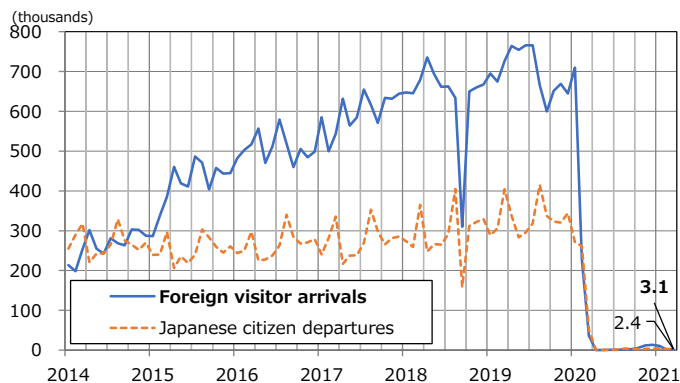
▶In Figure 4, we compare the evolution of foreign arrival numbers at KIX following the Global Financial Crisis, the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the COVID-19 outbreak. Although the YoY decline rate seemingly decelerated in March 2021, it has to be kept in mind that in March 2020 the number of foreign arrivals was already low.

▶In March, Kansai's total exports rose by +14.6% YoY, marking the first increase in two months, sustained by strong demand from other Asian countries, particularly China. Total imports also expanded by +6.2% YoY, for the second consecutive month. Consequently, Kansai's trade balance stood at JPY 380.9 billion, marking the 14th consecutive month of surplus. The total trade amount (imports and exports) expanded by +10.8% YoY, marking the third straight month of positive growth (+6.1% YoY in February) (Figure 5).

▶As shown in Figure 6, Kansai's China-bound exports increased by +22.4% YoY in March, marking the 10th straight month in positive territory. The growth accelerated significantly from the previous month (+5.1% YoY in February). Exports of plastics and scientific optical instruments made a positive contribution. Imports from China also grew by +4.5% YoY, for the second consecutive month. The main growth contributors were audio and visual equipment (including parts), and office equipment.

▶Kansai's exports in FY 2020 decreased by -2.7% YoY, declining for the third year in a row. While exports to the USA and Europe dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, China-bound exports increased due to the country's fast recovery. By category, non-ferrous metals, which are used in automobiles and home appliances, and semiconductors and other electronic components, which are used for manufacturing devices such as PCs, saw an increase in demand due to teleworking. The region's imports also decreased by -8.0% YoY for the second successive year. While imports of yarn and textile products such as non-woven masks, and office equipment such as tablets increased, energy products such as crude oil decreased significantly.

Figure 3 Evolution of the number of foreign visitor arrivals at KIX



Source: based on Immigration Control statistics.

The numbers for Feb 2021 are preliminary figures (in Figure 4 as well)

Figure 4 Recovery paths from economic shocks

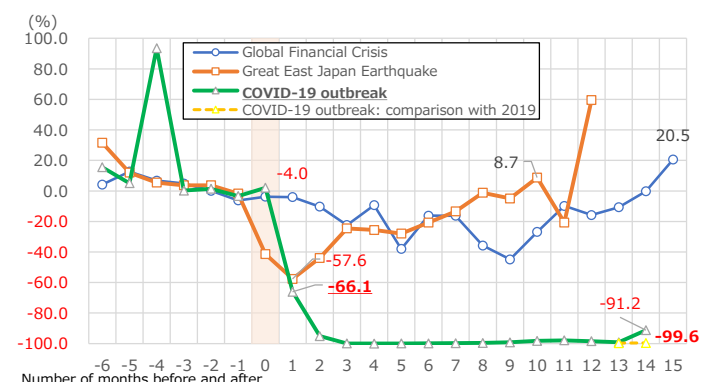


Figure 5 Evolution of Kansai's foreign trade

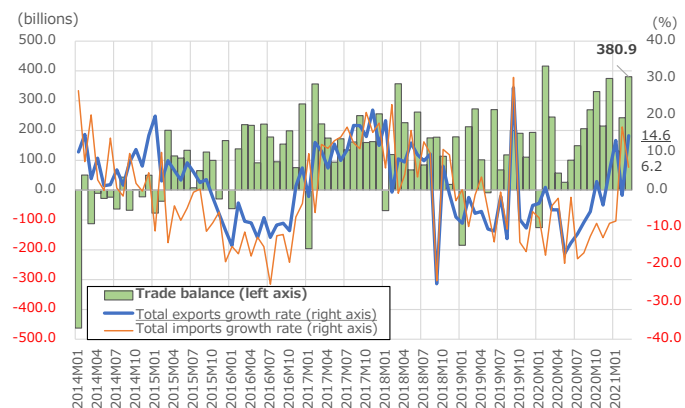
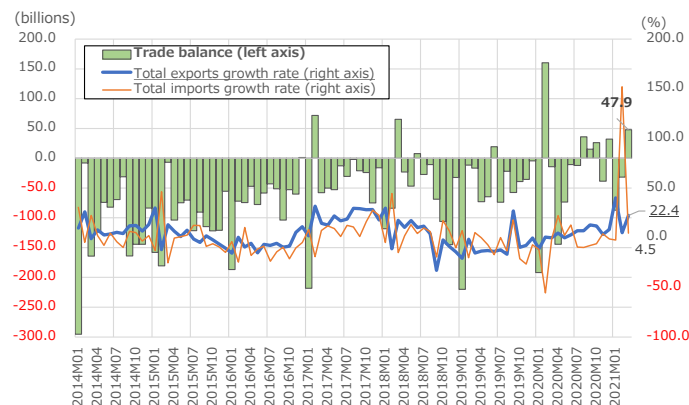


Figure 6 Evolution of Kansai's trade with China



Source: based on Osaka Customs Preliminary Data for Kansai Area.

Topics 2

● Total number of overnight guests in January in the Greater Kansai area

► In January, the total number of overnight guests in the Greater Kansai area dropped for the 13th consecutive month, by -63.9% YoY (Figure 7). Due to the fact that the government declared a state of emergency effective from January 14 in Kyoto, Osaka and Hyogo prefectures, the decline rate accelerated from the previous month (-47.0% YoY). As the state of emergency was lifted on February 28, the number of guests is expected to decrease even further in February.

► In January, the total number of Japanese overnight guests was 2.993 million, shrinking for the 13th consecutive month (-49.4% YoY). The decline rate accelerated from the previous month (-31.2% YoY, figures 7 and 8). The largest number of guests was in Osaka Prefecture (1.0099 million, -50.6% YoY), followed by Kyoto (533.9 thousand, -54.9% YoY), Hyogo (491.6 thousand, -46.9% YoY), Mie (281.7 thousand, -47.3% YoY), Wakayama (176.2 thousand, -44.3% YoY), Shiga (141.0 thousand, -42.7% YoY), Fukui (119.8 thousand, -49.6% YoY), Tottori (98.9 thousand, -43.1% YoY), Nara (75.9 thousand, -30.4% YoY) and Tokushima (64.1 thousand, -55.6% YoY). Despite a positive growth of +2.6% YoY in November 2020, the number of guests in Kyoto Prefecture dropped for the next two consecutive months while the decline rate accelerated.

► The total number of foreign overnight guests was 97.1 thousand (-96.3% YoY), declining for the 12th successive month (Figure 9). The decline rate expanded from the previous month (-94.7% YoY) (figures 7 and 9). The largest number of foreign guests was in Osaka Prefecture (70.2 thousand, -95.3% YoY), followed by Kyoto (9.8 thousand, -98.9% YoY), Hyogo (6.4 thousand, -93.4% YoY), Mie (4.7 thousand, -81.7% YoY), Wakayama (2.3 thousand, -92.6% YoY), Shiga (1.3 thousand, -95.3% YoY), Fukui (1.3 thousand, -87.4% YoY), Tottori (0.8 thousand, -93.4% YoY), Nara (0.4 thousand, -98.9% YoY) and Tokushima (0.1 thousand, -98.8% YoY).

► The total number of overnight guests in Kansai hit rock bottom in May 2020 in the case of both residents from within the prefecture and outside the prefecture (including foreign guests) (Figure 10). Notably, the number of guests from outside the prefecture started increasing in July, when the "Go to Travel" campaign was launched. However, the number has been gradually declining since the campaign was temporarily suspended due to the resurgence of COVID-19 (the so-called third wave). In January 2021 the number of guests from outside the prefecture dropped significantly to 2.1145 million (-69.7% YoY), while the number of guests from within the prefecture was 8.501 million (-20.1% YoY).

Figure 7 Evolution of the total number of overnight guests in Kansai

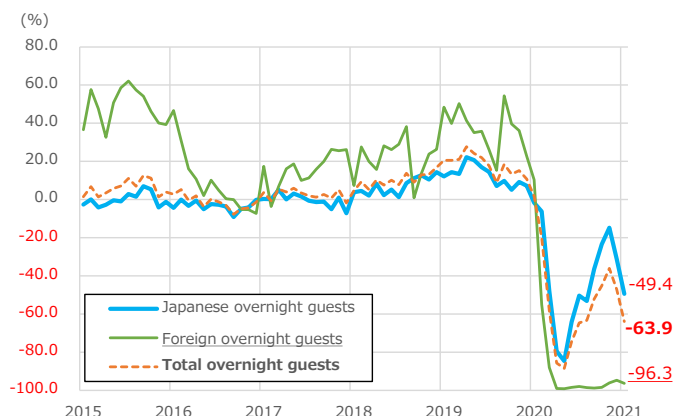


Figure 8 Evolution of the total number of Japanese overnight guests by prefecture

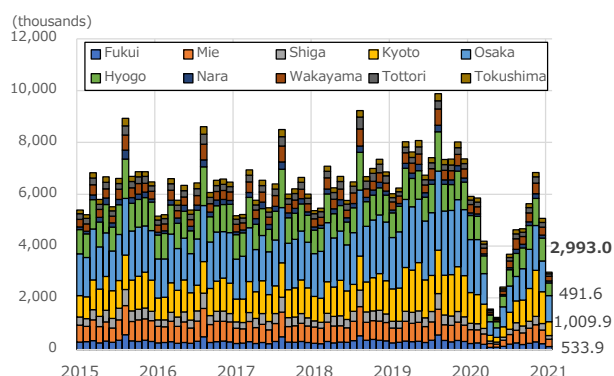


Figure 9 Evolution of the total number of foreign overnight guests by prefecture

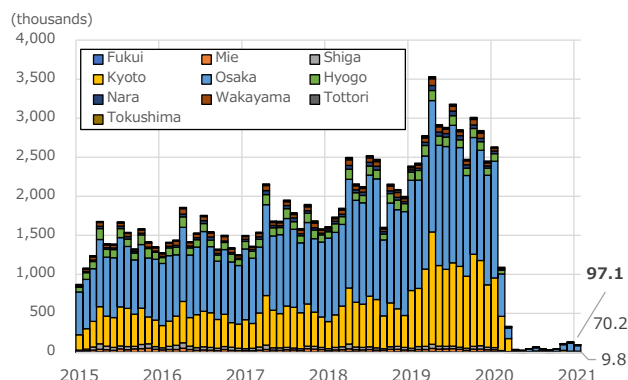
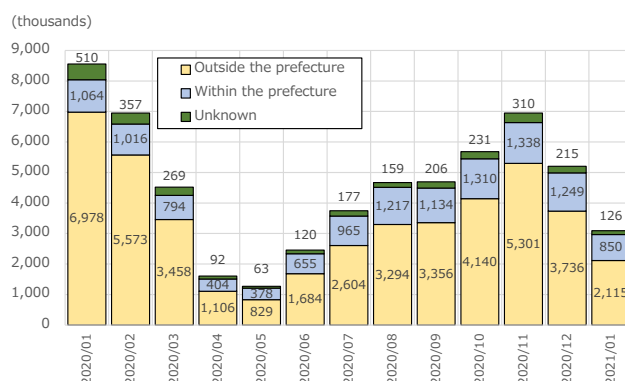


Figure 10 Evolution of the total number of overnight guests by residence



Source: based on *Overnight Travel Statistics Survey* by Japan Tourism Agency (figures 7~10)

Table 1 Foreign visitors in March 2021 (JNTO estimates) (comparison with 2019)

Country/Area	Total			Total		
	2019	2021	Growth rate(%)	2019	2021	Growth rate(%)
	March	March		Jan-Mar	Jan-Mar	
Grand Total	2,760,136	12,300	-99.6	8,053,797	66,200	-99.2
Major countries total (excl. S.Korea)	2,057,094	7,630	-99.6	5,710,543	49,950	-99.1
South Korea	585,586	2,000	-99.7	2,080,773	5,400	-99.7
China	691,279	4,000	-99.4	2,169,317	15,900	-99.3
Taiwan	402,433	600	-99.9	1,189,760	1,600	-99.9
Hong Kong	171,430	60	-100.0	505,046	260	-99.9
Thailand	147,443	100	-99.9	347,937	900	-99.7
Singapore	43,687	60	-99.9	92,465	200	-99.8
Malaysia	50,615	100	-99.8	118,674	400	-99.7
Indonesia	39,609	300	-99.2	96,708	1,400	-98.6
Philippines	48,277	200	-99.6	119,434	1,400	-98.8
Vietnam	47,881	200	-99.6	122,633	20,400	-83.4
India	17,752	700	-96.1	39,291	2,200	-94.4
Australia	44,175	50	-99.9	172,896	190	-99.9
U.S.A.	176,564	600	-99.7	372,424	2,200	-99.4
Canada	37,959	50	-99.9	84,135	200	-99.8
Mexico	5,740	20	-99.7	12,244	100	-99.2
United Kingdom	38,610	200	-99.5	83,718	500	-99.4
France	29,408	90	-99.7	62,125	720	-98.8
Germany	28,659	80	-99.7	53,401	480	-99.1
Italy	14,956	50	-99.7	26,886	230	-99.1
Russia	11,701	90	-99.2	23,618	380	-98.4
Spain	8,916	80	-99.1	17,831	290	-98.4
Middle East	11,726	70	-99.4	19,292	230	-98.8
Others	105,730	2,600	-97.5	243,189	10,620	-95.6

※ <:less than

Table 2 The number of foreign visitors by purpose of visit in Jan 2021 (JNTO provisional figures)

Country/Region	Total			Tourism			Business			Others purposes		
	2020	2021	Growth Rate(%)	2020	2021	Growth Rate(%)	2020	2021	Growth Rate(%)	2020	2021	Growth Rate(%)
	Jan	Jan		Jan	Jan		Jan	Jan		Jan	Jan	
Total	2,661,022	46,522	-98.3	2,287,755	547	-100.0	115,099	3,099	-97.3	258,168	42,876	-83.4
Korea	316,812	2,535	-99.2	266,717	76	-100.0	20,946	585	-97.2	29,149	1,874	-93.6
China	924,790	10,225	-98.9	804,901	83	-100.0	24,645	649	-97.4	95,244	9,493	-90.0
Taiwan	461,239	592	-99.9	434,358	14	-100.0	7,921	100	-98.7	18,960	478	-97.5
Hong Kong	219,358	161	-99.9	214,948	9	-100.0	2,564	31	-98.8	1,846	121	-93.4
Thailand	112,534	719	-99.4	106,035	8	-100.0	2,688	218	-91.9	3,811	493	-87.1
Singapore	30,180	85	-99.7	27,443	3	-100.0	2,085	23	-98.9	652	59	-91.0
Malaysia	44,829	242	-99.5	41,556	5	-100.0	1,613	87	-94.6	1,660	150	-91.0
Indonesia	37,540	922	-97.5	30,755	13	-100.0	1,680	26	-98.5	5,105	883	-82.7
Philippines	53,588	998	-98.1	40,371	19	-100.0	2,754	118	-95.7	10,463	861	-91.8
Vietnam	50,424	20,032	-60.3	11,452	10	-99.9	2,156	59	-97.3	36,816	19,963	-45.8
India	13,884	905	-93.5	3,208	7	-99.8	4,359	75	-98.3	6,317	823	-87.0
Australia	85,314	106	-99.9	81,452	3	-100.0	1,980	20	-99.0	1,882	83	-95.6
US	117,343	1,206	-99.0	91,560	130	-99.9	14,558	138	-99.1	11,225	938	-91.6
Canada	28,931	125	-99.6	25,582	19	-99.9	1,400	33	-97.6	1,949	73	-96.3
Mexico	4,641	56	-98.8	3,841	2	-99.9	326	9	-97.2	474	45	-90.5
UK	24,320	256	-98.9	17,442	12	-99.9	3,594	42	-98.8	3,284	202	-93.8
France	16,481	554	-96.6	10,615	20	-99.8	2,746	109	-96.0	3,120	425	-86.4
Germany	11,189	351	-96.9	6,226	12	-99.8	3,296	107	-96.8	1,667	232	-86.1
Italy	6,921	153	-97.8	4,408	4	-99.9	1,465	27	-98.2	1,048	122	-88.4
Russia	8,399	204	-97.6	6,167	5	-99.9	1,165	78	-93.3	1,067	121	-88.7
Spain	5,157	174	-96.6	3,609	1	-100.0	632	34	-94.6	916	139	-84.8
Middle East	4,265	125	-97.1	2,930	3	-99.9	697	15	-97.8	638	107	-83.2
Others	82,883	5,796	-99.9	52,179	89	-100.0	9,829	516	-99.9	20,875	5,191	-99.8

Source: based on data published by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) on Apr 21, 2021

Note: see Figure 2 note for details regarding definitions of travel purposes.