

## Himeji Castle's "Dual Pricing" Strategy Pays Off:

Revenue Doubles with ¥2,500 Fee for Non-Residents Despite 20% Drop in Visitors

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<https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/20bf73fa40ffa743c452ad2fef35ca1b7b59f78>

One month after raising admission fees at the World Heritage site Himeji Castle (Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture), the number of visitors has fallen by nearly 20% compared to the same period last year, while revenue is expected to double. Himeji City has described the drop in visitors as “within expectations” and revealed that it has received a surge of inquiries and visits from other municipalities struggling with overtourism. The city’s “dual pricing” policy is drawing attention as a potential precedent for other cities considering similar measures amid growing concerns over tourism-related problems and the weak yen.

Starting in March, Himeji Castle introduced a dual pricing system: the fee for Himeji residents aged 18 and over remains ¥1,000, while non-residents now pay ¥2,500. Children under 18 enter free regardless of residency, with the aim of encouraging more young people to connect with the castle.

During the first month, reactions from visitors were mixed. A woman in her 30s from Kakogawa, Hyogo Prefecture, said, “I didn’t know about the price increase. ¥2,500 is expensive.” A group of Indian tourists complained, “It would be better if it were cheaper.” On the other hand, a German woman in her 60s showed understanding: “I know maintaining cultural heritage costs money. My hometown also has World Heritage sites. I think dual pricing would be a good idea there too.”

According to Himeji City, the number of paid visitors in March (preliminary figures) was approximately 140,000, a decline of about 17% from the same month last year. Mayor Hideyasu Kiyomoto emphasized, “The decrease was within our expectations. There was no major confusion.” He also noted the current decline in Chinese tourists across Japan, saying, “It’s difficult to determine how much of an impact the price increase and dual pricing had.”

What stands out is the impact on revenue. March’s total admission revenue reached approximately ¥270 million — double the ¥130 million from the same month last year. The city had previously estimated that ¥28 billion would be needed over 10 years for maintenance and repair of the castle. The increased revenue will be used for these purposes. Mayor Kiyomoto expressed satisfaction, saying, “For municipalities with similar historical heritage, dual pricing is a major issue. We’ve received many inquiries and visits from other cities.”

Osaka Metropolitan University Associate Professor Chieko Ikeda, an expert on tourism issues, praised the initiative but emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the necessity of dual pricing. “It is especially important to convey to overseas visitors that this is a measure aimed at achieving a sustainable Himeji Castle,”

she said.

In its 5th Basic Plan for the Promotion of Tourism Nation, approved by the Cabinet in March, the Japanese government included a policy to develop guidelines making it easier to introduce dual pricing at public facilities. The aim is to address overtourism issues such as congestion and bad manners, while securing funds for the maintenance of tourism resources through increased revenue from dual pricing. Professor Ikeda added, “From the perspective of sustainable tourism management, it is essential for the national government to take the lead in creating a clear vision.”

(By Hiroyuki Kobayashi and Kentō Nishiura)