

Paris syndrome

Paris syndrome ([French](#): *Syndrome de Paris*, [Japanese](#): パリ症候群, *Pari shōkōgun*) is a transient [psychological disorder](#) exhibited by some individuals visiting or vacationing in [Paris](#) or elsewhere in Western Europe. It is characterized by a number of psychiatric symptoms such as acute [delusional](#) states, [hallucinations](#), feelings of [persecution](#) (perceptions of being a victim of [prejudice](#), [aggression](#), or [hostility](#) from others), [derealization](#), [depersonalization](#), [anxiety](#), and also [psychosomatic](#) manifestations such as [dizziness](#), [tachycardia](#), [sweating](#), and others.^[1] Similar syndromes include [Jerusalem syndrome](#) and [Stendhal syndrome](#). The condition is commonly viewed as a severe form of [culture shock](#).

History

Professor Hiroaki Ota, a Japanese psychiatrist working in France, is credited as the first person to diagnose the condition in 1986.^[2] However, later work by Youcef Mahmoudia, physician with the hospital [Hôtel-Dieu de Paris](#), indicates that Paris syndrome is "a manifestation of psychopathology related to the voyage, rather than a syndrome of the traveller."^[3] He theorized that the excitement resulting from visiting Paris causes [the heart to accelerate](#), causing giddiness and shortness of breath, which results in [hallucinations](#) in the manner similar to the [Stendhal syndrome](#) described by Italian psychiatrist [Graziella Magherini](#) in her book *La sindrome di Stendhal*.^[4]

Causes

The authors of the article, in the 2012 French psychiatry journal *Nervure*, cite the following as contributory factors:

1. [Language barrier](#) – few Japanese speak French and vice versa. This is believed to be the principal cause and is thought to engender the remainder. Apart from the obvious differences between French and Japanese, many everyday phrases and idioms are short of meaning and substance when translated, adding to the confusion of some who have not previously encountered such.
2. [Cultural difference](#) – the large difference between not only the languages but the manner. The French can communicate on an informal level in comparison to the rigidly formal [Japanese culture](#), which proves too great a difficulty for some Japanese visitors. It is thought that it is the rapid and frequent fluctuations in mood, tense and attitude, especially in the delivery of humour, which cause the most difficulty.

3. Idealized image of Paris – it is also speculated as manifesting from an individual's inability to reconcile a disparity between the Japanese popular image and the reality of Paris. The Japanese often picture Paris as a land of dreams, the land of beauty, culture and romance. However, they soon find out the contrary when they visit Paris for the first time. They find it to be a very regular place, the facilities are disorganized, many areas are unclean, and life characterized by noise, not like what was in their imagination.
4. Exhaustion – the over-booking of one's time and energy, whether on a [business trip](#) or on holiday, in attempting to cram too much into every moment of a stay in Paris, along with the effects of [jet lag](#), all contribute to the psychological destabilization of some visitors.

Susceptibility

Japanese visitors are observed to be especially susceptible.^{[2][5]} It was first noted in *Nervure*, the French journal of [psychiatry](#) in 2004.^[6] From the estimated six million yearly visitors, the number of reported cases is not significant: according to an administrator at the Japanese embassy in France, around twenty Japanese tourists a year are affected by the syndrome.^[7] The susceptibility of Japanese people may be linked to the popularity of Paris in Japanese culture, notably the idealized image of Paris prevalent in Japanese advertising.

Mario Renoux, the president of the Franco-Japanese Medical Association, states in *Libération*: "Des Japonais entre mal du pays et mal de Paris" ("The Japanese are caught between homesickness and Paris sickness", 13 December 2004) that [Japanese] magazines are primarily responsible for creating this syndrome. Renoux indicates that Japanese media, magazines in particular, often depict Paris as a place where most people on the street look like [stick-thin models](#) and most women dress in [high fashion](#) brands such as [Louis Vuitton](#),^[8] while in reality French high-fashion brands are mainly for foreign consumers, and the French population are far more overweight than the Japanese population.

As of 2004 the Japanese embassy ran a 24-hour help line to assist Japanese tourists suffering from this condition. The embassy also reported that at this time on average twelve people suffered from the disorder annually.^[9]

See also

- [Jerusalem syndrome](#)
- [Mean world syndrome](#)

- [Psychosis](#)
- [Multiculturalism](#)

Bibliography

Notes

References

- *Viala, A.; H. Ota; M.N. Vacheron; P. Martin; F. Caroli (2004). "[Les Japonais en voyage pathologique à Paris : un modèle original de prise en charge transculturelle](#)". *Nervure Supplément* **5**: 31–34. Retrieved 4 November 2009.*

External links

- ["Paris Syndrome," a 2010 short documentary](#)