



The MILT Minister Award Prize Goes to Hankyu Travel; 12 Divisions Awarded in the Tour Grand Prix 2013

On September 14, the Tour Grand Prix 2013 award ceremony was held at the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013. The Tour Grand Prix awards are presented to the most outstanding tour plans among outbound trips and domestic/inbound trips and are awarded for the purpose of contributing to the improvement of the planning and marketing capabilities of the travel industry and measures to make Japan a tourist destination. This year, 10 tours won in 12 divisions, including the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MILT) Prize. The winning tours in each division are as follow.

-MILT Minister Award: 15-day Trip across the US by Bus and Train (southern route)/Hankyu Travel

-Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner Award - Outbound: ANA Wonder Earth/ANA Sales

-Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner Award - Domestic/Inbound: Continued Reconstruction Support for Damage due to Hoof-and-Mouth Disease and the Shinmoedake Volcano in Southern Kyushu/Yomiuri Travel

-Japan-US Tourism Exchange Year Special Award: 15-Day Trip across the US by Bus and Train (southern route)/Hankyu Travel

-Grand Prix, SIT Division - Outbound: Walking with Camels in the Tunisian Desert/Dososhin Inc.

-Grand Prix, Destination Development Division - Outbound: To the Healing Country Where Time Flows Slowly - 6 Days in Laos by Direct Charter Flight/Jumbo Tours

-Grand Prix, Contribution to Market Expansion Division - Outbound: "Exciting English Night with Pirates," event planned by Benesse Corporation as part of "Energetic Family Guam and Saipan Tours" /JTB World Vacations

-Grand Prix, Package Tour Division - Outbound: ANA Wonder Earth/ANA Sales

-Selection Committee Special Award - Outbound: Look JTB "Flowers of the World"/ JTB World Vacations

-Selection Committee Special Award - Outbound: 9-day and 12-day Trips to the Gates of Hell and the Miraculous Earth/Saiyu Travel

-Grand Prix, Package Tour Division - Domestic/Inbound: 3-day Trip to Draw Close to the Historical Turmoil and Romance of the Ryukyu Kingdom/Isetan Mitsukoshi

-Selection Committee Special Award - Domestic/Inbound: 8 Days/6 Nights Fly & Drive Hokkaido Shiretoko Course/ANA Sales

Special Symposium on Strengthening Japan's Brand Power; "Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators" Supports the Realization of Japan as a Travel Destination

On September 14, the third day of the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase, a special symposium was held entitled "Strengthening Japan's Brand Power and Realization of Japan as a Travel Destination-Challenges for the Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators."

The moderator of the special symposium was Hiroyasu Sato, professor of tourism hospitality in the Comprehensive Management Department at Matsumoto University who also acts as chairman of the screening committee for the Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators. In addition to Kazuaki Maruo, chairman of the JATA Inbound Travel Promotion Committee, and Yasuhiro Shinohara, vice commissioner for international affairs, Japan Tourism Agency, taking the stage as panelists, Hiroyuki Kobayashi, representative director of the Chubu Region Institute for Social and Economic Research (CRISER), and Tomohiro Iguchi, representative director of Snow Country Region General Incorporated Association, spoke from the standpoint of advancing initiatives involving actual quality certification.

At the start of the symposium, Kazuaki Maruo explained the background of the founding of and the future expectations concerning JATA's Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators. He pointed out the importance of increasing the visibility of the Japan brand for attracting new customers and developing repeat customers. He revealed a plan to further boost quality, safety, and reliability by increasing the active transmission of information and expanding the merits of the system, while increasing the number of certified companies.

Yasuhiro Shinohara expressed the view that the introduction and spread of the assurance system will play a large role in advancing initiatives to attract 10 million inbound visitors annually to Japan, in line with the Abe Cabinet's action program to promote Japan as a tourism country.

Hiroyuki Kobayashi, who has researched tourism quality standards independently since FY2008 and drew up the tourism quality standards for "Sakura Quality," explained the thinking behind the agreement with JATA and Snow Country Region for gratis usage of the trademarked "Sakura Quality" symbol mark. He emphasized that, as seen in instances overseas, the Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators is an important pillar for supporting inbound promotions.

Tomohiro Iguchi, who is engaged in an independent quality certification project in tourist areas, informed participants about his aim to promote proper evaluation of services offered to tourists and listed the anticipated effects of introduction of quality standards as (1) increase in customer satisfaction in the region overall, (2) improvement in efficiency of businesses, (3) damage control for comments flooding various websites, (4) significant reduction in advertising costs, and (5) public attention on early introduction of initiatives compared to the rest of the country. He is also working on a plan to hold trainings on the establishment of tourism quality standards as Japan-wide standards.

Tabihaku Known around the World; Partnership Agreement Signed with UNWTO

Following the opening ceremony, a signing ceremony was held for a Comprehensive Partnership Agreement between JATA and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Speaking in reference to the partnership agreement, JATA Chairman Kikuma noted, "This is our first initiative in the Asia-Pacific region and our agreements follows with ITB in Berlin and WTM in London." He stressed, "International recognition of the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase as a major event is extremely significant not only for JATA but also for Japan, which is aiming to boost its profile as a travel destination."

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of UNWTO, said, "Our tie-up with JATA, an extremely influential organization



After signing the Comprehensive Partnership Agreement, Taleb Rifai (right), Secretary-General of UNWTO, and JATA Chairman Kikuma exchange a firm handshake.

in the travel field, represents significant progress for UNWTO," and he recognized that "Japan is an ideal platform for the development of the regional tourism at which UNWTO aims."

The Success Factor in the Asian Market is "Governance"; UNWTO Secretary-General Rifai and WTTC CEO Scowsill Present Keynote Addresses

After the opening ceremony, at Session 1 of the International Tourism Forum on "Analysis of the Asian Travel Market," keynote addresses were presented by Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General, and David Scowsill, CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Next, the same two gentlemen engaged in a substantive intense debate with Hiromi Tagawa, JATA vice chairman and sponsor representative, moderated by Yoshiaki Honpo, professor of urban environmental sciences at Tokyo Metropolitan University and the first commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency, on the topic of "The Rapidly Growing Asian Travel Market and Japan's Travel Industry."

While UNWTO Secretary-General Rifai pointed out "good governance" as a factor for success in the Asian market, WTTC CEO David Scowsill emphasized, "Cooperation between the public and private sectors is indispensable to the sustained growth of tourism" with an eye toward the approach of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Session 2 was entitled "From Growth to Maturity, Questioning the True Value of Japan's Outbound Travel Market-Finding the Way to Tomorrow through a Rigorous Comparison of the Three Markets of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan." A panel composed of Moo Seung Yang,

chairman of the Korean Association of Travel Agents (KATA), Jason Wang, chairman of the Lion Group in Taiwan, and John M.Koldowski, CEO adviser of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) exchanged ideas on the strengths and characteristics of Japan's outbound travel market.



Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of UNWTO, pointed out, "The role of the government in promoting tourism policy will increase in importance as we approach the 2020 Olympics."



David Scowsill, CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), urged, "The heads of governments in all countries must deepen their understanding of the role government plays in the tourism industry."



The moderator of Session 1, Yoshiaki Honpo, professor at Tokyo Metropolitan University, speaking from his experience as the first commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency, pointed out that, currently, "politicians are not keeping up with the changes in tourism."



Hiromi Tagawa, JATA vice chairman, stressed, "The fact that the 2020 Olympics will be held in Tokyo is significant for tourism because we will jointly share the role to be filled by the travel industry in that process with all of Asia."

Friendly Chats at Europe Square

At JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013, the number of booths in Europe Square increased significantly thanks to exhibits from the tourism agencies, tour operators, airline companies, and railways that compose Team Europe.

Team Europe held a Team Europe Reception at Europe Square, which was set up inside the venue on September 13, the second day of the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013. Many industry-related persons visited the reception, where they were greeted by 37 exhibitors from tourism bureaus and airline companies, etc., and enjoyed friendly chats.

Yosuke Tsuruho, MILT Senior Vice Minister, and Shigeto Kubo, Commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency, Visit the Venue

On September 12, the first day of JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013, Yosuke Tsuruho, senior vice minister of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and Shigeto Kubo, commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency, came to the venue at Tokyo Big Sight and visited the exhibitors booths. There were 730 companies and organizations from 154 countries and regions with eye-catching exhibits on display in 1,353 booths spread across three halls. The senior vice minister and commissioner enthusiastically visited various booths.

Highlighting “Destination Japan”; Kick-off Event “Tabihaku Night 2013” Held at Zojoji Temple

Tabihaku Night 2013 was held on September 12, the eve of the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase, at Zojoji Temple, located in the Shiba area of Tokyo. Just before this kick-off event, a gathering was held in the main hall of Zojoji to express hopes for the success of the event and for world peace; event staff and participants prayed in front of the main statue of Amida Buddha.



Zojoji Temple, the venue for the kick-off event. With an illuminated Tokyo Tower as the backdrop, a performance unfolded on a special stage in the impressive main building to raise the profile of “Destination Japan.”



JATA Chairman Kikuma (right) chatting with Yosuke Tsuruho (left), senior vice minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, at the kick-off event. Given the selection of Tokyo as an Olympic venue, JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013 was all the more significant as Japan prepares for the 2020 Olympics.



Guests from various countries attending the kick-off event naturally began to move to the music of the awa-odori dance performed by the dancers. *It's your loss if you don't dance; just sitting is foolish, too* go the lyrics of the song.

At the event, which was cosponsored by the Japan Tourism Agency, around 1,000 persons participated, including various countries' ministers in charge of tourism and the ambassadors to Japan as well as exhibitors. With an illuminated Tokyo Tower as the backdrop, amidst the interplay of the twinkling lights of ultramodern Tokyo and the atmosphere of the Edo period exuded by ancient Zojoji, “Destination Japan” and the charm of Zojoji as a unique venue were highlighted. Japanese drum and awa-odori dance performances enabled participants to experience Japanese tradition and culture. At the event, Yosuke Tsuruho, senior vice minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, noted, “As we approach the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, today marks the actual start of our work to increase the number of visitors to Japan and to make Japan a travel destination.”

New Record of 131,000 Visitors; 154 Countries and Regions Represented at 1,353 Booths

The JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013, which was held from September 12 to 15 at Tokyo Big Sight, was the largest such event ever held, setting a new record by attracting 131,058 visitors, including the days reserved for industry-related persons as well as the days open to the general public. A total of 1,353 booths were put on display by 730 companies and other bodies from 154 countries and regions.



The JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase, which attracted a record crowd of 131,058 visitors, enjoyed a bustling turnout every day with industry-related persons and the general public streaming in.



In his greeting presented at the opening ceremony, JATA Chairman Kikuma indicated his wish that two-way tourism be promoted.



Yosuke Tsuruho, senior vice minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, talked about the government's resolve to support promotion of bilateral exchanges.

The opening ceremony was held on September 13 and attended by around 750 including foreign ambassadors and embassy staff. The JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013 was launched with a grand tape-cutting ceremony. JATA Chairman Jungo Kikuma said in his greeting at the opening ceremony, “In continuation from last year when we set a new record for outbound Japanese travelers, we are doing well regarding the number of travelers to the US, Europe, and ASEAN this year, too, except for some neighboring countries with a large market size,” indicating a desire to promote strong two-way tourism including both outbound and inbound travelers. Guest speaker Yosuke Tsuruho, senior vice minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, emphasized the importance of two-way tourism, saying, “The government also wants to support the promotion of bilateral exchanges, together with promoting outbound travel from Japan.”

Mezamashi Saturday Receives Most- Outstanding Award; JATA Tourism Awards 2013

At the opening ceremony of the JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase 2013 on September 13, the presentation ceremony for the JATA Tourism Awards 2013 was held. To further stimulate travel demand, these awards are presented to companies and organizations that made a particularly significant contribution to the creation of travel demand through destination promotions and development, etc., during the year.

This year, eight companies and organizations were awarded in five divisions. Mezamashi Saturday (a Fuji TV program) won the Most-Outstanding Award which was newly instituted this year. The winners in each division were as follow.

- Most-Outstanding Award: “Top of the World” segment of Mezamashi Saturday (Fuji TV)
- Travel Bureau and Embassy Division: Hawaii Tourism Authority, Guam Visitors Bureau, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, and Sri Lanka Embassy
- Transport Division: Princess Cruises
- Domestic and Inbound Japan Travel Division: Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau/Tohoku Tourism Promotion Organization
- Publicity Division: “Top of the World” segment of Mezamashi Saturday (Fuji TV)