An Even More Powered-up Comprehensive Travel Event JATA Tourism EXPO Japan Continues from Last Year

In continuation from last year, the JATA Tourism EXPO Japan will be held for four days, during September 24 to 27, at Tokyo Big Sight. The first Tourism EXPO Japan held last year was a great success with 157,589 visitors in attendance, making it one of the largest travel events in the world. The EXPO displayed the power and potential of the travel industry in both B to B and B to C transactions. In its second year this year, while calling the attention of everyone in Japan and abroad to the fact that "Japan = Travel Destination," it will bring together not only the power of the travel industry but also the power of all industries and regions as it evolves into an even more powered-up, comprehensive travel event.

Buyers and Sellers Both Satisfied with Response

In creating the JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2014, not only did we merge the Japan Travel and Tourism Association's Tabi Fair and JATA Tabihaku, but at the same time, we also held the VISIT JAPAN Travel Mart (VJTM) 2014 organized by the Japan Tourism Agency and the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) as well as the VISIT JAPAN MICE Mart (VJMM) 2014. This brought together, at a single venue, business meetings on domestic travel, outbound travel, and inbound travel, creating a genuine three-in-one event.

At the Outbound Business Meetings and Domestic Business Meetings held by Japanese travel agencies and suppliers from Japan and around the world, the participants included 403 outbound sellers from 268 companies, 186 outbound buyers from 146 companies, 135 domestic sellers from 87 companies, and 67 domestic buyers from 42 companies.

In the participant questionnaire, both buyers and sellers commented on their satisfaction with the responses they received, such as outbound sellers who said, "all companies made diligent efforts at the appointments," "we had many business meetings with promising potential," and "we met potential buyers," domestic trip sellers who said, "we received positive responses and were able to determine our future direction," and "we realized that our regular PR is inadequate," outbound buyers who said, "because it is only once a year, it is a very good opportunity to have contact with the industry," and "it was a very valuable opportunity to collect information on completely new destinations," and domestic trip buyers who said, "it broadened our vision and will be useful for creating products" and "we acquired fresh information directly from destinations."

Over 30% of Attendees Have Information Collection as a Goal

In the questionnaire for attendees in the industry, regarding their purpose in visiting the EXPO, over 30% responded with answers such as "to collect broad information on overseas travel" (38.9%) and "to collect information on individual-type trips" (35.7%). Over 10% responded with answers such as "to build a sales network for the future" (11.9%), "to gather proposals for creating overseas travel products" (11.1%), and "as part of our company's PR activities" (11.1%). In response to the question on the benefits of attending, more than half commented, "our knowledge was extended" (55.6%), and others said, "we acquired information we wanted" (38.9%), "we got hints for a new business model" (12.7%), and "we broadened our network in the industry" (11.1%).

Attendees in the travel industry mentioned the following impressions: "There are events even late in the day on trade day, so we were able to take our time looking around" and "some booths included gourmet food, etc., in their presentation of tourist cities, and it was helpful to be able to experience the culture of the region." Others offered their assessments, saying, "It was good to be able to feel affinity with the sellers through face-to-face conversations at each booth" (local municipal organization personnel) and "I felt the enthusiasm for inbound travel" (marketing personnel).

Please bring your positive energy to your exhibit so that everyone can collect the latest information and create networks, together with working to expand sales channels at this event where knowledgeable travel industry professionals gather together in one location.

Event Outline of JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2015

Name: JATA Tourism EXPO Japan 2015
Dates: September 24 (Thursday) through September 27 (Sunday), 2015
Main Program: International Tourism Forum, Travel showcase, Business Meetings, Awards, and Official Events
Venue: Tokyo Big Sight (East Hall, Conference Tower), a unique venue in Tokyo
Organizers: Japan Travel and Tourism Association, Japan Association of Travel Agents

---Early-Bird Exhibitor Discount---

Exhibitors who apply by February 27 (Friday) will receive an 8% discount on the fee. Please direct applications and inquires to the JATA Tourism EXPO Japan Promotion Office (Tel: 03-5510-2004; Fax: 03-5510-2012; email: event@t-expo.jp).

2015 to Be a Turning Point Toward the Age of Earnest Overseas Travel Demand Creation

Hiromi Tagawa
JATA Chairman

At the New Year's meeting on January 8, JATA Chairman Hiromi Tagawa said that 2015 "will be an important turning point" in working toward the age of creation of overseas travel demand, and he stated ideas for conducting policy recommendations. Furthermore, given the increasing globalization, he emphasized the need for JATA to take a role in boosting the significance of JATA Tourism Expo Japan.

In response to the overwhelming victory of Japan's ruling party in the general election at the end of last year, and amidst ongoing moves to stimulate the Japanese economy, 2015 will be a year in the travel market when large-scale two-way exchanges of over 30 million travelers with outbound and inbound combined begins in earnest.

In outbound travel, the tough situation in China and South Korea continues, and the problems need to be resolved one by one. However, there are some positive signs promising improvement in the situation, such that we can expect a stable transition toward 20 million travelers annually. To expand overall demand, we in the travel industry must focus a light firmly on the outbound travel market once again.

At JATA, I want the headquarters, branches, and districts each to fulfill their roles steadfastly while strengthening collaboration and to make this year a turning point in working toward the age of creation of overseas travel demand in earnest.

In conjunction with stimulating demand, I also want to make policy recommendations steadily. I am proud to say that JATA is the only organization that can make policy recommendations for achieving 20 million outbound travelers, and so while raising awareness of the significance of overseas travel and working to promote two-way tourism, I want to expand overseas travel demand.

To stimulate the overseas travel market, together with launching a new phase in tours to South Korea centered around Seoul and based on the Mega Fam tour held last December, we must expedite specific measures for initiatives for the 50th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea. In the Chinese market, we conducted repeated studies with the Chinese at CITM last year, and in response to the Japan-China Summit Meeting, there is increasing momentum to improve relations in the private sector. In March this year, JATA will hold its Board of Directors' meeting in China and intends to hold a detailed exchange of opinions with the Chinese.

In the Japan inbound travel market which is steadily expanding, quality issues remain as a major theme. JATA must let the world know clearly about the quality assurance system for tour operators and steadily promote initiatives to boost the quality of travel to Japan.

As globalization progresses, JATA's role increases in importance. While we are proud that the overseas travel market has greatly expanded in the 50 years since deregulation, we must strengthen our collaboration with international bodies such as the UNWTO, and WTTC, and we must demonstrate Japan's presence to the world. The embodiment of Japan's presence is JATA Tourism Expo Japan, and the significance of this year's event is extremely large as its true value will be scrutinized in 2016. In Japan's economic circles overall, a share awareness has developed of Japan's flow from a tourism-oriented nation to a major tourism powerhouse. So, I think there is a need to steadily boost the significance of holding JATA Tourism Expo Japan as an event that concentrates the concerted efforts of all industries.

Outbound Japanese Travelers Down 3.3% in 2014, to 16.9 Million Exchange Population Including Inbound Travelers Reaches 30 Million

According to preliminary figures released on January 20 by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the number of outbound Japanese travelers declined 3.3% YOY to 16.903 million in 2014.

The number of outbound travelers in December 2014 dropped 5.4% YOY, to 1.397 million, marking the seventh straight month since June 2014, when the figure was down 0.8%, that the numbers have posted a decline year-on-year.

Outbound travelers in the second half of 2014 also displayed a 3.6% decline YOY, further increasing the decline following the 0.8% drop which was posted for the first half of 2014.

Looking at annual figures for outbound travel, after an 8.8% increase YOY in 2012 to 18,490,657, the figure reached only 17,472,748, a 5.5% drop YOY, in 2013. Although the amount of the decline leveled off in 2014, the result is two consecutive years of negative figures. This was the first time since 2011 that there were fewer than 17 million departing the country in a single year.

Meanwhile, the number of foreign travelers visiting Japan in 2014 increased by 29.4% YOY to reach 13,413,600, surpassing the 13 million mark for the first time. The previous year, the number of foreign inbound travelers increased by 24.0% YOY to 10,363,904, having just surpassed the 10 million mark the year before and increasing by more than 3 million in one year.

The number of inbound travelers has grown significantly, and according to JNTO's analysis, factors contributing to the expansion of inbound demand include increased demand for overseas travel accompanying economic growth in Asia as well as the spreading feeling that travel to Japan is relatively inexpensive due to the cheaper yen, in addition to the substantial relaxation of visa requirements and expansion of consumption tax exemptions.

2014 Visitor Arrivals & Japanese Overseas Travelers

(Unit: Persons)

	Visitor Arrivals			Japanese Overseas Travelers		
Month	2013	2014	Change %	2013	2014	Change %
1 Jan.	668,610 (456,009)	944,009 (730,519)	41.2 (60.2)	1,360,639	1,253,404	-7.9
2 Feb.	729,460 (559,949)	880,020 (688,902)	20.6 (23.0)	1,430,633	1,404,873	-1.8
3 Mar.	857,024 (624,502)	1,050,559 (802,434)	22.6 (28.5)	1,652,417	1,596,751	-3.4
4 Apr.	923,017 (719,277)	1,231,471 (1,020,474)	33.4 (41.9)	1,244,438	1,189,132	-4.4
5 May	875,408 (676,551)	1,097,211 (892,577)	25.3 (31.9)	1,265,170	1,280,765	1.2
6 Jun.	901,066 (720,877)	1,055,273 (866,883)	17.1 (20.3)	1,299,286	1,289,029	-0.8
1～6 Jan.-Jun.	4,954,585 (3,757,165)	6,258,543 (5,001,789)	26.3 (33.1)	8,252,583	8,013,954	-2.9
7 Jul.	1,003,032 (819,985)	1,270,048 (1,080,552)	26.6 (31.8)	1,454,281	1,414,912	-2.7
8 Aug.	906,379 (716,059)	1,109,569 (903,919)	22.4 (26.2)	1,838,683	1,783,127	-3.0
9 Sep.	866,966 (627,679)	1,099,102 (846,241)	26.8 (34.8)	1,554,254	1,520,863	-2.1
10 Oct.	928,560 (702,911)	1,271,705 (1,029,922)	37.0 (46.5)	1,495,836	1,417,766	-5.2
11 Nov.	839,891 (628,688)	*1,168,500	*39.1	1,400,278	*1,355,000	*-3.2
12 Dec.	864,491 (710,030)	*1,236,100	*43.0	1,476,833	*1,397,000	*-5.4
7～12 Jul.-Dec.	5,409,319 (4,205,352)	*7,155,000	*32.3	9,220,165	*8,889,000	*-3.6
1～12 Jan.-Dec.	10,363,904 (7,962,517)	*13,413,600	*29.4	17,472,748	*16,903,000	*-3.3

JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION(JNTO) Note:The figures in ( ) represent the number of tourists among the total.

The Increasing Importance of the Travel Industry's Role in "Regional Revitalization" Promoting Two-way Exchanges with the Synergy of Inbound Travel

Just over ten years have passed since the Koizumi Cabinet put forth its plan in 2003 to make Japan a tourism destination. Following the Tourism-based Country Promotion Basic Act and the creation of the Japan Tourism Agency, the Ministerial Council on the Promotion of Japan as a Tourism-Oriented Country was set up in 2013, and the number of foreign travelers visiting Japan exceeded 13 million persons in 2014. With initiatives for "Regional Revitalization" becoming well established, the role of the travel industry in regional tourism promotion is becoming more important. We talked to JATA Chairman Hiromi Tagawa and All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA) Chairman Toshihiro Nikai concerning the outlook for the travel industry in 2015.

-----First of all, what are your views on domestic tourism in 2015?

Hiromi Tagawa
JATA Chairman

Toshihiro Nikai
ANTA Chairman

Tagawa With inbound travel in a satisfactory state due to the tailwind it has received from the weakening yen since last year, domestic travel has also continued its solid trend. The almost daily reports on TV of foreign travelers visiting all over Japan seem to be having a boosting effect on domestic travel. The revival of the Tohoku region is indispensable to the stimulation of domestic tourism; I think that as inbound tourism extends to regional areas, there is a growing momentum for people to see their native towns in a fresh light, and a new trend is emerging from that.

Nikai This year, 2015, is when preparations start for 2020 when the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will be held, and sports tourism is expected to flourish in regional areas. With the inbound market continuing to grow, one important theme is how to ensure the safety and security of foreign travelers visiting Japan. In the plan to strengthen national resilience in which I am involved, the safety of foreigners in time of disaster is fully taken into consideration. We think of this as one part of our "hospitality" that will appeal to people overseas.

------In the "Regional Revitalization" put forward by the Abe Cabinet, tourism is likely to play a major role, but what do you think about the role of regional tourism promotion in regional revitalization?

Nikai Just over ten years have passed since efforts began to make Japan a tourism-oriented country, and now there are no heads of local governments or Diet members who don't talk about tourism. However, the reality is that we do not have a full vision of how, specifically, to proceed down the path toward the next step in order to promote Japan as a tourism destination. I think it is important to combine our efforts with regional revitalization. ANTA would like to continue to focus firmly on tourism promotion that leads to regional revitalization.

Tagawa Tourism resource treasures are sleeping in regional areas. The traditional *shitamachi* district of Tokyo is one such region. I think that regional revitalization must also be promoted even in Tokyo. To stimulate domestic travel, I want to work together with regional areas, utilizing not only the know-how inside Japan but also the experience gained in developing overseas destinations that the travel industry has accumulated over the course of 50 years, ever since overseas travel was deregulated. All six prefectures in the Tohoku region have announced a policy that focuses on the "power of tourism." Because we must spend time working on tourism promotion not just in one area but across a wide area, we need to take a longer-term perspective. By all means, I would like for the regional revitalization being advanced by the government to continue as a long-term measure.

-----Inbound foreign visitors coming to Japan are rapidly increasing, but meanwhile, circumstances are tough in outbound travel from Japan to China and South Korea, which are vital sources of inbound travel to Japan. What are your thoughts on the development of two-way tourism?

Nikai In February, I will lead a delegation of about 1,000 people to South Korea. It is not very well known that South Korea is a country with deep connections with Japan. Because Japan and South Korea are very close countries, there is any number of ways to speak ill of one another if one wants to, but that would be very counterproductive. If we recall the long history of exchanges between Japan and South Korea and talk about instances in current Japan-South Korea exchanges that are heartwarming to both countries, then we should be able to build a great relationship. As travel industry organizations, both JATA and ANTA should work together on building such a relationship. In May this year, a delegation is scheduled to go to China, and precisely because we are in a difficult period, I want us to seize the chance to build stronger bonds and to move forward.

Tagawa I think we should launch efforts this year to build good relationships with both China and South Korea on a double track, i.e., in both the public and private sectors. Last December, JATA led a Mega Fam tour with 1,000 participants to mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary since the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea, and we spread out in groups through the "regions," which South Korea has made a keyword, to conduct local visits. We hope to actively encourage the Japanese travel market so that there are tours to South Korea available all year during this milestone year. China is the site of JATA's board of directors meeting in March this year, and we will have detailed discussions with the Chinese concerning stimulation of demand for tours to China. We intend to make this a milestone for the expansion of the market. With the cooperation of ANTA and JATA, we must expand the channels for two-way exchanges through the synergistic effects of outbound and inbound travel.