

Team Europe Holds "Media Day" Most Outstanding Award Presented to Five Articles and TV Programs

JATA's Team Europe held a Media Day award ceremony and reception at Aoyama Diamond Hall in Tokyo on November 28.

Media Day is an event to award magazine and newspaper articles and TV programs in the mass media that feature tourist destinations in Europe.

Articles and programs published or aired between September 2012 and August 2013 were eligible. There were around 40 nominees in 5 categories. A Final Selection Committee of seven persons selected the most outstanding entries in each category.

At the opening of the award ceremony, Kaoru Kanetaka, chairperson of the Final Selection Committee, presented greetings, saying, "Tourism is necessary for world peace, and the media play an important role in introducing a variety of information about overseas destinations." At the reception which was held following the award ceremony, a toast was led by Edouard Tripkovic Katayama, head of representative officer of the Croatian National Tourist Board and the chairperson of the Media Day Sub-committee..

Comments from the winners follow below.

[Magazine Division]

©CREA Traveller. "To Elegant England. The Lakes District, northern England, London"; Cooperation : Visit Britain. Toshizumi Ishibashi, editor-in-chief, Bungeishunju Ltd.'s CREA Traveller : "We felt that we were producing something very good, and so we are extremely happy to receive this award."

[Newspaper Division]

©Kahoku Shimpō. "Visit Valais, Switzerland, and the fair Alps"; Cooperation: Swiss National Tourist Office. Naomi Osanai, Kahoku Shimpō Publishing Co.: "I became unwell when we were working on location, but the scenery I saw was fabulous. The blueness of the sky lives vividly in my memory."

[Web Division]

©Chikyu-no-Arukikata (Globe-Trotter Travel Guidebook) Blog "007 Scotland Connection." Cooperation : Visit Britain. Akihiko Ohishi, Manager, Digital Contents Dept, Diamond-Big Co.,Ltd. : "We aimed to create a website that would be intriguing for adults to read, and so I am very pleased to receive this award."

[Free Newspaper/Newsletter Division]

©Free Magazine Itariazuki (Italy Lovers) Special Report. Cooperation: ENIT. Hiroaki Matsumoto, representative director, PSSG : "This award gladdens not only the Italian State Tourism Board but also all those who support us."

[TV Division]

©BS Nippon's "Wa-no-neiroSekaiIsan'Doburovuniku'niHi biku (Japanese Tone Color Resonates in Dubrovnik, a World Heritage Site)." Cooperation: Croatian National Tourist Board. Toshiteru Inagaki, senior producer, Production Department, Programming Bureau, BS Nippon Corporation, and Tomoki Hoshino, representative director, Brain Corporation : "Travel programs are extremely popular particularly among middle-aged and older people, and we would be delighted if our program motivates them to travel to Europe."

●Final Selection Committee●

Chairperson Kaoru Kanetaka (honorary chairperson of Japan Travel Writers' Organization); Shigeto Kubo, commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency; Wakako Sakai, actress; Tenshin Kobayashi, representative of Evolution Tourism Institute; Jungo Kikuma, chairman, JATA, and chairman, JATA's Team Europe; Hiromi Tagawa, vice chairman, JATA, and vice chairman, JATA Team Europe; Ichiro Namai, chairman, JATA Overseas Travel Committee, and vice chairman, JATA Team Europe.

Inbound Foreign Visitors Increased by 29.5%, to 840,000 in November Attainment of 10 Million Total in 2013 is Assured

According to estimates released by the Japan National Tourist Organization(JNTO) on December 11, inbound foreign visitors increased by 29.5% year on year in November to 840,000, marking the first time that inbound visitors in November reached the 800,000 level. The total for January through November also increased by 23.9% year on year, to 9.499 million, which basically ensures that the total annual figure will surpass 10 million for the first time in history in 2013.

The number of inbound foreign visitors in December 2012 was 690,000, and so if the trend continues at a level similar as last year, the total figure for 2013 will be approximately 10.2 million. The monthly growth rate year on year of inbound foreign visitors in the second half of this year has been as follows: July 18.4%, August 17.1%, September 31.7%, October 31.5%, and November 29.5%. Given the growth around 30% during the three consecutive months since September this year, there is a strong possibility that December inbound foreign visitors will exceed last year's figure.

So, in light of November's results, attainment of 10 million inbound foreign visitors for the first time ever in 2013 is basically assured.

In JNTO's analysis, factors that contributed to the increase in November include the decline in the cost of travel to Japan due to the drop in the value of the yen, ongoing promotion of travel to Japan by the Visit Japan project, and measures to relax visa requirements in southeastern Asia.

handling inbound travel? We could set goals for billing volume and customer volume, and to reach those goals, we should utilize Tour Quality Japan and hold seminars. We are currently studying this matter.

----- What about outbound travel?

Kikuma: For destinations where business is sluggish, if government relations are a problem, then I think we should look into promoting a recovery in travel through private-sector exchanges. Already, we are actively setting up venues for discussions with private-sector businesses that are suffering in the destination countries. I think we should also consider initiatives like Team Europe, which promotes travel to Europe, for ASEAN and Oceania, for example. Then, there is the issue of how much JATA should get involved, but we should also actively study the possibility of local-to-local charters. For example, Team Europe is starting to plan how to arrange charter flights from regional airports in Japan to Europe, such as from Fukuoka to Edinburgh or Manchester, in a way so that everyone wins. The charter rules were relaxed in 2013, and so I think the travel industry probably needs to take the lead in actively developing charters while keeping in mind the issue of total capacity.

Kubo: For inbound as well, I think we cannot avoid the issues of aviation network enhancement and airport utilization. There are also cruises, but in Japan's case, the majority of inbound visitors arrive by plane. As Mr. Kikuma said, we must plan to enhance the aviation network, including usage of charters and regional airports. To attain 20 million inbound travelers in the future, I think we need to further boost airport functions in the Tokyo metropolitan area and promote utilization of airports outside the metropolitan area. The Japan Tourism Agency is not operating the airports and so there are limitations on what we can do. However, I hope that we who oversee tourism can participate in some form in enhancing the aviation network and strengthening airport functions so that the perspective of the Civil Aviation Bureau in the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism isn't the only one reflected.

Working on Improvement of the Vacation System with the Help of the Japan Tourism Agency

----- What are your wishes for the New Year of 2014?

Kubo: Very soon, the Organizing Committee will be launched to prepare for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Prior to this, in November last year, a comprehensive cooperation agreement was signed by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Japan Tourism Agency. The IOC Charter stipulates that the Olympic host country also holds cultural programs during the Olympic Games, and so we signed the comprehensive cooperation agreement with the Agency for Cultural Affairs to contribute to the sound implementation of cultural programs. These programs will start after the close of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Following the selection of Tokyo for 2020, people in the various regions of Japan expressed renewed concern about the concentration of so many events in Tokyo, but we have assured them repeatedly that this won't be the case. So this year, I would like to take the first sure step toward regional tourism promotion and regional cultural promotion

as we prepare cultural programs for the Tokyo Olympics.

Kikuma: There was a long period when travel agencies' efforts to promote tourism consisted of introducing famous places in each locale, but travelers nowadays want to experience the lifestyle and culture in each locale as well. JATA Tourism Expo Japan, which starts this year, integrates the Japan Travel and Tourism Association's (JTTA) Tabi Fair Japan and JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase. JTTA has wide-reaching connections with various aspects of local culture, and I think it resembles the cooperation between the Japan Tourism Agency and the Agency for Cultural Affairs. JATA Tourism Expo Japan which will include many perspectives to promote tourism from multiple angles, such as local culture and traditional arts, will offer a variety of things to see starting from the first expo. Then, we will be able to attract new participants, which I think will create a big-bang type expansion for tourism.

Kubo: If you add enhancement of the aviation network and utilization of airports to the big-bang type expansion for tourism, then I think we should be able to establish and expand Tokyo as the gateway for travel to various regions, and conversely, travel to Tokyo from various regions, as we approach the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The year prior to the Olympics, during which events are being held in Tokyo, will also be an active year for travel. Currently, most foreigners who visit Japan come in through airports in the Tokyo area, so stronger functionality and expanded capacity are indispensable, but we cannot achieve those immediately. When the Private Operation Airport Bill goes into effect and changes the operations of regional airports, I look forward to everyone exercising their ingenuity to boost travel. Airports cannot operate with only unidirectional travel, and so not only the government but also industry and the local people must think deeply of ways to stimulate both inbound and outbound travel.

Kikuma: JATA is already making policy recommendations and presenting interim reports, but what I would like to emphasize as my wish for 2014 is that JATA finally actualize the points outlined in its action plan. For example, among the policy recommendations, there is one to improve the vacation system. In 2002, when the number of three-day holidays was increased by moving holidays to Mondays, the economic effects were greater than the economic effects of the World Cup held in the same year. We probably cannot make drastic improvements in the vacation system, but if we make one week or 10 days of paid vacation mandatory, we can probably expect significant economic effects not only for tourism but for a variety of sectors as well. From the angle of revitalization of local areas, even before we attract 20 million inbound foreign travelers, if domestic travel takes off, it will certainly bring benefits, and that can be accomplished without any spending by local governments.

Kubo: I think that people definitely want to live in a society where it is easy to take vacation time. After all, I think that a society where it is difficult to take vacation time is a difficult society in a variety of meanings. So, not only for the sake of economic effects including tourism but also for making society more livable, I would like for the government to focus on working on this.

Creating a Big Bang-type Expansion for Tourism!!

Toward a Momentous Year for Expansion of Inbound Japan Market and Stimulation of Outbound Market



Shigeto Kubo
Commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism



Jungo Kikuma
Chairman of the Japan Association of Travel Agents

The year 2013 was one in which JATA prepared for its next big leap forward and the Japanese government drew up an action program to make Japan a tourism-oriented country. As we kick off 2014, JATA is also expected to take proactive initiatives for creating an open path to expand the inbound market in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics, to revitalize the overseas travel market, and to enhance the environment by improving the vacation system, etc. We talked with Shigeto Kubo, commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency, and Jungo Kikuma, chairman of JATA, about their hopes for the new year, among other things.

2013: A Landmark Year When Tourism Became Part of National Policy

-----Looking back on 2013, what sort of year do you think it was?

Kubo: I think it was a groundbreaking year from the perspective of tourism administration. To propel Japan forward powerfully as a travel destination, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held the Ministerial Council on the Promotion of Japan as a Tourism-Oriented Country at the Prime Minister's Office and prepared the Action Program toward the Realization of Japan as a Tourism-oriented Country in June. Similar content was also incorporated in the Japan Revitalization Strategy — Japan is Back adopted by the Cabinet in the same month, and so tourism is positioned as an important pillar supporting the growth of the Japanese economy. In September, Tokyo was officially chosen as the location for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. The selection of Tokyo gives a powerful boost to inbound travel promotion. I am extremely pleased to be able to begin my term as commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency in such a groundbreaking year.

Kikuma: Given the fact that 18.49 million Japanese people traveled overseas in 2011, we have worked throughout 2013 to see whether or not we could gain ground toward reaching the goal of 20 million outbound travelers. However, due to political problems with China and South Korea, we unfortunately did not make the progress for which we had hoped. These are destinations that have provided very

significant growth for outbound travel over the past 10 to 20 years, and so we must take some sort of measures to sweep away the stagnation being experienced now and to put their growth back on track. Meanwhile, the long-haul destinations of Europe and the US have displayed very good growth, and this is clearly a result of initiatives by Team Europe organized by JATA and collaboration with Brand USA. On the whole, in JATA's activities overall, I think that last year was a year of preparation for a momentous leap forward in the upcoming years.

----- What do you expect to happen, specifically?

Kikuma: First, we have started the Quality Assurance System for Tour Operators to create an environment that enables JATA member companies to fully promote initiatives for outbound trips. Moreover, we are merging the Japan Travel and Tourism Association's Tabi Fair Japan and JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase into one event. We are entering an age when tourism will be spoken of passionately by people in different industries, and as an event that crystallizes and symbolizes that passion, we will hold JATA Tourism Expo Japan starting this year. Because we signed a partnership agreement with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) last year at JATA Tabihaku Travel Showcase, I expect that, through this new event, Japan will serve as a stage for transmitting information about Asia to the world.

The key to expanding both inbound and outbound travel is enhancement of the aviation network and utilization of regional airports

----- Given the trends in 2013, how would you portray the path to realization of Japan as a tourism-oriented country, and what do you think is necessary to achieve that?

Kubo: In 2013, we had 10 million inbound visitors, and in anticipation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, the government has come up with a plan to "aim for the high goal of 20 million persons." So, we will be working with the goal of reaching 20 million inbound travelers. What must we do to reach this goal? First, together with getting people motivated to travel to Japan, we must also lower the barriers to travel here. So that people do become motivated, the Japan Tourism Agency is strengthening its promotions in conjunction with JNTO. To reach 20 million, we will publicize Japan as a destination so as to rouse people's interest in Japan and will focus on areas where we have done little or nothing to lower the barriers. A way to lower the barriers is to ease visa requirements, and I want to consider which countries to focus on after we have lowered the requirements for the ASEAN countries. Another thing is the environment visitors find themselves in once they arrive in Japan. After multilingual capabilities and WiFi, the next most important thing is payment options. In regional areas, credit cards cannot be used to pay small sums, and even though payment must be made in cash, credit cards cannot be used to withdraw cash. We are currently discussing this issue with financial institutions.

Kikuma: In reaching 10 million inbound visitors, I don't think that JATA played a very large role. So, the question is how can JATA member companies participate more in