

The usefulness of guesthouses in ensuring the safety of foreign tourists visiting Japan in the event of a disaster: A case study of accommodation facilities located in areas expected to be affected by the Nankai Trough earthquake

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This study examines the current state and challenges of responses to international tourists visiting Japan in the event of a Nankai Trough earthquake, which is expected to cause large-scale damage in the future. The survey focused on accommodation facilities including hotel and guesthouse located in municipalities designated as areas with special reinforcement of evacuation measures for the Nankai Trough earthquake tsunami, focusing in particular on disaster preparedness and responses during the period when emergency information has been issued in August 2024. The survey methodology included literature research using previous studies and government documents, as well as questionnaire surveys and interviews of accommodation facilities and guests, to clarify the current state and challenges of tourism disaster prevention.

The survey results revealed that while many accommodation facilities have a certain level of disaster prevention measures in place, primarily targeting Japanese guests, their provision of multilingual information and evacuation guidance methods for international tourists visiting Japan is insufficient. Furthermore, insufficient information sharing and coordination between government agencies and accommodation facilities was highlighted as an issue. On the other hand, there were also some local governments working on "disaster prevention tourism," which positions disaster prevention as a tourism resource, and some pioneering efforts to use accommodation facilities as evacuation centers in the event of a disaster.

Based on these results, it is suggested that guesthouses, due to their small scale of operation, have a certain degree of usefulness in ensuring the safety of foreign tourists visiting Japan in the event of a disaster, given their proximity to guests and flexibility in their response. However, because of their small scale of operation, there are limits to what accommodation facilities can do on their own, and it became clear that there is a need to build an effective tourism disaster prevention system in which local governments, DMOs (Destination Management/Marketing Organizations), OTAs (Online Travel Agents), and accommodation facilities work together in peacetime, without compromising the characteristics and individuality of each facility.

Keywords: foreign tourists visiting Japan, guesthouse, Nankai Trough earthquake, tourism disaster prevention