

The Japan Official Travel App provides a wide variety of travel and safety-related information including via push notifications
Courtesy of Japan National Tourism Organization



QR code for the Japan Official Travel App



For Safe Travel in Japan

Japan is strengthening its systems for distributing disaster information quickly and accurately to international visitors through apps, websites, hotlines and SNS.

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A rapidly increasing number of international visitors are traveling to Japan in recent years. The number of international visitors was about 10 million in 2013, but it exceeded 31 million in 2018. Amid this increase in the number of international visitors visiting Japan, Japan is advancing its system for distributing multilingual natural disaster- and weather-related information (hereafter, “disaster information”) through a collaboration between the central government, local governments and companies so that international visitors can feel safe while traveling throughout the country.

As part of this initiative, the Japan Tourism Agency in 2014 began providing the free Safety Tips app to provide disaster information. The app provides

information on earthquake early warnings, tsunami warnings, eruption early warnings, other weather warnings, and heatstroke information in Japan in the form of push notifications in five different languages (Japanese, English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese and Korean).

The Safety Tips app not only distributes disaster information but is also equipped with a wide range of functions that can be used in a disaster. For example, if you click the Advance Learning icon, you can get explanations of each type of warning, emergency treatment and corresponding flow charts. These flow charts explain what to do in the event of a disaster, for example by showing appropriate evacuation actions in response to a variety of hypothetical situations in

the event of an earthquake, such as being in an elevator or on the beach.

In addition, if you click the Communication Card icon, hypothetical questions for disasters, such as “Where is an evacuation center?” or “Where can I make an international phone call?” will be displayed in five languages. You can get information by showing the app screen to people around you.

The app also enables you to quickly access useful links in a disaster, such as contact information for embassies and medical institutions geared to accepting foreign patients.

QUICK AND ACCURATE DISASTER INFORMATION

Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), a government organization committed to attracting international visitors to Japan, also has built up a system to distribute disaster information to international visitors.

Tadashi Kaneko, JNTO Executive Director, Global Strategy Headquarters, says, “There is a lot of information out there in the event of a disaster, but the JNTO distributes reliable official information quickly. If you use our website as your portal in a disaster, you can access accurate information without getting lost.”

JNTO uses multiple methods to quickly convey accurate information. JNTO issues initial reports immediately after a disaster strikes through Japan Safe Travel (JST), the official Twitter account the organization launched in October 2018 to call public attention and guide users to the JNTO Global Site. This website usually provides travel information, but it works as an information portal for a comprehensive package of detailed information in the event of a disaster. Disaster information is also distributed through the Japan Official Travel App in English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese and Korean. Since this application added all the functions of the above-mentioned Safety Tips app, users can enjoy more substantial services, such as automatic disaster information notifications like earthquake early warnings.

In addition, JNTO provides around-the-clock



Some of the safety-related warnings and information provided by the Japan Tourism Agency's “Safety Tips” app
Courtesy of Japan Tourism Agency

services through its multilingual call center, the Japan Visitor Hotline, 050-3816-2787, in English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese, and a chat bot which automatically replies to online inquiries in English, Chinese and Korean, responding to a broad range of inquiries about travel around Japan as well as disaster inquiries.

Kaneko says, “Japan will host the Rugby World Cup this year and the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games next year. Many international visitors are expected to visit Japan. We will build up our collaborations with many information providers, including traffic organizations, local governments, and tourism facilities, and further increase the accuracy of the information we distribute.”