

Cabinet Coordinates Action Program Promoting Japan as a Tourism Nation Powerfully

The second Cabinet meeting (Prime Minister Abe presiding) on the promotion of Japan as a tourism nation was held on June 11 at the prime minister's office in Nagatacho, Tokyo. At the meeting, the Action Program for Making Japan a Tourism Nation was compiled.

Reliable Implementation with Inspections and Evaluations of Progress

To utilize the potential of Japan's tourism resources and to create a tourism country that will attract people



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe(right) and Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Akihiro Ohta(center)
[Photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office]

from around the world, this program recognizes "the need to effectively devise measures to break through the bottlenecks that exist in each stage" and the importance of planning for (1) creation and communication of the Japan brand, (2) promotion of travel to Japan by easing visa conditions, (3) improvement of reception of foreign travelers, and (4) promotion of investment in MICE (including international conferences, etc.). In addition, a policy was announced in which the novel parts of the necessary measures in the program will hold a central position and measures that are already underway will continue unchanged.

The government's goal in implementing the measures included in the program is to have 20 million foreigners visit Japan. Because reliable implementation of the measures is important, the idea is to powerfully promote the program while conducting inspections and evaluation of its progress and utilizing that feedback in the ongoing implementation.

Following the discussion at the Cabinet meeting on promotion of Japan as a tourism nation, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe explained, "Japan has resources such as nature, culture, history, and cuisine that it can confidently present to the people of the world. We have prepared an action program that will utilize these resources and make Japan into a very attractive tourism country." He stated that because this year is the 40th anniversary of friendship and cooperation between Japan and ASEAN, first of all the following steps will be taken to ease visa requirements for tourists from ASEAN countries.

- (1) Visa exemption for travelers from Thailand and Malaysia
- (2) Multiple visas for travelers from Vietnam and the Philippines
- (3) Extension of the period of stay for Indonesians with multiple visas

It has been decided to implement these relaxation measures all at once by summertime.

Number of Foreign Tourists to Increase from 10 Million to 20 Million

Moreover, Prime Minister Abe announced his determination for "the government as a whole to establish Japan as the top location for international meetings in Asia while simultaneously transmitting the Japan brand overseas by broadcasting contents overseas on a large scale and securing overseas channels." He emphasized, "We will immediately implement this action plan to reach 10 million, and then to aim for 20 million, foreign visitors to Japan for the first time in history." He requested the cooperation of the related Cabinet members with

economic growth, regional revitalization, and attraction of travelers from all countries.

With this year marking the tenth anniversary of the start of the Visit Japan project, since when Japan began genuine initiatives to become a tourism country, the Japan Tourism Agency points out, "to increase the number of foreign visitors to Japan, the entire government must work as one to strengthen initiatives."

To rebuild a strong Japanese economy through growth strategies and to powerfully promote measures to create a tourism country that is more attractive than neighboring countries, the Abe Cabinet launched a Cabinet meeting to promote Japan as a tourism country in March 2013. The action program was arranged mainly by a working team dedicated to promotion of Japan as a tourism country through repeated discussions based on opinions from a panel of experts.

The specific action items for each of the four main measures in the action program are as follow.

- (I) Creation and promotion of the Japan brand
 - (1) Expand stronger collaboration with a Japan-wide system
 - (2) Transmit the Japan brand in conjunction with Cool Japan
 - (3) Implement promotions to visit Japan from new standpoints
- (II) Promotion of travel to Japan by easing visa requirements
 - (1) Ease visa requirements
 - (2) Inform travelers of lodging and transportation that are easy to use
 - (3) Promote cruises
 - (4) Further enhance the aviation network
- (III) Improvement of reception of foreign travelers—Improvement of immigration procedures
 - (1) Expedite and smooth immigration procedures
 - Environmental arrangement that makes movement easy
 - (1) Arrange environment for pleasant and smooth movement using transport facilities
 - (2) Improve and strengthen multilingual capabilities
 - Environmental arrangement to make it easy to spend time in Japan
 - (1) Improve and strengthen multilingual capabilities
 - (2) Improve the tourism industry's responsiveness to foreign travelers
 - (3) Strengthen tourist information services
 - (4) Implement measures for Muslim travelers
 - (5) Improve convenience for foreigners visiting Japan
 - (6) Study the best form for the duty-free system
 - Creation of attractive tourism areas
 - (1) Create new tourism
 - (2) Promote tourism that is linked to infrastructure projects
 - (3) Maximize the tourism potential of local areas
 - (4) Stimulate travel demand in disaster areas
- (IV) Promotion of investment in international conferences, etc. (MICE)
 - (1) Construct an integrated MICE attracting system with the country working in unison
 - (2) Prepare an environment to receive MICE in cities
 - (3) Collaborate with related organizations through a joint action plan
 - (4) Promote integrated resorts
 - (5) Provide support for attracting and holding of international sports competitions