

are either traditional houses or caravansaries. They are historical, modern, and very stylish, which is very appealing to Japanese tourists. Tradition is highly captivating to Japanese tourists, and we can find this kind of combination in some renovated restaurants even in Tehran. Such information is very appealing to Japanese tourists.

Do you think Japanese tourists prefer group tours or individual tours?

It depends on their ages. Older people prefer group tours to visit some famous modern heritage sites, while younger people would like to discover things on their own, so they prefer individual tourism.

Do we get any individual tourists from Japan who come to Iran on their own without a tour operator?

The number is limited due to the tensions that exist in this large region and there are some images that make it very difficult to visit Iran. But there are some who would like to try visiting Iran. Sometimes, they put some videos on YouTube, and almost all of their evaluations are very positive. Before coming here, they compare it with previous images, noting that Iranian people are very kind, the food is good and cheap, and there are many historic tourist places. So, almost all evaluations are very positive.

How can we improve Iran's image to other people, including foreign tourists, and specifically Japanese tourists?

Before coming here, I was in France, in Paris, where I worked for Japanese Embassy. When I

Why is Iranian cinema not well-known in Japan, despite the popularity of Japanese anime in Iran?

It's surprising for us that Iranian cinema is not well-represented in Japan, despite the popularity of anime in Iran. One reason is that it's difficult to obtain the rights to broadcast Iranian films in Japan, and the number of Iranian films available in Japan is still limited.

What Japanese dishes or food experiences would you recommend to Iranian tourists?

Sushi. But I think you don't have the culture to try raw fish; it's not for all Iranians, although there are some who like such foods. *Dashi* is a kind of broth that forms one of the culinary cornerstones of Japanese cooking. It is made from water, dried fish, and vegetables. It is a type of bouillon that is popular worldwide. *Dashi* is the base for soups; for example, in French cuisine, they use mint or various vegetables, but in our case, we also use fish and edible seaweed.

We also have advanced fermentation techniques. These aspects of *dashi* and the fermentation techniques in Japanese cuisine are becoming increasingly popular worldwide, so you can experience Japanese culinary techniques in Japan, for example in Tokyo and Kyoto, Tokyo is similar to Tehran, while Kyoto is akin to Isfahan. Kyoto is a very historical city offering traditional Japanese cuisine.

What challenges do Japanese tourists face in Iran?

Japanese tourists may face linguistic problems; as Persian language is a difficult language. They may also encounter difficulties with travel infrastructure, such

told my French colleagues that I would be going to Tehran, some of them knew Iran very well, including a French woman who is an amateur of Iranian cinema. Before having a conversation with her, I didn't know much about Iranian films, even though they are very famous worldwide. This is due to the difficulty of accessing Iranian films in Japan. This kind of information is still not popular among Japanese people. However, if there are some interesting Iranian films that showcase the beauty of visiting Iran, it will likely increase the number of Japanese tourists. There are many ways and aspects to attract interest. It's a step-by-step process to entice and appeal to Japanese tourists.

Can you name any Iranian movies that you admire?

In my case, it's very limited, but I have only watched Kiarostami's films. From 2010 to 2020, there are several Iranian filmmakers who have received worldwide awards.

as accessing money, cell phones, and Wi-Fi. In terms of cultural or religious issues, Japanese tourists are generally respectful of Iranian culture and traditions, and we do not have any major issues.

What is the state of Japanese studies in Iran and Iranian studies in Japan?

In Iran, the University of Tehran has an intermediary major in Japanese Studies, where students can study various aspects of Japan. In Japan, we have Persian courses in universities such as Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Osaka University. We have a significant number of Persian specialists, and our country has one of the largest numbers of foreign Persian language specialists.

Are there opportunities for Iranian students to study in Japan with scholarships?

Yes, there are scholarships available for Iranian students to study in Japan. Every year, there is an



A showcase of exquisite Iranian handicrafts at the AGEO World Fair in Saitama, Japan, 2023

examination for scholarships to study in Japan. Iranian students can apply for these scholarships to study in Japan.

What are the challenges in showcasing Iranian films in Japan?

The main challenge is that Iranian films are not commercially viable in Japan, making it difficult to broadcast them. However, there are some film enthusiasts who are passionate about showcasing Iranian films in Japan, despite the commercial limitations. These enthusiasts are working to promote Iranian cinema in Japan, and collaborations between Japanese and Iranian film lovers can help increase awareness of Iranian films.

Does the Iranian Embassy in Japan organize cultural events to promote Iranian culture and cinema?

Yes, the Iranian Embassy in Japan occasionally holds cultural events, including a cultural week, to introduce Iranian culture and cinema to the Japanese public. However, the selection of films is sometimes limited, and there may be miscommunication about the types of films that appeal to Japanese audiences. In addition, some Iranian films are available on Netflix and Amazon Prime, which can help increase their visibility in Japan.

What Iranian souvenirs are popular among Japanese tourists in Iran?

In Japan, pistachios and saffron are well-known as souvenirs from Iran. We also appreciate the stylish and lovely copper products found in Tajrish market, as well as Iranian scarves with beautiful designs.

How can Iranian handicrafts be exported to Japan despite the obstacles?

Even under economic sanctions, there are ways to export Iranian handicrafts to Japan. For example, a Japanese shop has been working with Afghan refugees in Iran to manufacture *Gabbeh* (a simple and colorful hand-knotted textile with a pile of long threads), which is then imported to Japan and sold to aid Afghan people. This shows that economic sanctions are not a total obstacle to cultural exchange.

Are there opportunities for joint courses to protect cultural heritage between



In Japan, pistachios and saffron are well-known as souvenirs from Iran.

Iran and Japan?

This is an interesting idea. Many countries face challenges in managing their heritage sites, and exchanging experiences could be beneficial. I will share this idea with our nation, but I am not aware of any specific plans for joint courses at this time.

What are the plans for the Japan Foundation to disseminate Japanese culture in Iran?

Previously, the Japan Foundation sent a Japanese teacher to Tehran every year, but this process was stopped due to some problems. We are open to collaborating with Iranian organizations to promote Japanese culture in Iran. If you have any events or ideas, please feel free to share them with us, and we will help promote them through our social media channels.



Iranian pistachios

What became of the cultural cooperation agreement signed between Iran and Japan in 2015?

The agreement was signed to commemorate the 90th anniversary of our diplomatic relationship. Although not much has been done to implement the agreement, we are now looking forward to our 100th anniversary in 2029, and we hope to use this occasion to strengthen our cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchange.



Sushi



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A hot spring in Sarein, Iran