



# *JATA International Newsletter*

*January 2021*

## **Chairman Sakamaki's Reflections on Travel, Life and the Way Forward**

We are in the middle of the second State of Emergency. As the pandemic continues and travel and tourism are on hold, it is important that we maintain the motivation of our staff and the interest in travel of our customers. By utilizing technology JATA and its member companies continue to organize virtual tours and other online travel events, bringing the beauty of overseas destinations to the Japanese market.



The pandemic has given us the time to think about this and deliver our message to the public. History, culture, cuisine, nature... we now have the time and the means to increase the awareness and spread the word about what is awaiting once overseas travel becomes possible again.

Our first priority at this time is not only to maintain but also to elevate our customers' motivation to travel so that both the industry and the customers are ready when the borders open.

Another priority is to set up standards and protocols for safe travel and engage the travelers in their thorough implementation. As the industry is preparing to offer managed group tours, it is important that we work to broaden the awareness and

personal responsibility of the travelers. Personal protection should go hand in hand with the responsibility of protecting the people around us.

But most importantly, in times like these, we should remember the basic objective of our work: bringing wellness and smiles into people's lives by showing them new worlds, new cultures and enabling them to gain new experiences. Now, more than ever, we should strive to achieve this as we prepare for the better times to come.

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The power of travel: towards a world full of smiles...

**Below, find the impressions shared by the students in the video.**

I thought we wouldn't be allowed to travel. But we were!

Our school trip was postponed because of the pandemic, but eventually, we made it!

All the fun we had and all the memories we made were worth waiting for.

I am grateful to all my classmates.

I am grateful for the peaceful times we live in.

I am grateful for my health.

I am grateful for my family.

I am grateful for my friends.

I am overwhelmed with gratitude.

We had to refrain from talking but it didn't stop us smiling.

Even if you are unsure of yourself, you only need to try! Then you realize how much you can do.

I laughed from the bottom of my heart!

We met many exchange students. Next is meeting them in person!

My motivation got stronger.

This was a well spent day. It made me think about a myriad of things.

I understood how important real-time, in-person experience is.

My heart is filled with gratitude.

This trip will always be a part of me.

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## Travel and Tourism during the pandemic

### Go To Campaign: put on hold

As the winter season settled in and the Covid-19 infections increased, the Japanese government announced a second state of emergency for Tokyo and four of its neighboring prefectures on January 7 and a week later, on January 13, included 7 more prefectures, bringing the total number of regions in SOE to 11. The government also put on hold the Go To Travel Campaign, which was meant to support local businesses by providing subsidies to domestic travelers. During the first part of the campaign, from July 22 till December 23, 2020 the campaign resulted in 66 million overnights.

More information on border control during the state of emergency is available [here](#).

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## Recovery timeline



The second state of emergency has stalled the negotiations of the Japanese government for opening travel corridors. Overseas and inbound travel at present is non-existent as the borders remain open only to residents of Japan. The second state of emergency will be extended till the end of February, further aggravating the predicament the travel industry is in. The government is preparing to roll out a vaccination program as the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games approach. Initial international travel from and to Japan is expected to resume based on bilateral agreements summer of this calendar year.

Although the conditions remain to be determined the overseas travel is expected to restart through managed tour packages. JATA is working for the start of “managed tours” by exchanging information and collaborating with the Japan Tourism Agency.

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## JATA activities

The Go To Travel Campaign is a domestic-travel stimulus program which aims at bringing travel back to life. As the government announced the second state of emergency, the travel industry faced yet another survival challenge. JATA is working on a proposal for preparations for resuming the suspended Go To Campaign as soon as it is deemed possible based on the COVID situation.

## Tourism Expo Japan

私の旅は、次のステージへ。



**Dates:** November 25 - November 28, 2021

**Venue:** INTEX Osaka

**Number of exhibition booths:** 450

**Expected visitors:** 27,000

After the seamless execution of Tourism EXPO Japan (TEJ) 2020 in Okinawa, the Japan Association of Travel Agents, the Japan Travel and Tourism Association and the Japan National Tourism Organization will hold Tourism EXPO Japan 2021 in Osaka, the gateway to the second largest source market in Japan. The expo will take place from November 25 to November 28, and will feature business meeting sessions, forum & seminars, and the Japan Tourism Awards. The 5<sup>th</sup> TEJ Ministerial Round Table in collaboration with UNWTO is scheduled to be held on November 25 in Osaka. The tentative program includes also a Travel DX Solutions Exhibition, and the VISIT JAPAN Travel & MICE Mart (VJTM) 2021.

**The Early bird discount** is available till March, 31 and the applications will close on July 31.



## The Newsletter VIP Interview

**Interview with H.E. Mr. Singtong Lapisatepun, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand in Japan**

**Q1: Ambassador Lapisatepun, the pandemic has stalled the travel exchange between Thailand and Japan. With the view that the pandemic will come to an end later this year, we would like to ask you about how you envision the future of Thailand as a travel destination?**

Approximately 20% of Thailand's GDP comes from tourism. Since 1/5 of our GDP comes from travel and tourism, the COVID-19 pandemic hit not only the Thai travel industry but also the economy as a whole. This impact called for governmental measures which could help to restore the move so that the economy could begin growing again. We are still in the middle of the pandemic, but our government has created policies and strategies to help the industry. Similar to the Go To Campaign, the Thai government has granted subsidies to travelers as well as the hospitality and other related industries to stimulate domestic travel. Most recently, we are promoting "Workation Thailand," aiming at encouraging people to practice "working, outing and meeting from somewhere". As for inbound travel, we have all the safety protocols in place: PCR testing and 14-day state quarantines for inbound visitors and returning Thai nationals.

The foreign visitors can quarantine at 4 or 5-star hotels which are registered with the government. The visitors need to stay in the hotels for 14 days and undergo PCR tests but they can work remotely and also enjoy the hotel environment on a schedule. Once the quarantine is over, they are free to go anywhere in Thailand. At present, the traveler is required to apply for a COE (Certificate of Entry) to enter into Thailand. Currently, we issue all visa categories. Since now one-week vacations are not possible, we have created a framework which facilitates longer stays for people who can work remotely or can take long holidays. We implement a 45-day tourist visa exemption scheme for various countries so that the visitors can still spend 30 days exploring the country after their quarantine is over. We are also working with the Thai Airways and some Japanese airlines, namely ANA, JAL and ZIPAIR, to arrange weekly flights for Thais and Non-Thais. This month, we also introduced a Golf Quarantine (GQ) program, which allows visitors a choice to quarantine in a resort which has a golf course and play golf according to a pre-established schedule. We have also introduced the Amazing Thailand Safety & Health Administration (SHA) Certificate for the hotels and restaurants which are open and accept customers. This helps the customers feel secure and confident, and indirectly encourages them to travel.

**Q2: How do you evaluate the Japanese travel market as a source market for Thailand?**

The Japanese market is one of our largest markets in terms of numbers. In 2019, there are nearly 1.8 million Japanese visited Thailand. On the other hand, almost 1.3 million Thai visited Japan. Culturally, Japan and Thailand have a lot in common, we share many values. We value Japanese as "Quality tourists". We have many repeaters and based on our observation from recent anniversary events, many Japanese tourists miss Thailand. We are going to arrange a virtual flight with Japan Airlines in March for the people who are the most eager to visit Thailand again.

**Q3: What is the process which Thailand has been going through in order to begin accepting Japanese visitors again?**

The Thai and Japanese governments have negotiated an agreement on a bilateral travel bubble but the second wave of COVID-19 infections hit and we haven't made much progress. However, Thai nationals are allowed to enter Japan through a

residence track and we are fully open to Japanese visitors. Although we require a Certificate of Entry (COE) in addition to a visa, Thailand accepts tourists and business visitors. Last year, because of the pandemic, we suspended the 30-day visa exemption for Japanese tourists but now, we have renewed the exemption and have extended it from 30 to 45 days so that the visitors have one month after the quarantine is over.

**Q4: How long do you expect the recovery of the Japanese tourism to Thailand to take?**

Now, as the vaccines are coming, we think that travel may resume in the third quarter of this (calendar) year. It will depend on the infection control in each country but we are keen to resume the movement of people. During the Olympics and Paralympics, there will be few Japanese to travel to Thailand. In 2020, only 300,000 Japanese visited Thailand and this figure is made up mostly by the number of visitors in January. Our Tourism Authority of Thailand hopes to have the same number in 2021. Hope the prospect will be good this year although there are still many unknowns.

**Q5: Which organizations, in addition to Tourism Authority of Thailand are leading the recovery of the travel and tourism in your country?**

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has been very active in promoting MICE travel and the attractiveness of Thailand in Japan. In the private sector, we have the Thai Hotel Association which also plays an important role. There are guidelines and standards for preventive measures during the pandemic set forth by the association. We believe that the members of the Thai Travel Agents Association (TTAA) will be very active in the recovery of travel exchange between Japan and Thailand. Another organization is the Thai-Japan Tourist Association which works with a number of Japanese trade and business organizations. Unfortunately, the airlines are in a much harder predicament now but Thai Airways now have three flights a week from Tokyo to Bangkok and one flight a week from Osaka.

**Q6: What lessons should the travel industry extract from the current situation?**

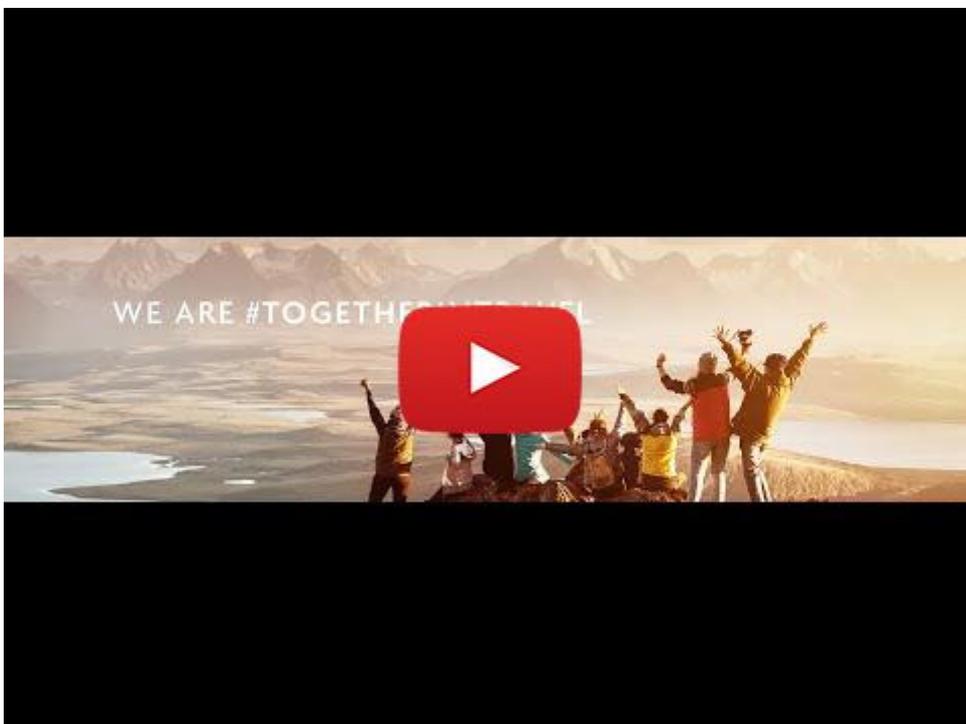
One of the positive impacts of the pandemic is the restored balance of our natural habitats. The wildlife is back, beaches and forests are cleaner now. This is the time for us to reconsider the importance of quality over quantity and see how we can manage the industry so that the balance between healthy natural environments, economic stability and people's wellbeing can be maintained. This is also, I believe, the road to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In Thailand, we have to reconnect with our environment in a new way which can help us reduce the use of natural resources and materials. The new policies will be different for every country but this "new normal" is indeed the way forward.

**Q7: Do you have a favorite pastime in Japan? A favorite place to visit? Favorite food?**

I love Japan's four seasons and how every park, every location changes its colors and atmosphere with the seasons. Okutama, Mt. Takao and many other places close to Tokyo are incredibly beautiful throughout the year. I love to taste local delicacies, regional cuisines, everywhere I go in Japan. I particularly love strolling through port towns like Minato-machi in Yokohama, Hakodate in Hokkaido or Kobe because I enjoy

the specific atmosphere, architecture, culture and the history of these places. They are not present anywhere else.

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