

Special Interview

Try to Make the City of Tokyo a Global Tourism Brand;

Achieving 10 Million Foreign Visitors in Five Years Using Five Strategies

The Tokyo metropolitan government recently released the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Industrial and Tourism Promotion Plan which details strategies for attracting more foreign travelers by boosting the attractiveness of Tokyo as an international city. Koji Ikehata, Chairman of the JATA Kanto Chapter which covers Tokyo and nine other prefectures in the Kanto area, spoke with Shinichi Sogou, Senior Director of Tourism Division at Tokyo's Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs, about tourism policy in Tokyo.



Koji Ikehata
Chairman of the JATA Kanto Chapter

Ikehata : The JATA Kanto Chapter is an industry group that is concerned with the travel scene across a wide area that covers ten prefectures, including seven prefectures in Kanto plus three neighboring prefectures. The policy of our chapter is to pursue our daily activities under the themes of promoting creation of tourism sites that visitors will trust, carrying out strict compliance, and finding

ways to strengthen collaboration with local governments including Tokyo, the Japan Tourism Agency, and tourist associations. Today, I would like to hear mainly about the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Industrial and Tourism Promotion Plan from your standpoint as Senior Director of Tourism Division at Tokyo's Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs. To begin, could you please explain the five strategies drawn up for the development of the policies in the plan?



Shinichi Sogou
Senior Director of Tourism Division
Tokyo's Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs

Sogou: Broadly speaking, the five strategies are new developments to attract foreign travelers, promotion of MICE hosting and attraction, development of tourism resources to boost attractiveness, enhancement of the receiving environment, and development and utilization of human resources. The main points in our stance are to convey the attractiveness of Tokyo to foreign travelers and to intensify our efforts to attract them to Tokyo.

We want to promote inbound travel through activation of MICE demand (i.e., large business events) which will generally expand travel demand not only for international conferences but also for business trips such as incentive tours. Regarding development of tourism resources, Japan and Tokyo are currently popular worldwide, and so I think we should be able to attract more travelers if

we network new tourism resources like cuisine, *anime*, and fashion and package them in a way that are easy to grasp for overseas travelers. Regarding the receiving environment, for foreign travelers as well as domestic travelers, we need to promote usage of information and communication technology (ICT) so that individuals can walk around while freely accessing information. Another important thing is development of human resources. With tourism promotion increasing in importance, local areas are promoting the creation of tourism-oriented towns, and initiatives by tourist associations are spreading. However, the results of these efforts vary wildly depending on whether or not there are people who can take a leading role. At the same time, the existence of local ties and the functioning of networking are important themes. For activation of the MICE market, the fact of the matter is that there are still few genuine meeting planners in Japan, and so we must create a mechanism for development of human resources that combines the strengths of the Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau and the private sector.

Ikehata: Have numerical targets been established?

Sogou: In regard to the numerical target, as I mentioned before, we had reached 5.94 million visitors before the disaster, and our target is to expand that to 10 million in the coming five years. The volume zone including China, South Korea, and Taiwan is definitely important for reaching that target, but at the same time, we must also work to raise the level by developing new markets. In the US and Europe, Japan's market share as a destination is still quite small. However, Japan and Tokyo are currently internationally popular, so I want to devise a strategy to draw individual travelers by communicating as much as possible about the attractions here, while strengthening our appeal through ten tourism representatives and so forth. Marketing will be extremely important for this, and so this year first of all I want to put energy into marketing.

Ikehata: Soon, in September, the site of the 2020 Olympics will be decided. We certainly hope that it will be held in Tokyo so that we will have a great opportunity to show the world what a fantastic city Tokyo is.

Sogou: I really would like for people everywhere to know what sort of welcome we here in Tokyo can offer to all travelers from around the world during a large event such as the Olympics. Tokyo is a metropolis that integrates a dense concentration of things to see and experience. As we approach September, we are doing our utmost to make the Olympic Committee aware that Tokyo is a sophisticated city with high potential that has the ability to hold the Olympics successfully with ease, as is written in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Industrial and Tourism Promotion Plan. We have also put together a new brochure that summarizes the attractions of Tokyo to distribute to people around the world so that they will know what attractions await them in Tokyo.