

JATA International News Letter

February 2026

Remarks by Mr. Hiroyuki Takahashi, Chairperson of JATA

Thank you very much for your continued and generous support of JATA's activities.

We are pleased to share with you the third issue of the JATA English Newsletter. Last month, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) released the 2025 statistics for inbound and outbound travel to and from Japan. As highlighted in the newsletter, the number of international visitors to Japan reached a record high of 42.68 million, while the number of outbound Japanese travelers totaled 14.73 million, representing a 13% increase compared to the previous year.

The Japanese government is currently formulating the Fifth Basic Plan for the Promotion of a Tourism-Oriented Nation, in which outbound travel initiatives are expected to be positioned as one of the key pillars. Although the number of outbound travelers has not yet fully recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, JATA will continue to contribute toward realizing a balanced tourism-oriented nation that integrates domestic, overseas, and inbound travel to Japan.

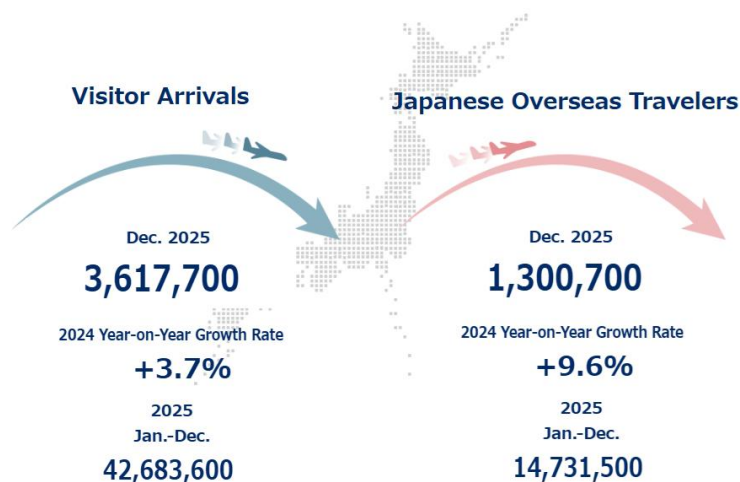
We sincerely appreciate your continued support and cooperation in JATA's activities.



Hiroyuki Takahashi Chairperson
Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA)

Topics Related to the Japanese Travel Market

Visitor arrivals to Japan and Japanese Overseas Travelers (as of February, 2026)



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

Under the leadership of JATA, the Japan Outbound Tourism Council (JOTC) Outbound Travel Promotion Subcommittee has launched a new initiative in collaboration with the Japan Oceangoing Passenger Ship Association (JOPA) and the Japan International Cruise Committee (JICC). This initiative aims to foster widespread interest in cruises and achieve the new target set by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism's "Expert Panel for the Sustainable Development of Japan's Cruise Market"—to reach one million Japanese cruise passengers by 2030. To this end, the council has launched collaborative efforts with cruise lines and travel agencies. As part of these efforts, we aim to raise broad awareness among consumers about our initiatives, allow them to experience the joy of cruising, and develop new markets centered on younger demographics. Under the slogan "Let's CRUISE 1M (Million) ~ Let's Go on a Cruise with 1 Million People! ~," we have established a new flagship logo. By encouraging its widespread use among cruise lines, travel agencies, and other cruise industry stakeholders, we will work to build momentum.

In response to numerous requests from JATA member travel agencies expressing a desire to "expand cruise sales" or "begin offering cruise packages," we hosted a webinar featuring cruise lines, national tourism organizations, operators, and travel agencies. The session introduced ship features, recommended highlights, popular tourist attractions near the port of call, and suggested products. Going forward, in coordination with developments such as the launch of new cruise ships, we will continue to discuss and implement effective measures among relevant stakeholders, and plan to expand the scope of our activities, including the implementation of promotional campaigns.

「Let's CRUISE 1M(Million) ~ Let's Go on a Cruise with 1 Million People! ~



Inbound Travel Promotion Division

The Inbound Travel Promotion Division, in co-hosting with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Japan Chapter, conducted a preview event for “Hirakuza,” a restaurant based on the concept of sumo. “Hirakuza” is a restaurant where guests can learn about the history and rules of sumo, Japan’s national sport, while enjoying a meal accompanied by demonstrations performed by former wrestlers who trained in actual sumo stables.

It opened in Osaka in 2024 and, due to its immense popularity with international visitors, opened a new location in Ginza, Tokyo this January.

A total of 30 members from JATA and the PATA Japan Chapter, including travel agencies handling inbound travel to Japan, participated in the preview event. After touring the facility and receiving an explanation from the staff, participants enjoyed a meal while experiencing a live sumo demonstration. Feedback from attendees highlighted the venue as a new nighttime entertainment option appealing to international visitors. The Inbound Travel Promotion Division will continue organizing inspection tours and seminars to support member travel agencies’ sales promotion efforts.



Explanation from the staff



Sumo Wrestling Demonstration

Domestic Travel Promotion Division

The Domestic Travel Promotion Division has decided to continue the “Let’s Stay overnight on a Weekday!” campaign in FY2026, following the announcement in our October newsletter.

Amid significant growth in domestic travel, including inbound tourism, various challenges have become increasingly apparent as barriers to achieving sustainable tourism. These include the concentration of demand during peak periods such as Golden Week, weekends, and consecutive



holidays, as well as severe congestion at tourist destinations caused by sharp increases in visitor numbers and seasonal concentration in specific regions.

As part of JATA's efforts to help address these challenges, we have been implementing this campaign since FY2024 in cooperation with our member companies. Through encouraging a shift and leveling of demand toward weekdays, we aim to alleviate congestion, enhance traveler satisfaction, and expand overall domestic travel demand.

This campaign is specifically designed for weekday travel (staying overnight on weekdays). Guests who stay overnight on a weekday will be entered into a lottery to win a coupon for their next trip. By uniting the entire industry to implement this campaign, we aim not only to alleviate congestion and level out demand but also to foster a movement promoting vacation taking. This movement will align with nationwide initiatives to encourage taking time off ("Positive Off," "Vacation Reform") and various local government efforts (such as "Learcation (learning vacation)"). Working in collaboration with all stakeholders, we will strive to address challenges and expand travel demand.

"Let's Stay Overnight on a Weekday!" Campaign Overview

- ◆Eligibility: Individuals who purchased a trip from a JATA member travel agency that includes weekday accommodations costing ¥10,000 or more per person
- ◆Application Period: First Period: April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026 / Second Period: July 1, 2026 - September 30, 2026 / Third Period: October 1, 2026 - December 25, 2026 / Fourth Period: January 4, 2027 - March 31, 2027
- ◆Prizes: 40 winners per period will receive travel coupons usable for their next trip (¥30,000 and ¥10,000 coupons, 20 winners each)

Campaign Website: <https://heijitsu.jp>

International Affairs Department

The International Affairs Department traveled to Madrid, Spain from January 19 to 24 to hold meetings with UN Tourism and observe "FITUR MADRID", one of Europe's largest travel trade fairs.

(1) Meeting with UN Tourism

At the headquarters of UN Tourism, discussions were held regarding a framework for cooperation in connection with "Tourism EXPO Japan," which will be held in Tokyo in 2026.

JATA has concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Tourism on cooperation in the promotion of tourism. Based on this MOU, JATA requested the participation of UN Tourism in the "Tourism Ministerial Roundtable" and the Opening Ceremony, both scheduled to take place on the first day of Tourism EXPO Japan.

Discussions with UN Tourism regarding the details of this cooperation are ongoing. Specific preparations will proceed once these details are finalized.

(2) Visit to the FITUR MADRID Travel Trade Fair

We also visited FITUR MADRID, one of Europe's largest travel trade fairs, held in Madrid during the same period. FITUR boasts approximately 250,000 visitors during its run, ranking among Europe's largest travel trade shows alongside WTM London and ITB Berlin. Given its location in Spain, participation was particularly strong from Spanish-speaking regions, especially Latin America, and the venue was filled with tremendous energy.

At the venue, in coordination with the Tourism EXPO Japan Promotion Office, we visited the national booths exhibiting at FITUR to promote participation in Tourism EXPO Japan and to invite countries to the Tourism Ministerial Roundtable.

In addition, while numerous seminars and symposiums were held throughout the FITUR exhibition, we participated in the "Affiliate Members Corner" symposium organized by UN Tourism. The symposium featured a panel discussion on the "A Guide for the Development of Astro Tourism," a guidebook published by UN Tourism. Participants from locations such as the Canary Islands (Tenerife), Portugal, and Mexico shared case studies and exchanged views on promoting astro tourism.

Following this, a session themed "Cross-Sector Value in Tourism" focused on the cross-sector value between tourism and other industries, with presentations delivered by tourism operators from Istanbul and other regions.

UN Tourism regularly organizes such events for affiliate members at major travel trade fairs, and JATA will use the insights gained from this participation to inform future activities.



Scene at the FITUR venue



The meeting at the venue



Affiliate Members Corner Presentation

Tourism EXPO Japan (TEJ) is Japan's largest comprehensive tourism event, aiming to "Lead the world in tourism." It brings together stakeholders from tourism-related industries to promote outbound, inbound, and domestic tourism, as well as regional revitalization.

The trade exhibition provides business opportunities, while general visitors can enjoy promotional activities and direct marketing experiences.

The 2026 event will be held from September 24 to 27 at Tokyo Big Sight. Exhibitor registration is currently open, with an early bird discount on exhibition fees available for applications received by March 13. We encourage all those considering networking and PR with tourism businesses from Japan and abroad to take this opportunity to exhibit.

Tourism EXPO Japan 2026

Dates: Thursday, September 24 to Sunday, September 27, 2026

Venue: Tokyo Big Sight East Exhibition Hall, Tokyo

For more information, please visit the URL below.

<https://www.t-expo.jp/en/exhibit2026>



Courtesy calls and Visits to JATA

January 13th (Tuesday)

Enrique Ruiz, Tourism Counselor at the Embassy of Spain and Director General of the Spanish National Tourism Board, visited JATA Headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/260113_spain/

December 18th (Thursday)

Sandun Sameera, First Secretary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, visited JATA Headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/251218_srilanka/

December 18th (Thursday)

Ambassador Farid Talibov of the Republic of Azerbaijan and others paid a courtesy visit to JATA Headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/251218_azerbaijan/

December 12th (Friday)

The Charge d'Affaires of the Republic of Namibia, Rebecca Iyambo, and others paid a courtesy visit to JATA Headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/251212_namibia/

October 31st (Friday)

Abdul Hameed of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan visited JATA Headquarters.

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/251031_pakistan/

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/

※ For courtesy visit records prior to this, please visit the JATA website.

<https://www.jata-net.or.jp/about/jata-active/courtesy-visit/visit2025/>

<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_jjatakomi/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.

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/>

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Written by JATA International Affairs Department

If you have any comments or inquiries regarding this newsletter please contact the following email address:

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