

TOURISM

PHOTO: SATOSHI KAWAI

Mao Danqing

Writer

YŌKOSO JAPAN! AMBASSADOR

Mao guides actress and novelist Tian Yuan, who has many fans among younger Chinese, near Osaka's newest hot-spot, Herbis Plaza in Nishi-Umeda.



China is currently experiencing an unprecedented boom in overseas travel. High-quality travel magazines have been launched in quick succession over the last few years and their sales are growing. The publishers who produce these magazines send writers and photographers off to various countries to conduct research and interviews, and they print well-informed tourist information. Articles on Japan, for example, feature out-of-the-way tourist spots, such as Sado Island and Okinawa. Travel writers discover the charms of such places for themselves and create articles about them. Moreover, travel magazines are not the only source of information: brochures, guidebooks and other publications offer mountains of information on overseas travel.

Given this surplus of information, there is no point presenting the attractions of Japanese travel in an ordinary way. Chinese readers interested in overseas travel seek information that has added value at its core. One of the ways I communicate information about Japan is to tell Chinese opinion-leaders about its appeal, so that people can learn more about Japan through the words of such influential figures. I have invited Chinese artists including the movie actress Zhang Ziyi, China's most famous writer Mo Yan, and *Postmen in the Mountains* director Huo Jianqi to Japan to see tourist destinations for themselves. Recently I showed fast-rising actress and novelist Tian Yuan around Osaka's trendiest shopping mall. Tian enjoys enormous popularity among the younger generation, so it will be fascinating to see what she has to say about the lure of Japan.



Chinese-born Mao Danqing developed an interest in Japanese culture when he was a student at Peking University. Since coming to Japan in 1987, he has traveled extensively around the country and contributed articles to Chinese travel magazines. He has also introduced Japanese culture to Chinese audiences in other ways, such as by publishing a collection of essays on Japan.

A Wider Focus



The Tourism Agency is working to support an initiative to create "tour-

ism regions" that link multiple tourist areas together in way that makes it easier for both overseas and domestic tourists to enjoy the region for a period of at least three days and two nights.

This project will strive to boost the allure of these tourism regions to entice tourists to visit on extended stays. This will be accomplished through a better offering of accommodation plans and activities to experience what these places have to offer through collaboration among municipalities, tourism associations, accommodation facilities, entities in charge of transportation, local residents and individuals involved in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, as well as commerce and industry. Currently, such efforts are underway to prepare 16 tourism regions around Japan.

These monthly YŌKOSO! JAPAN Ambassador articles serve to promote tourism by publicizing efforts to increase the number of tourists coming to Japan, while outlining these ambassadors' activities showcases the allure of travel to Japan.

<http://www.japantravelinfo.com/top/index.php>

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