

New Year's Greeting by JATA Chairman Hiromi Tagawa 2018, The Year Of Preparation

Happy New Year!

In 2017, overseas travel reached the mark of 18 million travelers despite occurring incidents and existing risks and domestic travel got on the recovery track. Inbound travel is closing in on the 30 million mark and, in general, the signs have been bright for the industry.

If we depict 2018 by using a single Chinese character, that character should be “備”, the character for “preparation”. Our industry has been heading for the “Age of Innovation” when our actions, products and services ought to match the amendments in the Travel Agency Law. This is the age when the Japanese travel industry ought to act responsibly and introduce innovations to ensure sustainable development.

Our first objective is to address the introduction of the new tourism tax in 2019. We will make a strategic proposal focusing on the further expansion of mutual exchange. Based on our perception of “exchange” as a key word, it is our belief that “an advanced tourism country is based on a sound tourism exchange”. In line with this belief, we will devise and propose a strategy to ensure that overseas travel will grow. This strategy will also enable the next generations to further strengthen the position of Japan as a leader in travel and tourism.

Next, we commit to establishing governance which will prevent the occurrence of incidents. By implementing preventive measures and governance, we will work to restore the trust in the industry.

Our third objective is the revision of the registration systems for land operators and foreign-language speaking guides. JATA has been calling for amendments to both systems which along with JATA's Tour Quality System for inbound tour operators will help maintain the high quality and volume of the inbound travel business.

The country is enjoying a sound economy. However, the travel market has matured and the diversification of sales channels is still in progress. Under these circumstances, JATA's Outbound Tourism Council has entered its second year of active work. Domestic travel along with inbound travel has stimulated the amelioration of tourism resources in the country's regions, called for a wider use of DMOs (Destination Management Organization) and advanced the improvement of the services catering to both domestic and inbound visitors. Travel agencies have begun to create distinctive products which offer higher value and unique experiences.

Tourism EXPO Japan has been growing into a “Travel Exhibition” which reflects the change of the times and the growth of tourism. With the Business Meeting in its core, it has become one of the

world's largest B to B promotion platforms and 2018 will be the year in which we will prepare for opening Tourism EXPO Japan in some of Japan's local regions. For three consecutive years world sports events will be held in Japan. The years 2019, 2020 and 2021 will see respectively the Rugby World Cup, the Olympics and Paralympics, and the World Masters Games. Each one of them will be marked a sports golden year and I believe that they will provide an opportunity to further develop sports tourism.

This year, we will be preparing for the huge changes which 2019 will bring. 2018 will be the year for "aggressive defense". 2018 should be the year in which JATA meets the huge expectations for the further advancement of the trinity of the travel industry: domestic, outbound and inbound travel.

This year again, we will rely on your guidance and support for our endeavors.

Hiromi Tagawa
Chairman

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