

JATA International News Letter

December 2025

Remarks by Mr. Hiroyuki Takahashi, Chairperson of JATA

We sincerely appreciate your continued support for JATA's activities.

We are pleased to share with you the second issue of the JATA English Newsletter.

The Osaka-Kansai Expo, which ran until October this year, welcomed a remarkable 25.57 million general visitors from Japan and abroad and concluded with great success. Pavilions from countries around the world attracted strong interest, offering visitors the opportunity to experience diverse cultures. We believe this provided an excellent occasion to inspire many people in Japan to learn more about the world and rekindle their desire to travel overseas. Additionally, the Tourism EXPO Japan — the nation's largest celebration of travel, held this year in Aichi Prefecture — welcomed an impressive 127,000 visitors, far surpassing its initial target.

This newsletter is intended to share updates on JATA's recent initiatives with the embassies, national tourism organizations, and other partners who kindly support our activities. We hope it will help deepen your understanding of our work and encourage your continued cooperation.

To make this newsletter even more informative and valuable, we also welcome your comments and suggestions.

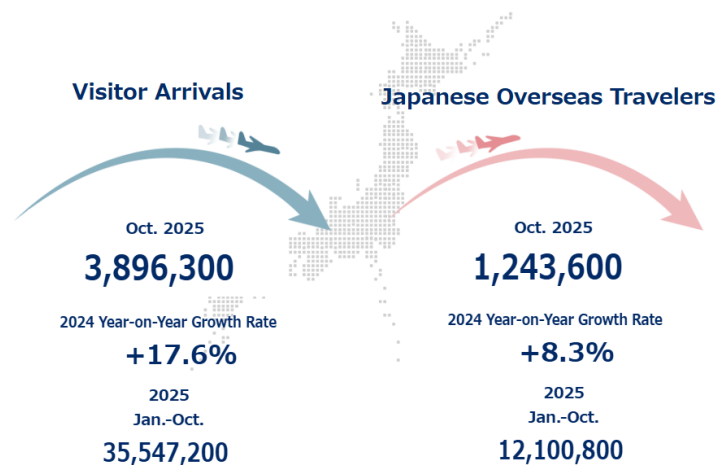
We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support and collaboration with JATA.



Hiroyuki Takahashi Chairperson
Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA)

Topics Related to the Japanese Travel Market and JATA

Visitor arrivals to Japan and Japanese Overseas Travelers (as of December, 2025)



Source: JNTO statistics.

For more details please visit: <https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--latest--figures>

JATA's Key Activities

Outbound Travel Promotion Division

The Outbound Travel Promotion Department, together with the Korea Tourism Organization, once again organized the special “Japan Day” event exclusively for Japanese visitors. This initiative was held in Haman County’s Gwehwang Village during the traditional fire festival “Haman Rakka Nori,” following last year’s successful collaboration. Located about a 90-minute drive west of Busan, Korea’s second-largest city, Haman County in Gyeongsangnam-do hosts the traditional fire festival known as *Rakka Nori*. Recognized as one of Korea’s three major fire festivals, it takes place once a year on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, celebrated as Buddha’s birthday, and attracts numerous visitors annually. The sight of countless sparks illuminating the night sky has become especially popular among younger generations for its highly photogenic, social-media-friendly appeal, and the event currently operates on a reservation-only basis.

The “Haman Rakka Nori” festival features thousands of *rakka-bō*—fire dropping sticks approximately 30 centimeters long, crafted by weaving charcoal powder with paper and cloth into rope-like shapes. These fire sticks are hung from long lines stretched around a pond, then ignited to create a breathtaking display as they burn slowly over the course of about two hours, scattering glowing sparks into the night. Interestingly, *nori* in Korean means “play,” reflecting the celebratory nature of the tradition.



A magical scene where falling sparks reflect on the water's surface (below)

Many guests were moved by the breathtaking view (left)



This year marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. To commemorate this milestone, 23 JATA member companies created special tour packages, aiming to double last year’s numbers and send approximately 1,000 Japanese visitors to the event. By incorporating exclusive experiences into the tours, the initiative sought to enhance added value while also addressing the challenge of promoting travel to regional destinations outside Seoul.

According to the Director of the Korea Tourism Organization’s Japan Regional Office and Tokyo

Office, which organized the event, “By actively promoting the event through TV, newspapers, and social media, we were able to attract approximately 1,000 visitors from Japan—double the number from last year—which I believe contributed greatly to the event’s success. In addition to enjoying *Rakka Nori*, we prepared various cultural experiences such as offering light Korean snacks like *jeon*, as well as setting up booths where guests could try on *hanbok* or experience Hangul calligraphy. These elements were designed to showcase the charm of Korea and provide our Japanese visitors with a deeper cultural experience.” They also noted that, for next year’s event, the organizers are considering expanding the viewing capacity to welcome even more visitors from Japan.

Participants shared highly positive feedback, with comments such as:

“The sensation of sparks falling from above was incredible—I want to come again.”

“It was far more magnificent than I imagined. The way the embers scattered and fell onto the water was truly magical.”

The Outbound Travel Promotion Department will continue to pursue various initiatives to further encourage outbound travel across different destinations.

Inbound Travel Promotion Division

The Inbound Travel Promotion Department participated in and exhibited at the following events in November.

1) Exhibition and business negotiations at the World Travel Market (Tour Quality Japan Booth)

From November 4 (Tuesday) ~ 6 (Thursday), 2025, JATA participated in the World Travel Market (WTM) in London, exhibiting at the Japan Tourism booth under Tour Quality Japan (TQJ).

Japan’s New Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan emphasizes the qualitative enhancement of tourism, focusing on “*Create Sustainable Tourism Destinations*”, “*Recover Inbound Tourism*” and “*Expand Domestic Exchanges*”. In this context, tour operators and DMCs are expected to play a key role by providing high-value, one-stop travel solutions that connect international markets with local regions. There is also strong demand from overseas travel agencies for introductions to reliable tour operators and DMCs with whom they can confidently do business. Specifically, the Inbound Travel Promotion Department is advancing the “Tour Quality Japan” (TQJ) certification program for tour operators that meet certain standards (details can be found on the following website):

<http://en.tour-quality.jp/>

This year, there appeared to be an increase in buyers offering IT-based travel solutions compared to last year. The booth also promoted TQJ awareness among co-exhibitors and conducted outreach to non-member JATA/ANTA companies, encouraging them to join TQJ and informing them about the TQJ online seminar. This marks the second consecutive year for TQJ’s participation in the exhibition.

2) Japan- U.S. Tourism Reception and U.S.-Japan international exchange symposium 2025

JATA attended the Japan-U.S. Tourism Reception on November 19 and the U.S.-Japan International Exchange Symposium on November 20, in Washington, D.C.

The reception was hosted by the Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., with a welcome from the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce, followed by a toast from the Commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency.

Speeches highlighted the importance of tourism, two-way exchanges, and Japan-origin travel to the U.S., especially in light of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States. The Japanese Ambassador mentioned, "Tourism is the first step to deepen mutual understanding and is the most important and enjoyable means," while the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce spoke about the 250th anniversary next year and sports events, encouraging many Japanese people to visit America. Furthermore, the Commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency stressed the importance of bilateral exchange and regional attraction. Concurrently, a booth introducing products for travel from Japan to the U.S. was set up, where many visitors showed high interest in traveling to Japan and sought specific advice for their future trips. U.S.-Japan International Exchange Symposium 2025 was held in two sessions. The first session featured international exchange organizations, while the second session included the Commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency and representatives from Brand USA, facilitating a dialogue on tourism promotion. Moving forward, efforts will continue to enhance U.S.-Japan tourism exchanges, particularly in preparation for the U.S. 250th anniversary next year.



Meeting scene at WTM



Exhibition booth at the U.S.-Japan
Tourism Exchange Reception

Domestic Travel Promotion Division

The Domestic Travel Promotion Department considers the promotion of Universal Tourism as one of its top priorities.

This initiative aims to create an environment where all travelers, including those with disabilities and the elderly, can travel safely and comfortably.

- **Background and Market Potential**

Amid Japan's rapidly aging society, Universal Tourism represents a significant potential market.

Addressing an Aging Population: With over 29% of the population aged 65 and older, it is increasingly important to provide travel support for those who may face difficulties participating.

Opportunities for Market Expansion: Developing this potential market is estimated to increase domestic travel spending by approximately 3.9%, contributing to the overall revitalization of the travel industry.

- **Key Initiatives**

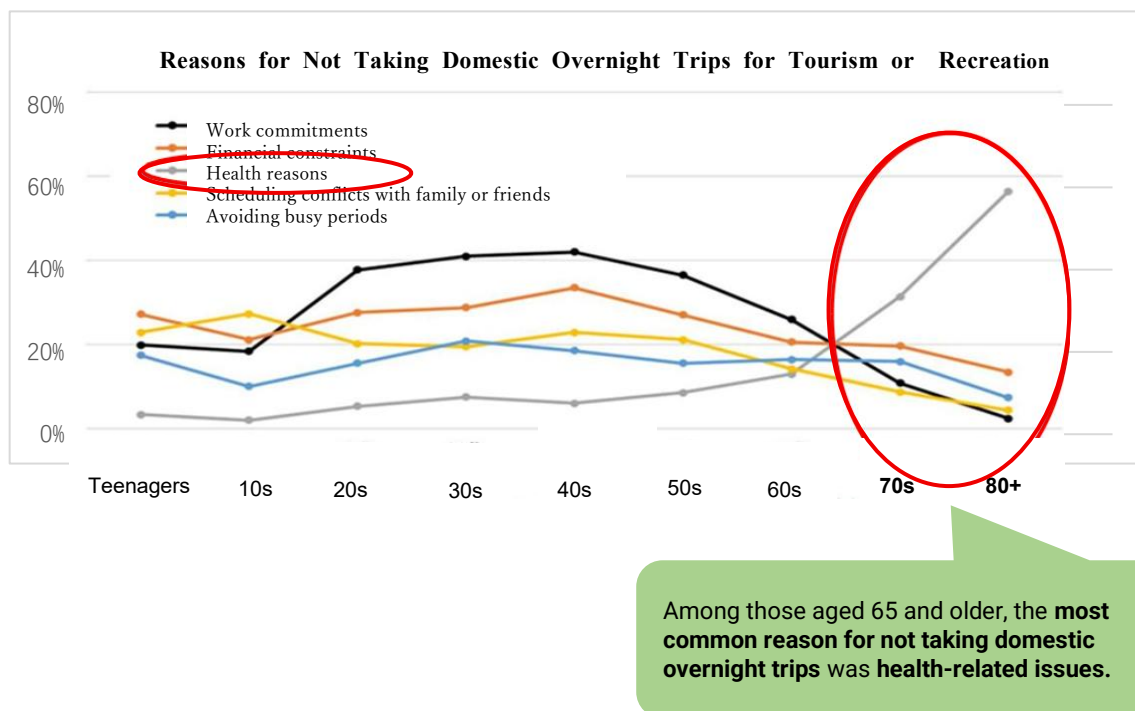
The department focuses on the following two key areas to promote the development of such an

inclusive travel environment.

- **Enhancing Knowledge and Information:** We collect and share barrier-free information to ensure that travel agencies have the correct knowledge and understanding to provide well-considered, accessible services.

- **Shifting from “Reactive” to “Proactive” Sales:** Moving away from a reactive approach focused on addressing issues or regulations, we aim to adopt a proactive strategy that actively promotes travel opportunities to all individuals, including those with disabilities or the elderly who may have previously refrained from traveling.

Through sharing best practices among member companies and providing recommendations to relevant stakeholders, we aim to contribute to the realization of sustainable tourism where everyone can enjoy traveling.



International Affairs Department

The International Affairs Department represented JATA at two major international events in November 2025. From November 7 (Friday) ~ 11 (Sunday), the department attended the 26th UN Tourism General Assembly held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This was followed by participation in the Board Meeting and General Assembly of the World Tourism Alliance (WTA), which took place in Hangzhou, China from November 18 (Tuesday) ~ 21 (Friday).

1) The 26th UN Tourism General Assembly

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UN Tourism (formerly UNWTO), and

the General Assembly was held at a milestone moment, with the election and approval of a new Secretary-General. JATA, as an Allied Member of UN Tourism, attended the Allied Members' meetings held on the first and second days.

During the meeting, UN Tourism began by recognizing members who have made significant contributions over the years. JTB Corp., also an Allied Member, received a historic commendation—the first ever awarded to a member from Japan or the wider Asia region. The recognition highlighted JTB's long-standing staff dispatch to UN Tourism, its contributions to international tourism organizations, and its extensive support and collaboration with regions around the world, particularly across Asia.

In the symposium that followed, the Saudi Tourism Authority presented an AI-powered logistics and guidance app developed for General Assembly participants, highlighting its features and benefits. Additional presentations focused on the advantages of integrating AI into tourism operations. The session continued with case studies showcasing the use of AI and other emerging technologies, followed by a panel discussion. While many potential benefits of technological solutions were introduced, participants also engaged in a candid discussion about the challenges that lie ahead.

Commencing on the third day, the General Assembly proceeded with a series of reports and exchanges of views, followed by the formal adoption of the agenda items. The principal matters of note from these proceedings are outlined below.

- 1 Ms. Shaikha Nasser Al Nuaimi of the United Arab Emirates was formally elected as the new Secretary-General for the 2026–2029 term.
- 2 It was approved that discussions will be held on the proposal submitted by China in August last year to establish a UN Tourism regional office in Shanghai, as well as on the division of roles between this proposed office and the existing support office in Japan.
- 3 The Dominican Republic has declared its candidacy to host both the Americas–Africa Regional Conference and next year's General Assembly. The country also proposed the advancement of a cooperation framework between the Americas and Africa, which was subsequently endorsed.
- 4 The “Riyadh Declaration” was adopted as the official outcome of the meeting.

During the Assembly, JATA and UN Tourism signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in tourism, including collaboration on Tourism EXPO Japan.

The next General Assembly is scheduled to be held in the Dominican Republic in Central America.

2) WTA Annual Meetings

The WTA Annual Meetings were held under the theme “Beyond Boundaries: Venturing into the Infinite Horizons of Tourism.” Prior to the General Assembly, a Board Meeting was convened, during which the following agenda items were approved. Subsequently, during the General Assembly, the results of the Board Meeting were reported and unanimously approved. The key items were as follows:

1. Confirmation and approval of the agenda
2. Appointment of the Vice President and Secretary-General
— Mr. Zheng Hao was unanimously elected.
3. Report on 2025 activities and presentation of the 2026 work plan

4. 2025 financial report and 2026 budget proposal
 - The proposed budget amounted to approximately JPY 400 million, with 50% supported by subsidies from the Chinese government.
5. Approval of new memberships and acknowledgment of withdrawals
6. Preparations for the 2025 WTA Annual Meetings

Following the General Assembly, a symposium continued through the next day. The keynote sessions featured presentations by the Director General of the Italian National Tourist Board, PATA CEO Mr. Peter Semone, a Program Coordinator from UN Tourism, and speakers from the private sector, including an international marketing firm and Mastercard's Asia-Pacific representative. Topics covered included initiatives in sports tourism (Los Angeles Tourism Board), market outlook for China in 2035 (PATA), and collaboration between tourism and education (Student & Youth Travel Association). In line with the symposium's overarching theme, many sessions highlighted how the tourism sector can transcend traditional boundaries and enhance collaboration across industries. Several practical case studies showcased efforts to enrich visitor experiences and expand service offerings. As with UN Tourism, the role of AI emerged as a key topic, with presentations featuring examples of how AI is being incorporated into tourism-related initiatives, along with discussions on the challenges that lie ahead.



UN Tourism and JATA sign an MOU



At the WTA General Assembly

Tourism EXPO Japan (TEJ)

1) Tourism EXPO Japan 2026 Exhibition Guide

Please note that due to venue renovations, the total exhibition hall space will be slightly smaller compared to the Tokyo event in 2024. If you are considering applying, we encourage you to submit your application as early as possible. We are currently offering a Super Early Bird exhibition rate until January 9, 2026 — an excellent opportunity to secure your booth space.

- Date: September 24 ~ 27, 2026
- Venue: Tokyo Big Sight
- TEJ2026 Exhibition Guide

https://www.t-expo.jp/_shared/pdf/tej2026_exhibitionguide_en.pdf

2) Travel Solution Exhibition 2026

As the TEJ's parallel B2B showcase, the two-day Travel Solution Exhibition provides business opportunities for those offering solutions focused on the tourism sector, including digital industries (automated translation, IT platforms, 5G, IoT, AR, VR, AI, location information, biometric authentication, robotics, automated driving, etc.) and community support (regional revitalization, inbound tourism, digital marketing, consulting, etc.).

- Date: September 24 & 25, 2026
- Venue: Tokyo Big Sight
- Travel Solution Exhibition 2026

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Travel-Solution-Exhibition_Info-Appication-Form.pdf

Website: <https://www.t-expo.jp/en>

Courtesy calls and visits to JATA

October 3rd (Friday)

Portuguese Vice Minister of Tourism Pedro Machado and others visited JATA headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/251003_portugal/

September 5th (Friday)

Seo Young-chung, acting president (vice president) of the Korea Tourism Organization, visited JATA Chairperson Takahashi and JATA President Ebina.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250905_korea/

August 5th (Tuesday)

Polish Member of the European Parliament Dariusz Jónski visited JATA President Ebina.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250905_poland/

July 22nd (Tuesday)

His Excellency Oguzhan Ertuğrul, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Turkey to Japan.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250722_turkey/

June 20th (Friday)

The newly appointed Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the Dominican Republic, Edward Pérez, and his delegation

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250620_dominica/

June 19th (Thursday)

Miguel Sanz, Director General of the Spanish Tourism Promotion Agency, visited JATA President Ebina along with the staff of the Spanish national accommodation facility, Parador.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250619_spain/

June 5th (Thursday)

Director General of the Polish National Tourist Office Maria Orziew

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250605_poland/

June 5th (Thursday)

Deputy Chairperson of the Cabinet of the Kyrgyz Republic, Edil Baisalov and 11 other government officials

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/250605_Kyrgyz/

<JATA's online Magazine Jatakomi>

JATA introduces the daily activities of Head Quarters and regional offices on the website.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-information/mog_jatakomi/mog_jatakomi_index/?lang=en

*The linked articles on JATA website can be translated into Japanese, English, Korean, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. If the language is not translated properly, please click the Google Translate button (see below) and select your preferred language.

For non-resident businesses,

Please select your language (English, Chinese and Korean are available)

at the above "Google translation"  button.

<For Companies Based Overseas>

Join us as an Overseas Allied member!

JATA welcomes you to join us as an Overseas Allied Member. You can get more details about the membership and application from the link below.

<https://www.jata-net.or.jp/english/whats/join-us/>

If you are looking for JATA membership for businesses based in Japan, please check the link below.

<https://www.jata-net.or.jp/page-2298/>

December , 2025

JATA International Newsletter December edition;

Written by JATA International Affairs Department

If you have any comments or inquiries regarding this newsletter please contact the following email address: int@jata-net.or.jp

Wishing you a joyful holiday season

and a happy, healthy New Year.

Thank you for your partnership and collaboration this year.



CHRISTMAS

