

Ready for Asian travellers?

Eight honest customer experience (CX) questions to find out where you stand, and where to improve.

Introduction

Asian travellers are a fast-growing and high-value segment for Europe, and they eat out with intent: a meal is often a planned highlight of the trip, not an afterthought.

For European restaurants and cafés, winning these diners is a real growth opportunity. JCB's Cardmember data shows the momentum: in-store spend in Europe grew 65% year on year among Indian cardmembers, 16% among Japanese cardmembers and 13% among Indonesian cardmembers.[1]

It starts with Omotenashi – the Japanese art of anticipating a guest's needs before they're spoken. But diner expectations are not always met by the places they visit. This checklist flags where those expectations sit.

Below are eight honest questions about how ready your restaurant, bar or café really is to welcome guests from Asia, from the first search to the last goodbye. Answer each one truthfully, mark where you stand, and use it to decide what to do next.



How to use it.

For each question, read what great looks like and the warning signs, then mark honestly where you sit. Use the 'Thoughts and inspiration' space to capture what you would change. The questions you mark amber are where the biggest opportunities sit.

1 - JCB proprietary cardmember spend data. Figures show year-on-year growth in face-to-face (in-store) spend in Europe by JCB Cardmembers from each market, over the latest available annual periods (India, 2024 to 2025; Japan and Indonesia, financial years to March 2025 and March 2026 respectively). "Europe" covers France, Italy, Spain, the UK, Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

1. Discovery and pre-arrival



"Can diners from Asia find us, read our menu and reserve a table in a way that feels native to them, before they have even left home?"

Why it matters.

Many Asian diners choose where to eat before they land, on the review and map apps they trust, in their own language, and often from photographs of the food and the environment. A restaurant that is invisible or unintelligible at that stage is off the list before anyone walks in.

What great looks like

- ✓ Easy to find where diners already look (Google Maps, Instagram and TikTok) with mouth-watering food and interior photography, and a menu that's easy to read.
- ✓ A menu that can be read and understood online, with clear pictures of the dishes.
- ✓ Online reservations that work the way they expect, without a European phone call or account.
- ✓ Where you have the reach to do it well, a presence on the local platforms a market plans on – for example Naver in South Korea.
- ✓ Imagery and tone that show diners from Asia they are welcomed, not an afterthought.

Warning signs

- × An English-only presence, or automated translations full of errors.
- × Absent from the apps your diners actually use to choose where to eat.
- × No food and environment photography, so they cannot picture the meal before choosing.
- × Reservations that assume a local phone number or a Western booking habit.

Thoughts and inspiration

2. The welcome



"Do the first ninety seconds at the door make a guest from Asia feel expected, rather than merely tolerated?"

Why it matters.

The greeting, the wait and the walk to the table set the tone for the meal. For someone navigating an unfamiliar city and language, a flat or flustered welcome is what lingers, and it is among the most fixable things here: it takes attention and a little training, not heavy investment.

What great looks like

- A warm, prompt greeting, and a clear sense of what happens next: how long the wait is, where to sit.
- A word of welcome in the guest's language, offered rather than expected of them.
- A small sign they are recognised: an acknowledgement of where they have come from, a familiar courtesy.
- Staff are attentive to individual preferences, such as quieter seating, a preferred view, or comfort considerations, and accommodate them where possible.
- If a wait is unavoidable, guests are kept informed about how long it is likely to be and made comfortable while they wait.

Warning signs

- Guests left unsure whether to wait, seat themselves, or how long it will be.
- A brisk, identical script for everyone, whatever the context.
- A welcome that makes a guest feel they are interrupting rather than arriving.
- Seating requests treated as an inconvenience, or guests offered little choice when suitable alternatives are available.
- Reserved guests left uncertain about when they will be seated, or made to feel their booking is unimportant.

Thoughts and inspiration

3. The core experience



"Is the meal built around a single default diner, or does it flex for cultural context without losing what makes us distinctive?"

Why it matters.

Omotenashi is anticipating a need before it is spoken. The aim is not to rebuild your spot around one market; it is to notice the specific things that let a diner from another culture eat with confidence and feel thought about. Done well, it sharpens what makes you distinctive rather than diluting it.

What great looks like

- ✓ Dietary needs handled as routine: halal, vegetarian, Jain and no-beef requests, and clear, accurate allergen information.
- ✓ Dishes and drinks explained with enough context for someone new to the cuisine to order with confidence.
- ✓ Group and round-table dining taken in stride, with sharing formats and larger tables the norm.
- ✓ Small adjustments, such as hot rather than iced water or an extra plate for sharing.
- ✓ Staff understand that guests may enjoy meals differently and are happy to accommodate requests for sharing plates, serving utensils, sauces or seasoning preferences where practical.

Warning signs

- × A fixed menu with no room to flex, and dietary requests treated as a nuisance.
- × Staff who cannot say what is in a dish, or what a newcomer to the cuisine should try.
- × Large or sharing tables treated as an inconvenience rather than routine.
- × "We have always done it this way" as the answer to every request.
- × Guests needing to repeatedly ask for basic items that would make the meal more comfortable or enjoyable.

Thoughts and inspiration

4. Payment fluency



"Can every diner settle the bill the way they want, on the device they want, without friction at the table?"

Why it matters.

Payment is where a good meal can quietly sour. A diner who cannot pay the way they do at home feels the gap at once, and it colours the memory of everything before it. JCB's own research describes a segment, common in South Korea, for whom a seamless, wallet-first checkout is non-negotiable, and payment acceptance is paramount. A stumbling block at the point of payment can impact an otherwise memorable dining experience.

What great looks like

- ✓ JCB accepted, with the acceptance mark shown clearly, at the front door, inside the venue and on online portals.
- ✓ Contactless and mobile payments supported wherever guests choose to pay.
- ✓ Contactless and mobile payment working at the table, not only at a fixed till.
- ✓ One host settling for the whole table handled smoothly, and splitting made easy when asked.
- ✓ Currency shown transparently, with no surprise fees, and staff confident with an unfamiliar card or wallet.

Warning signs

- ✗ "We only take Visa or Mastercard" or "Cash Only" at the point of payment.
- ✗ Acceptance marks missing, so diners do not know they can pay their way.
- ✗ A wallet fumbled or declined because staff are unsure how to process it.
- ✗ Payment possible only at a distant counter, not where the guest is sitting.
- ✗ Incidental payment holds that block a guest's card without any explanation.

Thoughts and inspiration

2 - JCB, "Asian Traveller Personas – Inspiring European Merchants to Unlock Greater Spend" https://www.thepaymentshub.net/asian-traveller-personas-inspiring-european-merchants-to-unlock-greater-spend/

5. The send-off



"Is the end of the meal as considered as the welcome, or does it just tail off once the bill is paid?"

Why it matters.

The close is the part most places neglect and the part a diner remembers. Being hurried out the moment the card clears undoes a good meal. An unhurried, warm farewell, with a little practical help for what comes next, is what they carry away.

What great looks like

- ✓ An unhurried farewell, with no sense of the table being turned the instant payment goes through.
- ✓ Genuine thanks, and a goodbye that matches the warmth of the welcome.
- ✓ Practical help with onward plans, whether that's directions, transport advice, or guidance to a nearby attraction or landmark.
- ✓ A small parting courtesy that fits the occasion.
- ✓ Staff attentive to practical details when guests leave, such as helping with luggage, umbrellas, shopping bags or pushchairs where appropriate.

Warning signs

- × The table cleared and the guest ushered out as soon as the bill is settled.
- × A flat, transactional goodbye after an otherwise good meal.
- × Guests left to figure out onward travel themselves when a simple offer of help would have made a difference.
- × The end of the meal treated as the end of any interest in the guest.
- × Guests struggling with obvious needs while staff remain disengaged.

Thoughts and inspiration



6. Reviews and recommendation

"When a diner has loved the meal, have we made it natural for them to share it, so the next traveller finds us through them?"

Why it matters.

A tourist rarely eats at the same restaurant twice in one trip, so the return you can win is not the same diner, it is the next one. Asian diners photograph and review heavily, and the next group chooses on what they see. A memorable experience that is easy to share does your marketing for you.

What great looks like

- ✓ Food and moments worth photographing, and nothing that gets in the way of guests sharing them, often via social media.
- ✓ A simple, low-pressure prompt to leave a review where the next travellers will look.
- ✓ Reviews left in Asian languages read and responded to, not ignored.
- ✓ A genuine reason to be recommended: a signature dish or detail worth telling friends about.

Warning signs

- × Nothing about the meal or the room that invites a photo or a post.
- × Reviews in other languages left unread and unanswered.
- × No thought given to how the next diner will hear about you.
- × Relying on walk-in luck rather than an earned reputation.

Thoughts and inspiration

7. Your team



"Are your staff delivering all of the above? Are they briefed, equipped and trusted to do it, or are they currently improvising?"

Why it matters.

Every point on this list reaches the guest through a person. Good intentions fail at the pass if staff are not briefed, equipped and trusted to act. Omotenashi is not a script; it is giving your team the context and the latitude to do the right thing when they see the chance.

What great looks like

- ✓ Front-of-house staff briefed on who they are serving and why it matters.
- ✓ The practical tools to hand: a few key phrases, the payment know-how, the cultural context.
- ✓ Staff trusted to put a guest's experience right without escalating every time.
- ✓ Cultural awareness built into how new starters are trained, not left to chance.

Warning signs

- × Staff expected to deliver with no briefing or support.
- × Every small decision pushed up to a manager.
- × Training that happened once, a long time ago.
- × A gap between what the marketing promises and what the floor can deliver.

Thoughts and inspiration

8. Your evidence



"Do we actually know how we are doing with diners from Asia, or are we guessing?"

Why it matters.

You cannot improve what you do not measure. Most places have a feeling about their international guests, but a feeling is not data. Knowing which markets your diners come from, what they order and spend, and where you lose them turns guesswork into decisions.

What great looks like

- ✓ You know which markets your diners come from, not just that they are "international".
- ✓ Covers, spend and no-shows tracked by market, not lumped together.
- ✓ Payment data used to see the fuller picture by market, which your payment provider can often help you break down.
- ✓ Feedback gathered in the diner's language, so you hear the real story.
- ✓ What you learn feeds back into the menu, the service and the plan.

Warning signs

- × "International" treated as one undifferentiated group.
- × No view of where bookings or covers fall away.
- × Feedback only ever collected in English.
- × Insight gathered, then never acted on.

Thoughts and inspiration

Where did you land?

No one scores all green, and that is exactly how it should be. Think of each amber response as a small act of hospitality waiting to happen, one more reason a guest leaves delighted and comes back. Start with one. Whenever you would like a hand, your JCB account manager is right there with you.

#BetterWithOmotenashi

