

A Group of 3,000 Japanese People Will be Sent in the Japan-China Tourism & Cultural Exchange Project during May



The press conference held on February 25th

Mr. Hiromi Tagawa, Chairman of JATA and the Executive Committee of the Japan-China Tourism & Culture Exchange Project, announced an intent to send a group of 3,000 people to Beijing and other Chinese cities at a press conference at Tokai University Koyu Kaikan at Kasumigaseki, Tokyo, on February 25th. The project is expected to give impetus to the stagnating Japanese travel to China and contribute to the expansion of bilateral exchange between the two countries.

Opportunity to reinforce efforts to increase travel to China

“While aiming at achieving 40 million in- and outbound travelers by 2020 and in order to expand the Japanese outbound travel to 20 million travelers per year, we consider the recovery of the number of Japanese visitors to China to the three-million level of utmost importance,” said JATA Chairman Mr. Tagawa, emphasizing the significance of the project.

3.97 million Japanese visited China in 2007, almost reaching the four-million mark. However, the numbers stayed at the three-million level between 2008 and 2012 and dropped to 2.88 million in 2013 and even further to 2.72 million in 2014.

Mr. Tagawa pointed out that business travel is part of the recorded visits to China and “if you take a look only at the number of visitors who booked through major travel agencies, it is clear that the holiday visits by Japanese travelers represent only 10%-plus in comparison to 2012.” He affirmed that the recovery of travel to China is a pressing matter for the Japanese travel industry.

Mr. Tagawa mentioned the summit held by the Japanese and Chinese prime ministers during last year’s APEC summit and the following meeting between Mr. Akihiro Ota, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan and Mr. Li Jinzao, Chief of the National Tourism Administration of People’s Republic of China in November. “After the officials reached an agreement to create a detailed plan for expanding the exchange between Japan and China, the number of tourism seminars organized by different Chinese regions in Tokyo have quickly increased. With the recovery of the demand for travel between the two countries in mind, this is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen tourism exchange and increase visits to China at private sector level.”

According to Mr. Tagawa, the Japan-China Tourism & Culture Exchange Project is a joint effort by state authorities and the private sector and is run under the theme of “Mutual

Exchange.” The project is considered a step towards improving relations with China, which holds the key to the recovery of the overseas travel market. The program of the visit includes meetings between representatives of the Japanese travel industry and travel-related businesses and representatives of Chinese travel agencies, Visit China Night, Visit Japan Travel Fair, and other events. There have been requests from the Japanese travel industry to the Chinese side for special visit tour programs and commercial realization of tour products including events is expected to advance.

JATA Chairman Mr. Tagawa noted that China as a country of numerous world heritage sites is considered “a traveler’s treasure box” and stressed that “through May’s visit, it is necessary to build momentum for the revitalization of travel exchange at private-sector level, re-acknowledge the merits and bring out the attractiveness of a new China.”

Expansion of exchange between Japan and China regions promoting at regional revitalization

Mr. Toshihiro Nikai, Chairman of All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA), who has played a leading role in the realization of Japan-China Tourism & Cultural Exchange Project said that “While the number of Chinese visitors to Japan has been increasing gradually, Japanese visitors to China have continued to decrease and there have been frequent requests for improvement measures made by the Chinese side.” “With the organization of the 3,000-strog tour to China, we plan to visit multiple cities and conduct opinion-exchange meetings about travel and tourism exchange between both countries,” explained Mr. Nikai.

In 2000, 5,200 Japanese visited Beijing on the “Japan-China Travel Exchange Emissary Tour 2000,” in 2002, 13,000 Japanese visited the city under the “Japan-China friendship, cultural and tourism exchange project on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations”; in 2007, 25,000 Japanese visited 19 Chinese cities under the “Japan-China friendship, cultural and tourism exchange project on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations” and we expect that even though we are aiming at sending 3,000 people under this year’s project, I expect that up to 5,000 people will eventually take part in the tour, said Mr. Nikai.

Further, Mr. Nikai expressed pride in the fact that all the participants in the above exchange projects countenanced the initiatives by traveling at their own expense. “As 3,000-plus participants will take part in this tour, we would like to show that we will continue to place importance on and maintain the relations between Japan and China in the fields of politics, economics, culture, education, sports, etc.”

Mr. Norio Yamaguchi, Chairman of the Japan Travel and Tourism Association(JTTA) which is cosponsoring the Japan-China Tourism and Culture Exchange Project said “We will invite our members – local authorities and a broad range of other public and private business organizations – to participate in the project.” There are more than 80 air routes between the two countries and airlines fly between 21 Japanese airports and a number of major airports in China. “Through this initiative, we would like to promote exchange between the local regions

Travel Industry Monthly Report

of Japan and China,” explained Mr. Yamaguchi.

The JTТА Chairman Mr. Yamaguchi also said “By promoting mutual exchange and attracting Chinese tourists to different parts of Japan, we would like to make a contribution to the revitalization of local areas.”

Aim at improving frozen relations

Mr. Shigeto Kubo, Commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency, took part in a press conference with the chairmen of the organizers JATA, ANTA and JTТА, and talked about the current project. “The meeting between Mr. Ota, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and Mr. Li Jinzao, Chief of the National Tourism Administration of People’s Republic of China set the beginning of the work on a detailed plan to expand the exchange between Japan and China. I hope that more Japanese will visit different parts of China. The Japan Tourism Agency will assist the organizers in this initiative.”

Mr. Ryoichi Matsuyama, President of the Japan National Tourism Organization said that in January this year, the number of visitors from China surpassed all past records for a 17th consecutive month. “The current of the inbound travel from China has changed completely.” At the same time, Mr. Matsuyama affirmed that the business meetings with local travel companies during the tour in May and the promotion of Japan as a travel destination to the general public in China will have a positive effect on the number of Japanese tourists to China and thus on the expansion of bilateral exchange. .

Mr. Zhao Wei, Counsellor of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Japan, and Mr. Zhang Xi Long, Director of China National Tourism Administration Tokyo Office, representing the Chinese side, also took part in the press conference and expressed their full support for the Project.

An addition, H.E. Mr. Yonghua CHENG, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People’s Republic of China, represented by Mr. Zhao, said “Japan and China are separated by only a narrow strip of water. We benefit from peace and hurt each other when we fight. Improving mutual understanding and sentiments is necessary for our field of work.” H.E. Mr. Yonghua CHENG emphasized that “In order to promote tourism and cultural exchange, it is important to work effectively to deepen mutual understanding.” He added “I am sure that the current initiative will promote the improvement of Japan-China relations and will wholeheartedly support it.”

Regarding the bilateral relations, ANTA Chairman Mr. Nikai noted “I think that China is not satisfied either.” He continued “As recent summits between our prime ministers have been conducted in icy atmosphere, our project may be considered a roundabout approach to improving bilateral relations. Yet, we are determined to make it a success.”

Overseas Japanese Travelers decreased by 10.2% in February For the first time in 19 months, a two-digit minus record

According to the preliminary figures released by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) on March 18, 1.262 million Japanese traveled overseas in February, which is a 10.2% decrease compared to the same month last year. For the first time in 19 months the decrease hovered at a two-digit level.

This is a ninth-successive-month decline which began in June

last year. The range of the decline, which shrank for a while in January expanded again increasing the feeling of uncertainty about the following months.

According to JATA’s Survey of Travel Market Trends (March 2015, 4th quarter, released on March 18), overseas DI declined by 11 points from December (-27), falling to -38. In addition to the depreciation of the yen, fear of terrorism and other concerns act as negative factors influencing customers’ willingness to travel. The index at present reveals distressing results and demand for overseas travel has not shown any improvement in February this year.

On the one hand, the number of foreign visitors to Japan in February this year increased by 57.6% compared to the same month last year, reaching 1.387 million and exceeding the record of 2014 (8.8 million) by more than 500,000. It also surpassed the monthly record of October 2014 when 1,272 million foreigners visited Japan, recording a new monthly high. This record of more than one million visits per month is the 12th consecutive one since March 2014.

Having a look at the market segments, China and Hong Kong recorded new monthly highs, and except for Russia, 19 source markets stood at record high. Especially, with the 359, 000 Chinese who visited Japan, China surpassed the number of South Korean visitors (358,000) in January, while all source markets reached new monthly highs.

According to JNTO analysis, travel promotion using the momentum gained thanks to the expansion of visa waiver programs and the tax-exemption system, as well as the continuing yen devaluation spurred the growth of inbound tourism. Travel to Japan grew also thanks to the fact that the Chinese New Year was celebrated in February and that it was a major holiday in China, a source market with large population.

2015 Visitor Arrivals & Japanese Overseas Travelers (Unit: Persons)

Month	Visitor Arrivals			Japanese Overseas Travelers		
	2014	2015	Change %	2014	2015	Change %
1 Jan.	944,009 (730,519)	* 1,298,400	* 29.1	1,253,404	* 1,238,060	* -1.2
2 Feb.	880,020 (688,902)	* 1,387,000	* 57.6	1,404,873	* 1,262,000	* -10.2
3 Mar.	1,050,559 (802,434)			1,596,751		
4 Apr.	1,231,471 (1,020,474)			1,189,132		
5 May.	1,097,211 (892,577)			1,280,765		
6 Jun.	1,055,273 (866,883)			1,289,029		
1~6 Jan.-Jun.	6,258,543 (5,001,789)			8,013,954		
7 Jul.	1,270,048 (1,080,552)			1,414,912		
8 Aug.	1,109,569 (903,919)			1,783,127		
9 Sep.	1,099,102 (846,241)			1,520,863		
10 Oct.	1,271,705 (1,029,922)			1,417,766		
11 Nov.	1,168,427			1,355,246		
12 Dec.	* 1,236,073			* 1,397,520		
1~2 Jan.-Feb.	* 1,824,029 (1,419,421)	* 2,605,400	* 42.8	2,658,277	* 2,500,000	* -6.0
1~12 Jan.-Dec.	* 13,413,467			* 16,903,388		

◆Note 1. The figures for Jan.-Nov.2014 are provisional, while * stands for the preliminary figures estimated by JNTO.
◆Note 2. Provisional and definitive figures for Visitor Arrivals are compiled by JNTO (source: Ministry of Justice), and provisional and definitive figures for Japanese Overseas Travelers are provided by the Ministry of Justice.
◆Note 3. The figures in () represent the number of tourists among the total.