

experience
Japan





Japan

One look at the growing visitor numbers confirms it: Japan is a hot destination for business and leisure, as well as meetings and incentives. With a constantly improving infrastructure — not to mention a wealth of natural beauty and world-famous dedication to quality service — Japan is perfectly positioned to be a planner's dream destination.



THE JAPAN ADVANTAGE

Hotels and developers have taken note too. In recent years, there has been a boom in growth that has introduced more accommodation, meeting and venue options than ever before — in a variety of destinations and price categories. And with a favorable exchange rate and easy access from North America, the time has never been better to plan an event in Japan.

A DIVERSE DESTINATION

A collection of four large islands and thousands of smaller ones, Japan is a diverse country that offers countless choices for meeting and incentive planners. From the natural beauty of its soaring mountains and sunny shores to the glistening sophistication of its modern cities, this Pacific nation offers ideal settings for groups of every size.

Indeed, Japan's amazing contrasts are a big selling point. A group may gather in one of the world's most advanced convention centers and stay at one of the top luxury hotels in the Asia Pacific region, but they are never far from stunning natural settings — whether it's an idyllic beachfront, a lushly forested mountain region, or just a meticulously maintained city park dotted with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.

GREAT SERVICE, GREAT EXPERIENCES

No matter where they go in Japan, participants will be treated to the things that make it such



— a unique and worthwhile destination — including the nation's renowned high quality of service, which will make any group feel special. Groups can count on being in a safe environment; Japan is recognized around the world for its low crime rate.

Groups can also witness — and even participate in — a variety of fascinating traditions that date back centuries. Whether it's a kabuki performance, a sumo match, or noh (Japan's oldest form of musical drama), guests are sure to be entertained.

Planners can also choose from a wide array of venues for special events — including impressive museums, art galleries, historic sites as well as outdoor locations with views that truly inspire. Japan's tasty local cuisine — not to mention its international offerings — are sure to delight any palate.



The Japanese government is dedicated to growing the international meetings market, and has designated a large number of official International Convention Cities (ICCs), which meet strict criteria for hosting international events. The private sector has been equally diligent in creating a world-class range of options for meeting and incentive planners.

Once the meetings are done, participants can choose from countless reasons to extend their stay. With its four distinct climates, big cities, small towns, beaches and mountains, there is something to please every taste.

ECO-FRIENDLY EVENTS

Japan's meetings market is also committed to ecological responsibility and staying green. Many hotels have set up teams to deal with issues related to conservation and the environment, and have made great progress in recent years — monitoring and increasing energy conservation, waste reduction and purchasing of environmentally friendly materials and products.

These properties have come up with ingenious ways to stay green while creating the perfect setting for groups and meetings — including solar-powered illumination systems that provide for evening lighting, rooftop greenery that is designed to reduce global warming, and other techniques. In addition, existing hotels are remodeling to be more eco-friendly, and new hotels are built to the strictest environmental guidelines.



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All of this hard work is obviously paying off. Some 313 Japanese hotels and inns are currently listed with the Green Purchase Network, an eco-oriented organization that requires properties to meet 89 prerequisites for protecting the environment.

City's governments and convention centers are also paying attention, increasing their efforts to recycle and reduce waste. This means that events of every size can have less environmental impact, from the initial planning stages through the event itself and the cleanup afterwards.

THE CLEAR CHOICE

In short, Japan offers planners more choices than ever before, and an incredible diversity that may surprise some people. With its strong dedication to quality of service, world-class amenities and also ecological responsibility, Japan is poised to become even more prominent within the international meetings and incentives market. This guide provides details about the exciting options that await planners in Japan.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PLANNING IN JAPAN

Legendary destinations are bound to garner some unfounded misconceptions, and Japan is no exception. These misunderstandings might keep some planners from seriously considering Japan as a destination for their meetings and incentive trips — but those in the know are aware of the truth behind the myths. Here are a few of the facts that any planner should know about Japan.

JAPAN IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Sure, it may seem like a far-away land, but Japan is really an easy trip from just about anywhere in North America. There are more nonstop flights than ever before from multiple U.S. gateways — in fact, a trip to Japan is often faster than a flight to Europe, the Middle East and Australia, not to mention cities on the Asian continent. Attendees in California, for example, land in Japan faster than they could ever get to Italy. Travelers boarding a nonstop flight from New York City will touch down in Tokyo in just about the same time they could get to Honolulu.

Arrival is an efficient experience for groups of any size. Japan's three largest



international airports — Tokyo's Narita, Osaka's Kansai and Nagoya's Centrair — are all modern facilities that are close to some of the most popular meeting destinations. They also offer convenient domestic flight and bullet train connections to other convention cities and incentive hotspots throughout the nation.

JAPAN SPEAKS YOUR LANGUAGE

Anyone who hasn't studied Japanese may be a bit intimidated by perceived language barriers before they visit. But those fears are quickly put to rest upon arrival. Japan is a forward-thinking, global-minded destination where the English language has become a commonplace means of communication. Studying English is mandatory in schools, and professionals in many fields go on to take even more courses, assuring that there is always someone nearby who speaks your language. Tourism and meeting professionals are multilingual and eager to assist and even signage is increasingly multilingual, making it possible to navigate the largest cities with ease.

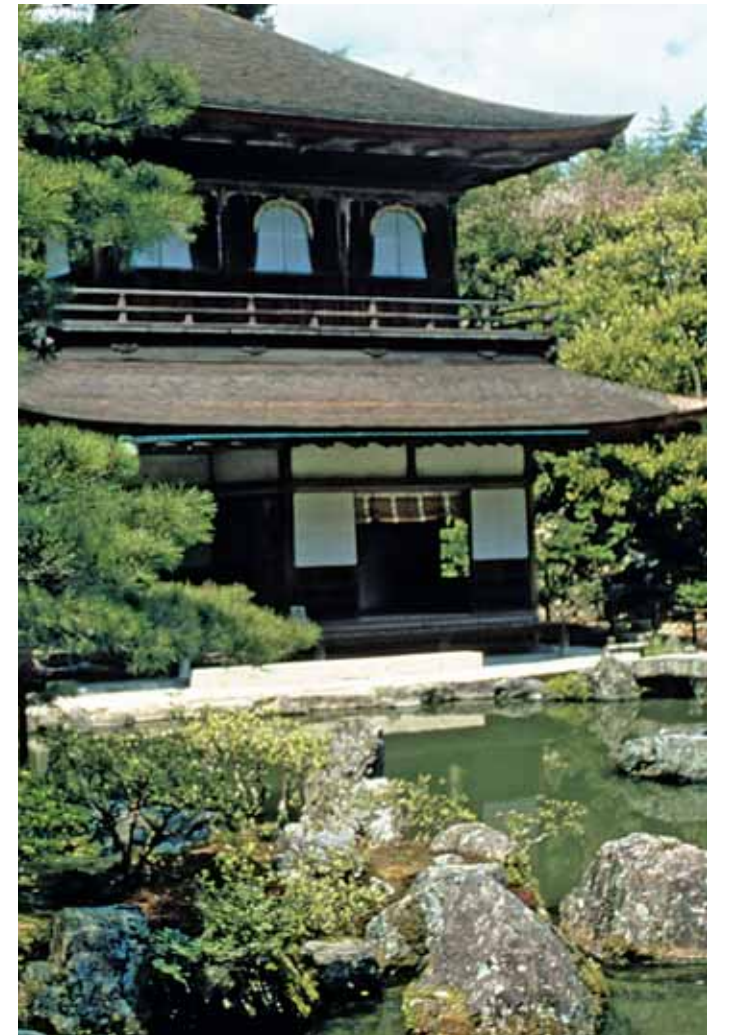
Of course, translation services are readily available to help any business interaction go as smoothly as possible — and multilingual tour guides are always ready to make every group activity a success.

JAPAN IS AFFORDABLE

Years ago, some travelers coming home from Japan loved shocking their friends and family with stories of incredibly high prices on everything from soda pop to taxi fares. Happily, those tales have been out of date for more than a decade. The yen is stable, and exchange rates are especially favorable for visitors from North America. Keep in mind that additional savings come from some of the unique aspects of Japanese society: there is no tipping ever — not for meals, taxis or any other service. Hotel bed taxes are low or non-existent in nearly every city. And with the value you get in Japan — unrivaled service and quality in all products and services — the level of satisfaction is particularly high.

JAPAN HAS A SEASON FOR EVERYONE

Many of the nation's most popular regions lie within a temperate area that experiences four lovely seasons. Japan is delightfully diverse, and its four distinct climates offer a variety of choices throughout the year that range from subarctic to subtropical. Think of the range of climates that stretches between Montreal and Cancun, and you'll have a good idea of Japan's amazing year-round diversity. Whether your group favors a stroll among the springtime cherry blossoms, catching some sun on glorious sandy beaches, or hiking to the top of snow-capped mountains, Japan has a destination to fit the bill.



Japan

Robin Hulsey, assistant vice president,
administrative services, National Western
Life Insurance Company, Austin, Texas



WORD OF MOUTH

It's easy to find destinations that tout their many advantages for meeting and incentive planners. But perhaps the best way to learn what Japan is really like is to hear it from the planners themselves.

National Western Life Insurance Company stages a two-tier incentive program every year. The company decided to hold its 2008 sales conference in Tokyo, with an estimated 500 attendees. After the conference, about 220 of the participants will continue to Kyoto for the company's 2008 Champions Club event. Hulsey has already traveled to Japan to research facilities and venues.

Q: WHAT DO YOU FIND UNIQUE ABOUT JAPAN?

A: Japan is unique in so many ways. I personally had some incredible experiences, from my first formal tea ceremony to my first public bath. I certainly ate some things I would have never considered eating previously and discovered both hot and cold sake. There is something for everyone in Japan. If you do not like typical Japanese food, try the delectable Kobe beef, or anything from French and Italian to hamburgers and pizza.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY LANGUAGE PROBLEMS WHILE TRAVELING IN JAPAN?

A: With a little help and guidance, I think most people can get by just fine in Japan. Most of the signs in train stations and subways are written in English and the photos on their menus are very helpful. However, going there with absolutely no assistance might be difficult. Our group is from several countries around the world and in addition to English we have Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese and Russian speakers, so this may prove to be challenging.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE HOTELS YOU'VE VISITED?

A: I was very impressed with the hotel options. As a general rule, the rooms are smaller than in the States, but they are larger than I expected and very adequate. Getting availability of dates was difficult, and many hotels will not book function space until a year out. I usually book hotels 18 months prior to the event. I also book directly, but I decided to contract through a destination management company, since they have extensive knowledge of the hotels and more experience in working with Japan. It was a surprise to discover that verbal contracts are the norm for many Japan businesses. Needless to say, this causes concern to us contract-sensitive Americans, but so far we have managed to reach agreements that satisfy both parties.

Q: HOW HELPFUL HAVE THE CVBS AND TOURIST ORGANIZATIONS BEEN FOR YOU?

A: The Japan National Tourist Organization and various local convention and visitors bureaus and a DMC were all so professional and helpful. I cannot express my gratitude for all of their valuable assistance and insight. They assisted with preparing for my site visit, completed a comprehensive grid of the hotels I was to visit, and accompanied me to assist with translations and all of my questions. Their help and guidance made my site visit to Japan very successful and provided the tools I need to help make our 2008 incentive program a success.

Planning for the Japan conference has been both frustrating and rewarding. In some ways it has been the most challenging and in other ways I have never received a warmer reception or more assistance. Like the country itself, planning for the conference has been an exercise in contrasts.



Dr. Robert King, director of conference services,
American Academy of Advertising, Richmond, Virginia

The American Academy of Advertising recently established a series of Asia-Pacific conferences to complement its annual conference series in North America. Its very first in the series was held in 2001 in Japan, and the organization returned again in 2003.

Q: WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE JAPAN FOR YOUR FIRST ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE?

A: It was Japan's comparative "mystique" that contributed to its selection for our first 2001 event in the region. Subsequently, I was delighted by the level of support and understanding given to us by staff members at a local convention and visitors bureau and also a local convention center in planning our event. We could not have hoped for greater cooperation. Two words characterize my reaction to Japanese work ethics: cooperation and accuracy. Obviously, business practices in Japan differ somewhat from those in the U.S., and this was my first experience in Japan...but from the beginning, there was a mutually shared feeling of trust and confidence among us.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY LANGUAGE OR COST PROBLEMS DURING YOUR EVENT IN JAPAN?

A: We initially — and incorrectly — expected distance, cost and language barriers to be obstacles. But cooperation from local convention bureau, combined with careful cost control by our association, basically eliminated these potential problems. Also, we offered our Japanese event as a "package" to our attendees, much like an organized tour. In effect, we cared for our attendees to the degree that costs and language concerns were largely absent.

Q: DID ATTENDEES GET TO SEE A LOT OF THE COUNTRY AND EXPERIENCE JAPANESE CULTURE?

A: Most of our American participants limited their stay in Japan to only two or three days beyond the schedule of our conference, although a small number enjoyed extended travel. Since most of our attendees were first-time visitors to Japan, we deliberately included some limited touring and cultural events in our program. I believe that our personal experiences encouraged and prepared us for more extended travel in Japan on our next visit there.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF PLANNING AN EVENT IN JAPAN?

A: We were extremely pleased with our first experience in Japan. Attendance exceeded our expectations, and I heard only words of praise for the facilities and events. From this planner's point of view, it was a delight to find initial cost estimates to be absolutely on target. There were no bad surprises. We were so pleased with the outcome of our initial experiences in Japan that we returned to the same venue in 2003, with equally good results.



Japan

MORE THAN YOU'D EXPECT: JAPAN'S RESORT GETAWAYS

Ask the average person to picture Japan in their minds, and they might conjure an image of super-modern cities and ancient temples, perhaps graced with delicate cherry blossoms. But when it comes to resort getaways for meeting and incentive planners, Japan offers much more.

Japan's distinct climates and diverse regions allow planners to choose the perfect atmosphere perfect for every group, during every season of the year.

In short, Japan probably offers more than you'd expect — all year long.

REJUVENATING WATERS

It's only natural that following a long meeting or convention, people want the chance to relax. And one of the best places to wind down and rejuvenate in Japan is at any of the more than 1,800 hot spring spas that dot Japan's countryside.

Called onsen, Japan's hot springs are the result of a centuries-old tradition that provides welcome respite from today's fast-paced lifestyle. Some onsen feature indoor o-furo (baths), with hot-spring waters piped indoors, or else outdoor pools called rotenburo.

The most popular onsen resort in Hokkaido is Noboribetsu, set among boiling mud pools and sulfuric geysers. Another popular choice near Sapporo is Jozankei Spa. Spas near Tokyo include Hakone, Atami, Ito, Kinugawa, Nasu, Nikko and Shiobara.

The Izu Peninsula, south of Hakone, is another popular area for onsen, backed by the Amagi Mountain range and a dramatic volcanic landscape.

Onsen are frequently part of the experience at ryokan, the traditional Japanese-style hotels that are a great way to enjoy culture and tradition. With excellent service and comfortable accommodations, they are a great complement to the onsen. And attendees are sure to leave feeling fully refreshed.

THE RYOKAN EXPERIENCE

For a luxurious, comfortable — and truly authentic — alternative to Japan's large international hotels, consider arranging a stay in a ryokan, or Japanese inn. These simple yet elegant properties offer excellent service and a unique experience that can't be duplicated anywhere else in the world.

During their stay, guests at a ryokan enjoy attentive service, beautiful décor and gourmet cuisine, expertly presented. Accommodations usually consist of a large room with a rice-straw tatami mat floor. A kimono-like robe, called a yukata, is provided, and can be worn outdoors as well as in place of pajamas. Sliding shoji screens separate rooms, and décor most likely consists of lovely ink brush drawings. In the evening, maids lay out the comfortable futon bedding for each guest.



© Japan Ryokan Association

A ryokan's room design is such that guests can enjoy the scenic views from the windows every season — new life in spring, greenery in the summer, foliage in the fall, and snow-capped mountains in the winter. Bathrooms at luxury ryokans are designed to make bathing in rejuvenating waters (called onsen at hot spring resorts) a heavenly event of a day. Dinner and breakfast is often included with a visit to a ryokan, and many are located in some of the most beautiful areas of

the country and small villages — but they are easily accessible from all the major city centers.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES, MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Japan's unique culture and traditions — a delightful combination of both ancient and modern influences — always seem to fascinate foreigners. And one of the best ways to create an unforgettable meeting or event is to give attendees the opportunity to do more than just see Japan — with proper planning, they can really experience it.

Luckily, arranging this is easy, thanks to the many companies, DMCs and even hotels that offer group and individual classes, programs and tours that get visitors involved in local culture and traditions, in a hands-on way. Participants can learn about traditions as varied as Ryukyu glass making, ceramics, weaving and dying. And cooking classes can help groups unlock the secrets of the varied styles of Japanese cuisine from around the country.

Attendees looking for inner peace after a hectic schedule of meetings can consider a program

OTHER EXAMPLES OF MEMORABLE EVENTS:

- Charter a boat to experience a Japanese traditional event, Cormorant Fishing on the Nagara river.
 - Enjoy a Yakata bune (roofed boat) run on Sumida River in Tokyo. These can be rented for an event and party.
 - Host a Japanese-themed Matsuri Night, where the emphasis is on casual fun in a summer festival atmosphere, complete with mini-demonstrations, games and food.
 - Participate in a traditional cooking class and sake tasting in Kyoto and Tokyo.
 - Enroll in martial arts and Japanese performing arts classes at Kyoto Machiya and appreciate the spiritual wisdom behind the arts.
- In Japan's major cities, DMCs can arrange for just about any type of group activity or excursion.

that highlights the basic principles of Zen. Groups can also participate in Zen meditation sessions, as well as enjoy Zen cuisine and calligraphy classes.

A similarly rewarding way to enjoy Japanese culture is by participating in a Japanese tea ceremony, a traditional ritual with roots in Zen Buddhism. A variety of other disciplines come into play during the ritual — which is led by a seasoned expert — including Ikebana flower arranging, incense and ceramics — and many DMCs and hotels offer these programs for foreign visitors and groups.



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HITTING THE SLOPES

With soaring mountains and challenging yet beautiful terrain, Japan offers excellent opportunities for ski enthusiasts, as well as group members who appreciate natural beauty plus the luxury and comfort of top-notch ski resorts. Major resorts dot the mountains of both Honshu and Hokkaido islands. The Japan Alps, a chain of volcanic peaks that run north to south through Honshu, offer some of the best places to enjoy the scenery, services and excitement.

Nagano, which landed firmly on the world map when it hosted the 1998 Winter Olympics, offers challenging winter skiing and snowboarding as well as excellent summertime walking and hiking. Hakuba, a magnificent resort complex, is easily accessible from Tokyo and attracts active travelers throughout the winter and even into the early spring. Shiga Kogen offers exciting challenges for skiers of every experience level. On Hokkaido, the Niseko resort area includes stunning views of Mt. Yotei-zan.

Skiing and hiking are a rewarding experience in this uncrowded region. During a dry and comfortable summer, it becomes the perfect destination for water sports such as rafting, canoeing and kayaking.

SUNNY, SUBTROPICAL AND SUBLIME

Japan's thousands of miles of coastline offer groups ample opportunity to enjoy the sun and sand.

One of the most popular beach destinations — not only for Japan but for all of Asia — is Okinawa, the only subtropical region on Japanese soil. Once home to the kingdom of Ryukyu, Okinawa today is as popular for its leisure activities as for its excellent meeting facilities. It boasts beautiful weather, inviting stretches of sand, impressive coral reefs and an extensive meeting and group infrastructure that includes conference facilities and resort hotel complexes.

Miyazaki in Kyushu Island offers everything from convention facilities and luxury accommodations to golf courses, spas and hot springs. The Phoenix Country Club, designed by Tom Watson, is one of the top 100 courses in the world and the site of the annual Dunlop Phoenix Tournament. The Phoenix Country Club is located within the Phoenix Seagaia Resort and has been awarded its fourth consecutive title as the "Best Golf Course in Japan" for 2006 by the readers of Asian Golf Monthly.

ARTS, ARCHITECTURE & TECHNOLOGY

Japan is a creative hotspot, and has a well-deserved reputation for its cutting-edge approach to technology, as well as its widely varied styles of art and architecture, from ancient to modern. And groups can enjoy all of this and more during their events and incentive trips.



When it comes to technology, Japan is hard to beat. Consider the global impact of Nintendo, the worldwide leader in interactive entertainment. Based in Kyoto, the company is known for bringing beloved characters including Mario and Donkey Kong to life. And Tokyo-based Hitachi has made headlines with creations like Hubo, a technologically advanced humanoid robot.

In Nagoya, hometown of Toyota, groups can pay a visit to the Toyota Kaikan Exhibition Hall, join a plant tour or follow the company's impressive history at the Toyota Techno Museum and the Toyota Automobile Museum. Toyota also operates an exciting attraction in Tokyo called Mega Web, where visitors can check out the latest models, admire vintage automobiles and even try out a car on a test course.

A visit to Tokyo's Akihabara, also known as "Electric Town," will amaze even the most devoted electronics buffs. Akihabara is one of the largest shopping areas on Earth for electronic and computer goods, and gained fame by devoting retail space to sell personal robots and robotics.

When it comes to art, Japan's cities are filled with galleries and museums featuring some of the finest work in the world, ranging from centuries-old Japanese masterpieces to contemporary and modern art. Often, the museum itself may be part of the attraction, thanks to Japan's wonderful architectural creativity. Indeed, architecture is a big draw in Japan. Visitors can admire the traditional beauty of a Samurai house such as in Kanazawa, Kakunodate (Akita) and Kagoshima; the peaceful designs of temples and shrines in Kyoto and Nara, or the sleek lines of modern icons like the brand-new National Art Center in Tokyo, which is just minutes by foot from Tokyo Midtown, a new retail complex that exudes modern elegance. At Benesse House, an art museum with accommodations designed by architect Tadao Ando, participants can gather amid beautiful artwork and a lovely natural setting on Naoshima, an island in the Seto Inland Sea between Kagawa and Okayama prefectures. Art and architectural tours are available in many destinations, highlighting both the ancient and the modern aspects that make this nation so special.

UNIQUE VENUES FOR EVERY OCCASION

With its rich history, diverse culture and world-class style, Japan offers countless impressive venues to host special events. Whether it's a festive party for an incentive group, a post-meeting cocktail event or a special occasion for a group of any size, planners find a wide variety of choices here.

Consider having your group hosted among the works of the world's greatest fine artists at one of the nation's top museums, or entertained by traditional taiko drummers and performances by Geisha.

Sapporo is home to Moerenuma Park, which boasts a giant sculpture — the final work by famed artist Isamu Noguchi; its glass pyramid accommodates 200 attendees for seated meetings and meals.

Sankeien, Yokohama's beautiful Japanese-style garden, has 17 historic buildings that were restored and moved from various locations around the country. They make wonderful settings for tea ceremonies, meetings and other private events.

In Nagoya, the Nagoya Noh Theater provides an elegant venue in a beautiful Japanese-style



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building. Here, next to Nagoya Castle, groups of up to 360 can enjoy performances of noh, a traditional art that combines drama, dance and music in a fascinating and entertaining show.

Even some temples and shrine complexes are available for group use; the tourist office, as well as local CVBs and DMCs, can be of great help in arranging unforgettable events in locations like this.

Tokyo has several unique settings in which to visit as a group. Happon is a serene garden complex with two restaurants on-site. The Tokyo National Museum provides an in-depth look at Japan's history, and the Meiji Kinenkan, a respected historical facility, also accommodates private events in an impressive surrounding.

For a truly Japanese experience in a different vein, consider staging an event at Kyoto Studio Park, the only theme park in Japan where visitors can wander among the sets of Japanese period dramas. Attendees can stroll along the streets of "ancient Japan", enjoy the exciting Samurai show or even dress up like a geisha or a samurai.

For a truly exclusive venue, permission to gather in one of Kyoto's temples and shrines is a high honor. Tranquil Kyoto garden, with its themed sections, and high-class Kyoto ryotei restaurants serving fresh, traditional Japanese delicacies are both special ways to experience the Kyoto ambience. Visitors touring the Museum of Kyoto will undoubtedly leave with a deeper understanding of the region and culture.

All of these possibilities are just a taste of what Japan can offer convention and incentive groups. It's just a matter of deciding which destination and venue suits your group best.

AROUND THE NATION

Japan has many different faces. Each region has unique characteristics, including its people and dialects that have been influenced by climate, history and location. Explore Japan and experience many aspects of the country that you may never imagined existed. There are cities and themes that can meet the needs of any meeting and incentive program.

SKI RESORTS & NOSTALGIA

The island of Hokkaido, and the northeastern part of Honshu (called the Tohoku region) are both magical places for groups. Graced with stunning scenery, national parks, hot springs and many interesting venues, this is a lesser-known region for many foreign travelers — but well worth exploring.

SAPPORO

The main gateway for the island of Hokkaido, a region abundant with natural beauty, the city of Sapporo offers a growing number of options for meeting and incentive planners.

Sapporo is home to several lovely parks that make for excellent incentive excursions throughout the year, including skiing in the winter, and hiking and river sports in the summer. Participants can also learn more about one of Japan's most famous brews at the Sapporo Beer Garden. In February during the Sapporo Snow Festival, Sapporo turns into a snow museum. Japan's largest snow festival is international renowned, and draws visitors from all over the world. The city is also



known for its excellent cuisine, which includes fresh seafood, ramen noodles and barbecue.

AKITA

Natural beauty abounds in Akita, home to Lake Tazawa, the deepest lake in Japan, as well as a pristine forest of beech trees that is registered on the list of World Heritage Sites of Nature.

Akita is a year-round destination with many interesting events and activities that are perfect for incentive groups. Summer activities include attending the Kanto Festival, a 250-year-old tradition dedicated to a successful harvest season. Winter brings plenty of opportunities for groups to enjoy skiing, as well as the warm waters of soothing hot springs. The most famous winter festival is Kamakura, when small structures created from snow are lit up at night.

SENDAI

Sendai's many trees and beautiful parks have helped the city build a reputation for its natural assets, but it's also a cultural, business and academic hotspot in the region thanks to its many museums, universities and great quality of life.

The city hosts a variety of events throughout the year. August is the traditional time for Tanabata, when thousands of fireworks light up the sky. In December, thousands of lights twinkle in trees in the city center, as part of the Sendai Pageant of Starlight.

Just outside the city are multiple attractions for incentive groups and post-conference get-aways — including Matsushima, a collection of 260 pristine, pine-covered islets considered to be one of the most beautiful sites in Japan.

YAMAGATA

With soaring mountain peaks, tempting hot springs and countless outdoor activities, Yamagata is an important agricultural region. Hiking toward the three peaks of Dewa along a magnificent mountain trail surrounded by massive cedars, is considered to have healing qualities. Onsen hot springs are also a big draw in Yamagata. Or consider one of the region's special events — every summer, thousands of dancers gather in Yamagata for Hanagasa Matsuri, a brilliant festival of safflower blossoms and parades. In the winter, the Snow Monster festival illuminates fascinating snow shapes after the sun sets.

TOKYO BAY AREA: HUB OF THE NATION

An important center for all things related to business, finance and government, the Tokyo Bay area is a region known for its sleek sophistication and modern services, as well as its unique natural beauty. Here, visitors find fascinating traditions, impressive art and architecture, and countless activities to suit every taste.



Japan

TOKYO

One of the truly iconic cities of Asia and the world, Tokyo is a fascinating blend of centuries-old traditions and a distinctly modern, sophisticated infrastructure.

The city is home to one quarter of all Japanese, with some 12 million residents just in the city itself. Both leisure and business visitors can choose from countless facilities, activities and attractions here.

The Tokyo National Museum, the largest museum in Japan, has a collection of more than 80,000 historic artifacts and works of art. Tokyo is not just modern and a city with skyscrapers; the town of Asakusa still embodies old Japan. It houses Senso-ji, a Buddhist temple completed in 645 AD. The path to the temple has small mom and pop stores, some of which have been in business long before the war. The Kabukiza Theater is nearby, where groups can attend kabuki shows throughout the year. For an impressive site, a visit to the Tsukiji Fish Market, a major distribution center of products from all over Japan and the world, gives groups a glimpse into the fascinating world of wholesale food marketing. The Meiji Shrines, dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji (19C) and his consort, Empress Shoken, allure visitors. Omotesando, its neighbor to the rear, is a mecca of high fashion. Stylish shopping and dining can be found throughout the city, with new entertainment complexes making a big splash with locals and foreigners alike. One of the newest is Tokyo Midtown, located in the Roppongi District, which opened in 2007. Tokyo Midtown features the Suntory museum, multiple dining and drinking establishments and a large upscale shopping mall. A short walk away is the stunning new National Art Center, which also opened in 2007 and exhibits the work of internationally renowned artists.

CHIBA

Less than 20 minutes by rail from Tokyo is Chiba. Since it is home to Narita International Airport, getting here is easy for visitors flying in from other countries.

In Chiba, groups can head to the Tokyo Disney resort, billed as the most popular theme park in the nation. New hotels are also opening in the Tokyo Disney area, offering more options for planners. For meetings in Makuhari, the extensive convention facilities of Makuhari Messe, the site of Tokyo Motor Show, form an extraordinary complex of three major event and exhibition halls and six hotels within walking distance of the convention center.

YOKOHAMA

Japan's second-largest city, Yokohama is just half an hour by train from Tokyo. Ever since Yokohama hosted Japan's first international conference — the 1854 Treaty of Peace and Amity between Japan and the United States — this bustling metropolis has built a reputation as one of the nation's biggest convention destinations. The city's many historic buildings and busy port — which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2009 — creates an interesting backdrop for any event.

JAPAN ALPS REGION

Centrally located on Honshu (Japan's biggest island), this region is known both for its big business



and also for its natural beauty and fascinating history. Dotted with castle towns and the soaring mountains of the Japan Alps, it's a great place for groups to explore and provides stunning settings for a variety of events. This is also a great place to sample sake, the tasty rice wine that is especially popular here.

NAGOYA

Nagoya is an important business center, especially for the automotive industry. The city serves as world headquarters for Toyota, as well as many other large enterprises.

But the city isn't all business; it also exudes a unique atmosphere, based on its fascinating history. It was born as a strategic castle town, and in the 16th century, three Samurai heroes — Oda, Toyotomi and Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa were born here.

Groups can still savor this rich heritage, at places like Nagoya Castle, built by the Shogun Ieyasu in 1614.

TAKAYAMA

Another important castle town in the region, Takayama is graced with charming streets and historic merchant houses, not to mention the temples and shrines of Higashiyama.

Oku Hida Hot Springs Village is nearby, and there is also a Hida Folk Village, an interesting open-air museum that includes dozens of typical farmhouses and structures from the Hida region. Takayama is also a great place for groups to savor delicious Japanese cuisine and libations — sake, noodles and beef are all locally produced here.

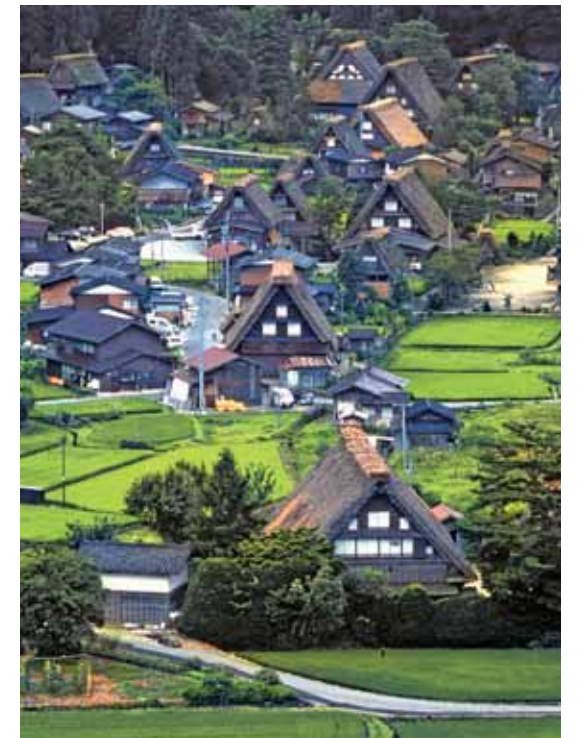
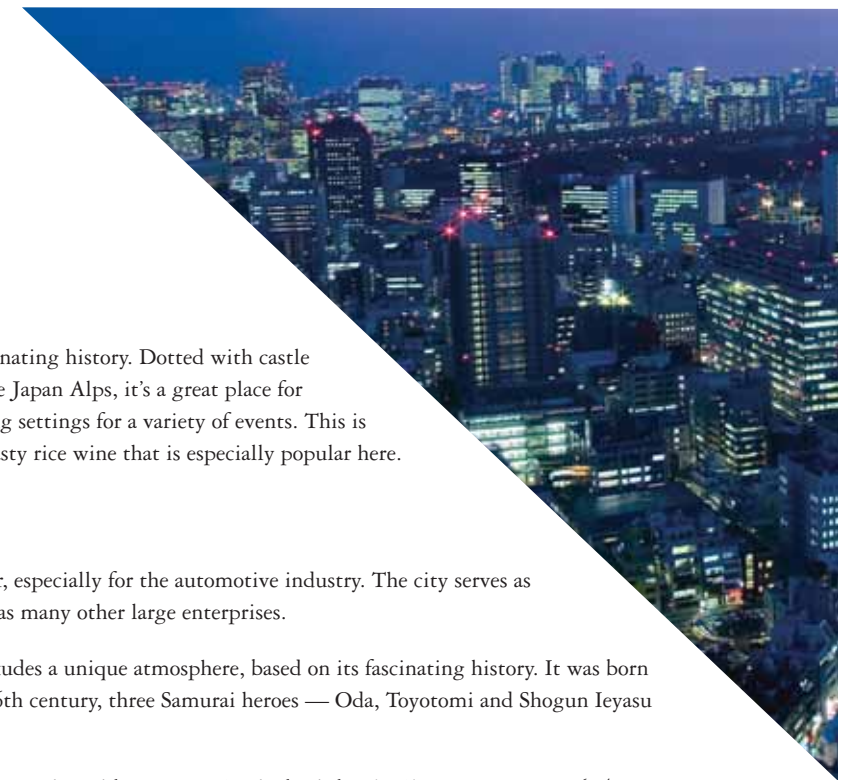
Other important heritage sites in the area include the World Heritage site Shirakawasa, noted for its traditional Gas-sho-style houses. Rural onsen provide indulgent getaways nearby.

KANAZAWA

As the home of Lord Maeda, Kanazawa developed as the wealthiest province in the 17 century. Today, countless historic buildings and winding streets foster a unique atmosphere in this beautiful city. One of the greatest features of this historic site is Kenroku-en, one of the most spectacular gardens in Japan. Among the attractions are the recently restored castle grounds. Groups can also enjoy local creations including ceramic and lacquer ware, as well as traditional performances of Noh theater.

NAGANO

When many people think of Nagano, they immediately picture the 1998 Winter Olympics, which took place on the challenging slopes at this beautiful winter wonderland. But Nagano, scenically located in the heart of the Japan Alps, offers lots more — even for groups that don't know the first thing about winter sports. Groups that are less focused on communing with nature can still enjoy arts and crafts museums, Japanese Ukiyo-e Museums, art galleries and a variety of musical events and concerts throughout the year. Historic sites include Zenko-ji.



Japan

SACRED TRADITIONS, TRUE HOSPITALITY

The area of Western Japan anchored by Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, and Kobe exudes an air of tranquility. Business and meetings may be on the minds of some of its residents and visitors, but there is no denying the calming, peaceful feeling that reigns here, the result of the region's centuries of history as a religious center. Here, groups can truly experience the tranquility and renewal of Japanese religious traditions.

OSAKA

Osaka, the largest city in, and gateway to, Western Japan is within 1 hour of Kyoto, Nara and Kobe. It is known for the quality of its shopping and great dining. Doton Bori, an entertainment district, is famous for colorful and dynamic displays by restaurants. It is reminiscent of Las Vegas (on a smaller scale).

For centuries the economic and cultural hub of the nation, Osaka is home to fascinating sites that can also serve as excellent group venues — including Osaka Castle, which dates to 1583; and Osaka Kaiyukan, one of the world's largest aquariums, which can host events.

KYOTO

With no less than 14 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the city of Kyoto was capital of Japan for some 1,200 years. During the flourish, Buddhist temples, gardens and Shinto shrines were built all over Kyoto.

Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion), covered in gold leaf, is one of Kyoto's leading temples. This Zen Temple, built in the 14th century, draws visitors from all over the world to see its beautiful temple and gardens. Kiyomizu-dera (built in the 8th century) is one of the most famous temples in Kyoto. The main hall was constructed in the 17th century, and is famous for its location overhanging a cliff. The platform of the main hall, supported by 139 giant pillars, affords a spectacular view of the town of Kyoto. It is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



NARA

The capital of Japan some 1,300 years ago, Nara is graced with eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and bears interesting influences from China and Korea, thanks to its role as an extension of the Silk Road.

This historic city is an ideal place for groups to learn about the intricate art of ink and brush making and perhaps attend the fascinating Shuni-e ceremony, which takes place during early spring at the Todai-ji temple, home of the Great Buddha (approx. 50 feet tall).

KOBE

A city that blends ancient culture and modern style, Kobe is set against the dramatic backdrop of the Rokko Mountains and the Seto Inland Sea.

Interesting sites in Kobe include, Nada, Kobe's



sake-brewing district. There are also several noteworthy hot springs resorts near Arima, where groups can choose from among more than two dozen traditional inns. Kobe is also world famous for its beef. There are also high-quality cultured pearls available in Kobe, which make great gifts. In fact, the world-famous Tasaki Shinju (pearl) has its headquarters in Kobe.

PEACE & PILGRIMAGE

The extreme western tip of Japan's largest island — as well as the nearby island of Shikoku — offers groups the opportunity to visit important sites dedicated to world peace, while enjoying traditional hospitality and excellent group facilities.

HIROSHIMA

This city in western Japan may forever be known as the place decimated by an atomic bomb during World War II, but Hiroshima has recast itself as the international city of peace and culture. The host to many conferences that deal with global peace, Hiroshima is home to the A-Bomb Dome, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as the Peace Memorial Park and the Peace Memorial Museum, which serve as moving testaments to the power of peace on a global scale. Miyajima, in the Seto Inland Sea, offers a majestic view of the Torii-gate of Itsukushima Shrine, one of Japan's icons.

MATSUE

Talk about a peaceful setting. Matsue is tucked between two lakes, Shinji and Nakaumi — offering beautiful scenery in just about every direction. This region — originally called Izumo, or land of the gods, is the home of Izumo Taisha, a shrine dedicated to the one of founding Gods of Japan, and Matsue Castle, which in the springtime is made even more attractive by thousands of delicate cherry blossoms. Adachi Museum is well known for both its superb Japanese gardens and its collection of contemporary Japanese paintings, comprised of approximately 1,300 of the country's most highly regarded paintings produced after the Meiji period

SHIKOKU

This region, which includes the smallest of the four main islands of Japan, as well as surrounding islets, is anchored by the city of Takamatsu. The city offers sophisticated convention facilities, excellent cuisine and naturally beautiful attractions including Ritsurin Park, a feudal lord's garden that dates to the Edo period of 1615-1868. Visit some of the 88 temples from The Shikoku Pilgrimage. It is believed all eighty-eight temples were visited by the famous Buddhist monk Kukai, who was born in Zentsuji, Shikoku in 774.



Japan

TROPICAL RESORTS, SAMURAI CULTURE

The islands of Kyushu and Okinawa, in western Japan, hold a special allure for planners, groups and vacationers alike: abundant sun, the year-round warmth of the tropics and a host of excellent activities and facilities. Samurais originated in Kyushu island played in important roles during Japan's transformation from Shogunate to Modern Japan. Kyushu is also famous as a Mecca of fine porcelains originated back in the 17th century.

FUKUOKA

The largest city on the island of Kyushu, Fukuoka is a sophisticated cultural and economic hub. Fukuoka is also a great place for group dining experiences, with open-air dining a popular option in the Tenjin district.

Appealing tourist draws include the lovely canals of Yanagawa and the Dazaifu Tenmangu, a shrine to the god of learning.

MIYAZAKI

The resort city of Miyazaki, a natural wonderland on the island of Kyushu, offers everything from convention facilities and five-star accommodations to golf courses, spas and hot springs

Leisure activities include teeing off at the Phoenix Country Club, which has a challenging, Tom Watson-designed public course; some 12 other courses are within half an hour of the city. South of Miyazaki is the Nichinan coastline, which offers stunning views, historic sites and active outdoor activities.

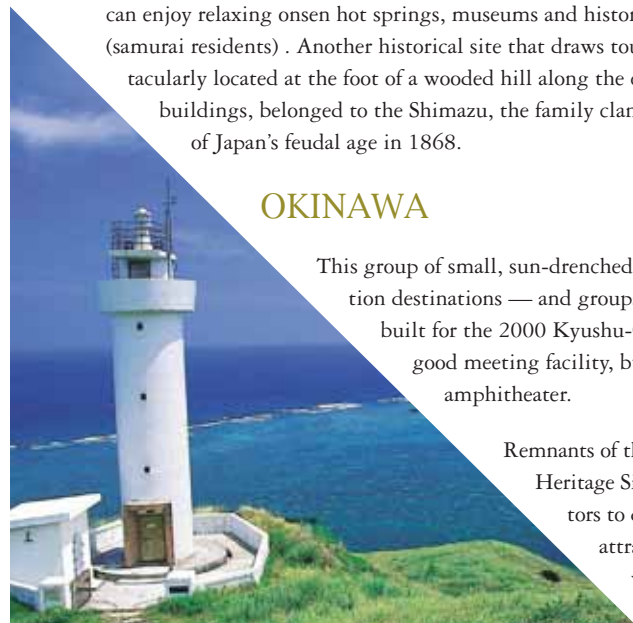
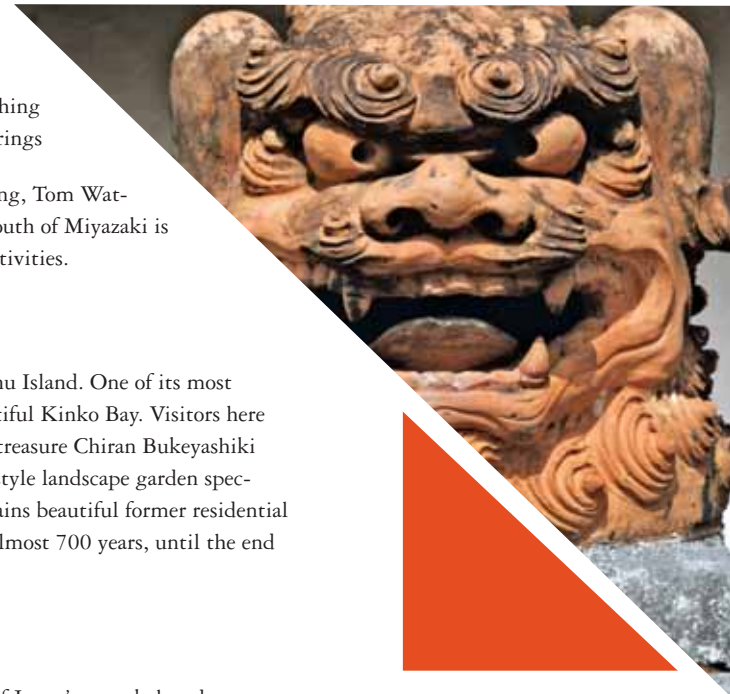
KAGOSHIMA

Known as the "Naples of the Far East," Kagoshima is the largest city in southern Kyushu Island. One of its most recognizable icons is the towering Sakurajima, an active volcano located along the beautiful Kinko Bay. Visitors here can enjoy relaxing onsen hot springs, museums and historical sites such as the national treasure Chiran Bukeyashiki (samurai residents). Another historical site that draws tourists is Senganen, a Japanese style landscape garden spectacularly located at the foot of a wooded hill along the coast. The garden, which contains beautiful former residential buildings, belonged to the Shimazu, the family clan which ruled Kagoshima for almost 700 years, until the end of Japan's feudal age in 1868.

OKINAWA

This group of small, sun-drenched islands has proved to be one of Japan's most beloved vacation destinations — and groups will be equally enchanted. The Bankoku Shinryokan Hall, built for the 2000 Kyushu-Okinawa G8 Summit, not only features all the amenities of a good meeting facility, but is also adjacent to a beach, a marina, a seaside park and an amphitheater.

Remnants of the old kingdom of Ryukyu, now designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites, wait to be explored on guided tours. Eco-tours allow visitors to discover some of the region's most startlingly beautiful natural attractions, including coral reefs. Active-minded attendees will want to consider sports like snorkeling, scuba diving and golf.



INSIDE INFORMATION

Japan is home to a host of excellent destination management companies, each skilled at working with planners to create successful events and incentive trips for groups from around the globe. We asked some of these expert DMCs for inside tips about what makes Japan such a great MICE destination.

Q: WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES JAPAN OFFER THAT OTHER NATIONS DON'T?

A: Japan is a very exotic — yet comfortable and modern — country. It is clean, safe and secure and extremely well organized. Travelers to Japan will find history, cutting-edge technology, cuisine, nature, old and modern architecture, as well as unique cultural experiences.

Visitors can experience a completely different culture from Western countries and an international standard of high technology in Japan. Japanese are very friendly to foreign visitors.

Q: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A DMC IN JAPAN?

A: A DMC's market knowledge, combined with strong buying power, can be very cost-effective for incentive groups in Japan. Using a DMC will remove the language barrier and will add uniqueness to the event.

Q: WHAT INCENTIVE SITES AND TOUR ROUTES DO YOU RECOMMEND?

A: Tokyo — the most exciting and vibrant city in Asia. Kyoto — the cultural capital of Japan. Osaka — a unique, local culture and dining heaven. There are various charming places to go depending on your interest in Japan. Experience tradition, culture, architecture, technology, resorts and more. See what life was like hundreds of years ago in the surviving castle town.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME UNIQUE EXPERIENCES THAT VISITORS CAN ONLY EXPERIENCE IN JAPAN?

A: Visiting a Sumo stable to join Sumo wrestler training, and enjoy a Sumo meal. The geisha party, calligraphy, flower arrangement, tea ceremony, martial arts, creating traditional crafts, Japanese cuisine, Ryokan are other unique cultural experience possibilities.

For the information about DMC based in the U.S., please visit at www.japantravelinfo.com/media

HOT TIPS

TRAVEL WITH CASH. Cash is still the most common form of paying for purchases in Japan — especially for smaller transactions. Visitors should be sure to exchange the appropriate amount before they arrive, or else at the airport.

GET YOUR MONEY. Since June of 2007, travelers have been able to use foreign debit and credit cards to withdraw cash from their accounts at some 11,700 Seven Bank ATMs, located in 7-11 convenience stores. This makes accessing money much easier for visitors. Other places with machines that accept foreign cards are post offices and Citibank locations.

TRAVEL WELL. ANA and Japan Airlines, the two largest carriers in Japan, both offer special fares to foreign visitors who want to combine multiple destinations while visiting Japan. The Visit Japan fare provides individuals and groups with deeply discounted domestic flights, helping to keep travel within budget. And travelers can also get mileage with Oneworld (with Japan Airlines) as well as the Star Alliance (with ANA).

RIDE THE RAILS. A great option for traveling within Japan is the nation's efficient, modern and comfortable long-distance rail service. The Japan Rail Pass, available to foreign travelers entering the country as a "temporary visitor," offers greater savings and flexibility for travel throughout the nation.

CONSIDER THE SAVINGS. Tipping is not expected anywhere in Japan, for any kind of service. Add those savings to the already good value for the money, and Japan becomes an even better deal for groups.

CARDS ARE CRITICAL. Japanese businesspeople place great importance on business cards. It's a good idea to have new cards printed before your arrival, with your complete information in Japanese on one side and English on the other. You can also have them printed on-site at Narita International Airport upon arrival — a fast and efficient way to make sure you make a good impression. (You can also rent a cell phone at the airport upon arrival.)



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