1 Article：
An Encounter with China, a 'Galapagos' of 1.4 Billion People

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

The Chinese government is looking to spark a rebound in the number of foreign visitors to China. Those numbers decreased sharply due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the government announced several measures designed to **attract** visitors. Among them are **simplifying** visa application forms and **lowering** visa acquisition fees.

However, I can't help but feel that it has become difficult for foreigners arriving from overseas to freely tour China. That is because of the acceleration of pervasive digitalization during China's coronavirus countermeasures.

Everything is Digitalized
While on vacation in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in 2023, I tried to enter a park. However, I was told that I would have to **pre-register** using a smartphone app. Moreover, registration required a Chinese identification number, and passport numbers were not supported.

Nowadays, anyone who wants to catch a taxi must normally use an app to request one. Especially in big Chinese cities, it is sometimes difficult to spot an empty taxi even on the main streets.

If you go to a restaurant and **ask for** a menu, your server is liable to tell you, "We don't have one. You can view one on your smartphone."

Digital Isolation in a Human Universe
One of the great things about China is that if you are at your wit's end a kind soul is likely to show up and ask you, "What's the matter?"

Travel in China is still no problem if you are part of a guided group tour. But I can't help but feel that there are more hurdles than before for foreigners traveling on their own.

There was a time when it was common to compare Japan's technologies and services with the Galapagos Islands. The islands' geographical isolation had allowed living organisms to evolve in unique ways. In Japan's case, the diffusion of its technologies and services at that time had wandered far from global standards.

These days, however, the way digitalization of services is proceeding in China, it would seem that that land of 1.4 billion people is fast becoming a colossal "Galapagos."

2　Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. attract　引き付ける、魅了する

The colorful signs are there to **attract** customers to the new cafe.

2. simplify　（複雑、難解なことを）簡単にする、単純にする、平易にする

Let's try to **simplify** the instructions so everyone can understand them.

3. lower　低下させる、低くする、下げる
The store decided to **lower** the prices during the holiday season.

4. pre-register　事前登録する

To save time, please make sure to **pre-register** for the event online.

5. ask for　～を頼む、注文する、要求する

When you're at the library, don't hesitate to **ask for** help if you can't find a book.

3　Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. **According to the article, what measures did the Chinese government announce in 2023 to attract visitors?**

2. **What difficulties did the author experience while trying to enter a park in Nanjing?**

3. **What changes have occurred in the way people catch taxis in big Chinese cities?**

4. **Have you ever faced challenges while traveling or entering a place in another country?**

5. **Do you like using smartphone apps for things like events or taxis? Why?**

4 　日本語関連記事： １４億人の「ガラパゴス」

中国政府が、新型コロナウイルス禍で激減した訪中外国人を回復させようとしている。昨年には、ビザ（査証）の申請書簡素化や、取得料金値下げなどを相次ぎ打ち出した。

一方で、コロナ対策を契機にさらに加速したデジタル化により、海外から来た外国人が中国国内を自由に観光するのは難しくなったと思う。昨年、休暇で訪れた江蘇省南京市で公園に入ろうとすると、スマートフォンのアプリで事前登録が求められた。しかし、登録には中国の身分証番号が必須で、パスポート番号には対応していなかった。

タクシーもアプリで呼ぶのが一般的となり、大通りでも流しの空車タクシーを見つけるのが困難な都市は珍しくない。飲食店で店員にメニューを求めると「ない。スマホで見て」といわれることもある。手段がなく困っていると「どうした？」と親切な人が現れるのは中国の良さだが、ガイド付きの団体旅行ならまだしも外国人の個人旅行はハードルが高くなったと感じる。

世界標準からかけ離れて普及した日本の技術やサービスを、生物が独自の進化を遂げたガラパゴス諸島になぞらえて表現することが一時期流行した。中国のデジタルサービスも、人口１４億人という桁違いの規模の「ガラパゴス化」が進んでいるように見える。