

# Japan heading for toilet diplomacy

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Japan is readying to lift the lid on what could be its most effective global marketing gimmick yet: the high-tech toilet seat.

Few foreign visitors make it through their first day in Japan without singing the praises of this epitome of Japanese know-how; a contraption that offers both comforting warmth and a frighteningly accurate bidet jet.

Now the government appears ready to capitalise on the enthusiasm and is set to talk up toilet technology as it launches a worldwide drive to promote Japan's prowess in innovation for the smallest room, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun.

Clean toilets equipped with various features "will be a plus for tourism", and will be included in a growth strategy to be compiled this summer, the newspaper said, citing unnamed sources.

The government will consider installing more high-tech toilets in areas frequented by tourists, such as airports, the Yomiuri said.

The nation might also produce promotional videos for foreigners in a bid to showcase the comfort of Japanese toilets ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, the newspaper said.

Nearly every household in Japan and most public restrooms are equipped with a seat that is plugged into the mains electricity.

At their most basic, they simply get warm, while at the other end they boast motion sensors, high-power odour-neutralisers and variable water jets, all tailored to conserve energy and water.

Some helpfully produce audio of flushing water for those shy users who don't want others to hear the sound of someone.... using a toilet.

The nation's bidet seats have won the hearts of the rich and famous, including Madonna and Will Smith, who have both sung their praises.

The seats are also among the most popular items targeted by Chinese tourists, ranking alongside high-spec rice cookers and cosmetics.

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