

JAPAN - THE LAND AND ITS CULTURE

by SAC*CES

通訳案内士/面接口述応答演習

応答例

1. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND POPULATION

Q : How was the Japanese Archipelago formed?

A : Japan was once a part of the Asian Continent until about ten thousand years ago. Then, as the result of volcanic activity[-ies] and crustal movements, it was separated from the Continent.

Q : What is the origin of the predominant Japanese or the Yamato race?

A : The Yamato race is said to have been created as a result of racial mixture of different peoples who came to Japan from the Continent and Southeast Asia over a long period of time.

Q : About what is the size of Japan and its population?

A : The north-south running Japanese archipelago is about 3,500 km long from tip to tip. The land area of Japan is approximately 380,000 sq. km, making it about the 50th biggest (of nearly 200 countries) in the world. Japan, at present, is populated by about 127 million inhabitants with the population density of 340 people per sq. km.

Q : Describe the climate of Japan.

A : Much of Japan has a temperate, oceanic climate with four distinctive seasons and varied geographical weather patterns. Northern Hokkaido is in a sub-frigid zone; Okinawa is subtropical. Mountains running north-south through the most part of the archipelago give contrasting weather to the two coasts: heavy snow along the Japan Sea coast, and hot and humid summers along the Pacific coast. All of western Japan experiences hot and humid summers. There's a rainy season in early summer, and a typhoon season from summer through autumn.

Q : Roughly when does each season begin for the most part of Japan?

A : Spring begins in March, summer in June, autumn in September and winter in December.

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Q : Which season do you like best? Why?

A : I like autumn best, because it's neither too hot nor too cold. In addition, after relieved from the summer heat, the moderate temperature and refreshing weather makes for comfortable reading and enjoying the sports I like.

Q : What is the highest mountain in Japan, and what is it like?

A : The highest mountain is Mt. Fuji. It is 3,776 meters [12,388 feet] high, and is world-famous for its almost perfect conical shape, sitting about 90 km south-east of Tokyo. Once worshiped as a supreme sacred mountain, Mt. Fuji is now popular as the symbol of Japan.

Q : It is a volcano, isn't it?

A : Yes, it is classified as an active volcano though it last erupted 300 years ago, in 1707. The Meteorological Agency designates those volcanoes with an eruption record in the past 2,000 years as "active volcano". As of today, there are about 80 active volcanoes in Japan, which accounts for about 10% of the 800 world's active volcanoes.

Q : What are some very active volcanoes?

A : They are Mt. Aso and Mt. Unzen in Kyushu, and Mt. Asama on borders of Nagano and Gunma Prefectures. Another 16 volcanoes (including Mt. Sakurajima and Mt. Usu) are also under constant observation. The latest volcanic eruption that caused serious damages to Japan was that of Fugen-dake, one of the main peaks of Mt. Unzen in Nagasaki Prefecture. It erupted for the first time in 200 years, and its pyroclastic flows killed 43 people.

Q : Can you tell me anything about Mt. Aso?

A : Yes I can. Located in the Aso-Kuju National Park, Mt. Aso has the world-largest *caldera. At the center, five peaks create a volcanic core that is still active.

***caldera:** Double-cratered volcano, especially referring to a large-scale basin-like depression between the central core and the sommas — the outer rim of the preceding crater — of a volcano. Mt. Aso's caldera has a circumference of 80 km,

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running about 18 km from east to west and 24 km from north to south.

Q : Are there any positive effects the volcanoes bring about for Japan?

A : Yes, there are. In fact, the presence of many volcanoes is a great contributor to Japanese tourism. It provides an abundance of hot spring resorts and a lot of variety in its topographical feature, which creates wonderful scenic beauty.

Q : Why does Japan have a lot of earthquakes?

A : Because Japan sits right over part of the Pacific Rim Earthquake Zone, where the Pacific plate, the Philippine plate and the Asian Continent plate collide. This is the point where stresses of the earth's crust are created and released causing earthquakes.

Q : What was the most powerful earthquake to hit Japan in recent years? When was it? How big was it?

A : It was the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that hit the south-west part of Hyogo Prefecture and west Osaka Prefecture before dawn, January 17, in 1995. Measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, the quake and fire killed more than 6,000 people and injured about 40,000. Over 200,000 homes and buildings collapsed, and the total damage was estimated to be close to 100 trillion yen. It was the worst disaster in history of post-World War 2 Japan. For reference, in 1923, there was a massive temblor called the Great Kanto Earthquake which struck the Tokyo and Yokohama area, measuring a magnitude of 7.9. The toll was 190,000 including 90,000 of deaths.

Q : Will you tell me any other natural disasters which have inflicted serious damage on Japan and Japanese people recently?

A : Yes. One of the major natural disasters in recent years was the "Toyohama Tunnel Cave-in", which occurred on the rainy morning of February 10, 1996, leaving 19 commuter bus passengers and a car driver inside the tunnel. Despite the 8-day-long arduous rescue efforts, all the 20 victims were found to have died instantaneously inside their vehicles.