



Image Source: Wikipedia

by David Lu / translated by Lexie Fang

Japan, an island nation in East Asia, sits in the Pacific Ocean and occupies an area of about 370,000 square kilometers. Though not large, it has a population of 120 million people, making it the 11th largest city in the world in terms of population.

Modern Japan is administratively divided into one metropolis, one territory, two urban prefectures, and 43 prefectures. Hokkaido is located in the northernmost part of Japan, with an area of about 83,000 square kilometers, accounting for over a fifth of Japan's land area. It is also the only administrative division referred to as a territory.

With the population which is approximately 5.28 million, Hokkaido is Japan's eighth first-level administrative region. Despite its large population and vast territory, there are still many areas untouched by humans. It is one of the few rare places in the world where nature and humans coexist perfectly, and attract a continuous stream of tourists.

A glimpse at Japan's overall economy shows that although personal spending declined earlier due to increase in consumption tax, the economy as a whole continues to be buoyant due to the wave of consumption during the end-of-year and New Year periods.

In addition, Bank of Japan made upward revision of its economy for this year, raising the GDP growth rate from 0.7% to 0.9%, indicating Japan's optimism for continued economic growth even after the conclusion of Tokyo Olympics.

The US-China trade war has made major progress recently, with both countries arriving at the first phase of agreement. Although the market is not yet completely stable, confidence is being restored gradually in the market. However, one has to watch for developments in the global economy.

In its 'Regional Brand Survey 2019', Brand Research Institute, Inc., a Japanese polling company that conducts public opinion surveys, and ranks areas on the basis of Japanese public opinion on the attractiveness of places, has listed Hokkaido at the top for the 11-consecutive year. It has also won the first place under the categories 'Willingness to visit' and "Ability to recall unique local food" for 11 consecutive years.

Hokkaido has 6 national parks, 5 quasi-national parks, and 12 prefectural parks. The beautiful natural scenery attracts a large number of tourists to Hokkaido, with the service industry being the main pillar of its economy, accounting for over 70% of Hokkaido's total output as per the Hokkaido Economic and Industrial Bureau. Data from the Japan Tourism Bureau shows that over 3 million foreign tourists visited Hokkaido in 2018, for the first time, an increase of 11.6% over the previous year setting yet another record for the seventh consecutive year. In addition to myriad natural sceneries, the urban landscape is not only full of traditional Japanese culture, but also a model showcasing a perfect blend of nature and human influence.

Remarks: Japan's Natural Park Act's framework categorizes natural parks into different levels based on their characteristics. The categories include national parks, whose unique natural scenery is representative of the country and is of world-class standard; quasi-national parks, which are home to outstanding natural scenery; and prefectural natural parks, whose natural scenery represents its administrative region.