

The Industry Unites to Awaken Demand for Travel to Europe JATA Launches “Team Europe” Project



Tetsunori Dambara,
Managing Director of
Miki Tourist

Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA) is launching Team Europe, a tourism promotion project to promote activities that will encourage Japanese people to travel to Europe as part of JATA’s Visit World Project.

The Japanese population over age 65 will exceed 30 million in 2012 and will increase by one million per year until 2016, when it is expected to reach 34 million. So, the coming years are predicted

to be the age when baby boomers who seek “quality” will travel to Europe, and the value of Japan’s overseas travel market, where the consumption unit cost is large, will further increase.

Young people are becoming more inclined to “invest in themselves,” and in the overseas travel market, it can be said that Europe is the top destination for that investment. In view of the fact that the new passport acquisition rate for young people is rising, we need to renew awareness of the fact that the Japanese market is still attractive.

Europe as a destination possesses the following special qualities within Japan’s overseas travel market.

- (1) It is the most popular destination; approximately 12% of all Japanese overseas travelers visit Europe each year.
- (2) For travel agencies, arranging trips to Europe is their most important business.
- (3) So that trips to Europe remain attractive and grow stably, we need to boost product planning capabilities that can ensure safety and peace of mind during trips and that are responsive to customers’ needs, while also collecting up-to-date information.

In 2010, the Asian office of the Europe Travel Commission (ETC) moved from Japan to China, and thus Japan lost what was the central body in the Japanese market that promoted tourism to Europe.

Financial conditions are becoming more stringent in European countries, with reductions in tourism promotion budgets becoming unavoidable and limited funds tending to be allocated to activities in developing nations where demand is growing rapidly.

With competition intensifying among international destinations, the Japanese overseas travel industry that handles trips to Europe will unite to strengthen and develop B to B to C market activities. Working toward sustainable development of European travel is an urgent and vital topic, and Team Europe will take on this issue.

Team Europe will actively develop study activities and seminars to improve the information-gathering capabilities and planning capabilities of the industry overall. At the same time, Team Europe will work closely on information sharing between affiliated companies and bodies that handle trips to Europe, and the industry will unite to launch marketing

activities designed to awaken demand for trips to Europe as a destination.

The main action plan focuses on four activities: (1) increase tour products to Europe, (2) study off-season measures, plan non-low-price, worthwhile winter tour products, and achieve successful results, (3) increase exposure to the media, and (4) create a new trend.

Specifically, following groups will be set up: (1) a Media Day Group, (2) a Seminar Group, (3) a Destination Development Group, (4) an Off-season Measures Group, and (5) a Research Group within Team Europe.

For example, the Seminar Group will considerate measures to stimulate motivation and aspiration for travelling among general consumers. The measures may include inviting experts from such thematic fields as “music,” “railways,” “festivals,” “pleasure at European resorts,” and “local cuisine in various regions” and holding special seminars which incorporate event elements.

The Off-season Measures Group intends to boost potential demand for tours by such means as reviewing regional features, including “festivals,” “flowers,” “foods,” and “theatergoing,” setting themes or appeals for off-season tours, setting a tour theme of “elegant stay at a five-star hotel” particularly for winter tour products, and highlighting the overlooked appeal of various areas in Europe by such means as introducing “10 selected winter sceneries.”

The Tourism Promotion Council of Team Europe will hold its first meeting within the year and visit local areas in Japan to hold a series of Europe Seminars within the fiscal year. The council will also plan a study tour to Europe for the industry in the first half of the next fiscal year.

Tetsunori Dambara, Managing Director of Miki Tourist, expressed his hopes for JATA’s Team Europe, saying, “I hope it will play a role in raising the level of the travel industry, publicizing the importance of the Japanese market, and creating travel trends.”

Managing Director Dambara pointed out, “In many cases, the customers have more information than the sellers due to the spread of the Internet, and it can’t be denied that professional travel agents’ skills in information gathering and planning are declining at both large and small travel agencies.” Particularly given the breadth and depth of a destination like Europe, “it is important to boost the skills of the industry overall through initiatives like Team Europe,” he emphasized.

He mentioned the need to raise Japan’s presence, saying, “We need to renew awareness of the importance of the Japanese market among suppliers such as airlines, hotels, and government tourism bureaus in Europe”.

Based on the example of the apparel industry where trendy fashions are created deliberately, he called on the travel industry “to undertake efforts to kindle a trend toward travel to Europe and invent ways to create synergistic effects through competition.”