



1 The opening ceremony of TEJ, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, 2 Tourism Ministers' Roundtable with participation from 9 countries and 4 organizations, with the theme "Creating A New Travel Journey", 3 The "Japan Tourism Awards," which received 119 entries from inside and outside Japan, 4 Kathakali dance, a traditional Indian dance form, showcased at the Welcome Reception



At the Opening Ceremony (upper photo), a video message from Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was presented, while at the Welcome Reception (lower photo), a video message from former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga was conveyed.

Leveraging High-Value Tourism, Approaches to Youth, and Expo Momentum

Global Tourism Leaders Envision New Forms of Travel

Tourism EXPO Japan (TEJ) 2024 opened on September 26th, gathering industry professionals participating in forums, seminars, exhibitions, and business meetings, where domestic and international tourism leaders took the stage. This year's industry theme is "Creating A New Travel Journey."

Tourism EXPO Japan Executive Committee Chairman Hiroyuki Takahashi expressed his enthusiasm at the press conference: "This is truly a full-scale event overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to announce the revival of Japanese tourism to the world." He highlighted support for the Hokuriku region, which recently experienced earthquakes and heavy rains, revealing that there would be product exhibitions, panel displays, and fundraising activities supporting the region at TEJ.

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivered a video message at the opening ceremony. "Tourism is a pillar of Japan's growth strategy and a key to regional revitalization. While inbound travel is performing well and contributing to sustainable regional growth, the recovery of outbound travel is still halfway. I hope this event will be a step towards expansion, including bilateral exchanges by young people," he said, expressing his expectations for the industry.

This year marks the 60th anniversary since Japan opened up overseas travel for its citizens. To celebrate this special year, actor

Tomoko Yamaguchi has been appointed as a special supporter. She gave the event a boost, saying, "The essence of travel is experience. Travel has inspired me so much in my life. Let us learn more about the world and experience our planet."

The keynote panel discussion focused on the topic of "Expanding Tourism Exchange." It featured debates on the future of the tourism industry from the perspectives of both destinations sending and receiving tourists, exploring topics such as adventure tourism, regional revitalization, and measures to address overtourism.

At the 7th TEJ Tourism Ministerial Roundtable, which gathered tourism administration leaders from nine countries and four organizations, participants shared cutting-edge global perspectives on various aspects, including approaches to engage youth, as well as the potential and challenges of high-value tourism centered around gastronomy, nature, and culture.

This year, TEJ also plays a role in building momentum for Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, which is expected to contribute to the revival of the tourism industry. Hanako Jimi, the Minister of State for the International Exposition, explained its features and sought cooperation from the travel industry. As regional dispersion and revitalization become essential in the tourism industry, there is likely to be growing interest in travel planning that starts in Osaka and extends beyond.

Keynote Panel Discussion | Expansion of the Tourism Exchange Population



Mr. Eduardo Santander
Executive Director,
European Travel
Commission (ETC)

Mr. Shumpei Shimada
President and CEO,
SATOYUME CO., LTD.

Mr. Shigeru Takada
Executive Director, Adventure
Division / Adventure Base
SIRI, Tsuruga Co. Ltd.

Mr. Eijiro Yamakita
President & CEO,
JTB Corp.

Moderator: Ms. Marjorie Dewey
President, Connect Worldwide Japan Co., Ltd.

Expanding Tourism Exchange With Sustainable, Unique Travel Products

The keynote panel at Tourism EXPO Japan 2024 centered on the theme of Expanding Tourism Exchange Population, with a focus on adventure travel, regional revitalization, tourism management, and tour operations. The panelists shared their strategies and case studies in developing sustainable and unique tourism products.

Takada emphasized the growing appeal of “soft adventure” tourism, which combines cultural experiences with moderately challenging outdoor activities, making it particularly well-suited to Japan. He explained, “Japanese people tend to associate adventure travel with extreme activities, but cultural experiences are becoming mainstream, especially in Japan, which fits well with our local offerings.” Takada highlighted his company’s efforts to develop adventure travel while helping ensure minimal environmental impact.

Shimada showcased his company’s work in rural revitalization, particularly in transforming Kosuge Village in Yamanashi Prefecture into a “village-wide hotel” by renovating more than 100 vacant houses. Members of the community are directly involved in construction, maintenance, and daily operations of hotels and restaurants that were once empty homes. “The villagers are the heart of this project, providing hospitality and managing various aspects of the hotels in Kosuge, which has become a popular destination for both domestic and international visitors,” he said. His company’s focus on lesser-known regions has helped boost local economies while preserving cultural heritage.

Santander addressed overtourism, particularly in Europe, stressing the importance of managing tourist flows and diversifying destinations. He remarked, “Overtourism is not just about too many tourists; it’s about governance and planning. We need to think ahead and collaborate internationally to ensure sustainable tourism growth.” He also discussed how Europe is leading the charge in implementing responsible tourism practices.

Yamakita spoke about his company’s transformation from a traditional travel agency to a company also focused on creating meaningful connections between people and places. “We’ve shifted from simply organizing travel to contributing to local communities through innovative projects like the Fujiyama Road Project, which promotes eco-friendly travel around Mount Fuji,” he explained, emphasizing the need for sustainable tourism development.

The panel concluded by noting the need for balancing tourism growth and sustainability by ensuring both local communities and travelers benefit from new travel opportunities.

The 7th TEJ Ministerial Round Table

Rebuilding “Travel,” reimagining the future

7th TEJ Ministerial Roundtable Charts Course for Innovative, Sustainable Global Tourism

The 7th TEJ Ministerial Roundtable, on the theme of “Creating a New Travel Journey,” gathered ministers from nine countries and four senior executives of international tourism organizations. It kicked off with a welcome message from Harry Hwang, Director of the Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific at UN Tourism. In his speech, Hwang emphasized that the future of global tourism hinges on embracing technology, empowering youth and women, and prioritizing sustainability. He stressed that by focusing on educating young people and nurturing their innovative potential, we can create a high-value, sustainable tourism sector that is both resilient and inclusive.

The speakers shared strategies and introduced case studies to promote sustainable regional development through quality-focused approaches, to create high-value tourism experiences by incorporating cultural elements, and to engage youth in the future of tourism.



Welcome Message

Leaders From Various Countries Joining Hands To Create New Journeys

Mr. Harry Hwang
Director, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific, UN Tourism

The theme “Creating A New Travel Journey” resonates with the mission of UN Tourism. Today’s tourism industry faces geopolitical challenges and reveals fundamental aspects that need to change, such as sustainable and inclusive economic growth, environmental responsibility, and promoting employment for women and youth. Additionally, the use of Artificial Intelligence, entrepreneurial spirit, and education of young people are essential for transformation. Tourism is also an industry that can contribute to all 17 goals set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Now that the world recognizes the importance of tourism more than ever before, I hope that the Tourism EXPO, where leaders from various countries gather, will serve as a platform for solving these challenges. Fostering collaboration and innovation can create a more resilient and inclusive tourism sector.

Building Cultural Bridges Through Immersive Local Programs

H.E. Ms. Maria Esperanza Christina Garcia Frasco
Republic of the Philippines, Secretary of Department of Tourism
Represented by H. E. Ms. Mylene J. Garcia-Albano, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, Tokyo, Japan

The new Philippine Eatsperience Program, part of the Love the Philippines campaign, offers immersive travel experiences across the country’s 7,641 islands. The program features cultural immersion with local families, traditional craft workshops, eco-adventures, culinary journeys, community volunteer projects, and festival participation. It aims to provide transformative experiences beyond conventional tourism, promoting personal growth and cultural exchange. Catering to various traveler types, the initiative encourages responsible tourism and fosters connections between visitors and Filipino culture. As an initiative to engage young people in tourism, the country is promoting the Leave No Trace challenge, engaging young people in appreciating local destinations responsibly.

Engaging Youth: Key to Sustainable Tourism Leadership in ASEAN

Honourable Dato Dr. Abdul Manaf Metussin
Brunei Darussalam, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism

Brunei aims to boost tourism by engaging youth as crucial workers and future leaders. The focus is on high-quality, high-value tourism that adapts to trends like artificial intelligence while prioritizing sustainability. Regenerative tourism offers meaningful experiences benefiting nature and local communities, showcasing Brunei’s abundant natural beauty and cultural heritage. The ASEAN “Six Countries, One Destination” initiative promotes regional nature conservation and cultural preservation. Engaging young talent with flexible sensitivities as champions of regenerative tourism is vital for fostering high-value tourism while preserving nature and culture across the region. This approach combines meaningful local experiences with environmental and community benefits.

Japan’s Approach for Sustainable Tourism Beyond Metropolises

Mr. Masanao Ozaki
Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

While inbound tourism to Japan is showing signs of recovery, there is an imbalance between urban and rural areas, as popular destinations remain concentrated in three major metropolitan areas: Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. It is important to promote visits to regional areas and expand consumption. To this end, Japan Tourism Agency selected 11 model regions to work on to create high-value-added inbound tourism destinations. For sustainable tourism development, knowledge of crisis management during disasters and recovery efforts is also necessary. Japan will host the Tourism Resilience Summit in November 2024 in collaboration with UN Tourism, highlighting the importance of international partnerships.

Creating a New Travel Journey



Malaysia's High-Value Tourism Vision: Crafting Sustainable Journeys Towards 2026

YBrs. Dr. Yasmeen binti Yasim

Malaysia, Deputy Secretary General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

Malaysia's National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 focuses on high-value tourism across nature, cultural heritage, luxury, and business sectors. It emphasizes sustainability, community involvement, and economic impact, aiming to provide immersive, eco-friendly experiences while preserving natural and cultural heritage. The strategy leverages Malaysia's biodiversity and multicultural traditions, catering to discerning tourists and promoting sustainable business events. It seeks to benefit the economy, citizens, and the environment beyond mere economic gains. The upcoming Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign reinforces this commitment, fostering collaboration among government, private sector, and communities to create a sustainable, inclusive, and high-value tourism industry that showcases Malaysia's unique strengths.



Promoting Sustainable Tourism as an Emerging Destination

Mr. Umid R. Shadiev

Republic of Uzbekistan, Chairman, Tourism Committee

Uzbekistan, an emerging tourism destination, welcomes 2027 as the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism and prioritizes sustainable tourism as a key national strategy. With tourism under the environment ministry's purview, the country emphasizes the sector's ecological importance. Uzbekistan boasts more than 8,000 tourist sites, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and is investing in tourism. The country focuses on diverse tourism products, balancing promotion with protection of cultural heritage. As a young nation, Uzbekistan recognizes its responsibility to provide job opportunities for youth. The government also prioritizes conservation of its many protected areas, integrating environmental stewardship with tourism development.



Cultural Tourism Essential to Connect in Challenging Modern Times

H.E. Mr. Evtim Miloshev

Republic of Bulgaria, Minister of Tourism

Cultural tourism development is a priority for Bulgaria, one of Europe's oldest countries. The nation boasts a rich heritage, ranking third in Europe for the number of archaeological and cultural sites, with over 40,000 locations. With 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and five intangible cultural heritage elements, Bulgaria offers diverse attractions including ancient cities, sites related to early Christianity, and the location of the world's oldest processed gold. Bulgaria believes cultural tourism is crucial for connecting different countries, cultures, and religions in these challenging times, and is honored to host the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2025.



Greece's Holistic Approach to Long-Term Prosperity

H.E. Ms. Olga Kefalogianni

Hellenic Republic, Minister of Tourism

Tourism, a major global economic driver, requires a strategic shift for sustainable prosperity. We prioritize quality over quantity, focusing on long-term innovation, authenticity, and sustainable regional development. Tourism's positive impact enhances residents' quality of life, preserves natural resources and local identity, and offers year-round benefits nationwide. We invest in infrastructure and develop niche markets like gastronomy. By involving locals in decision-making and destination management, we leverage each region's unique characteristics. Digital tools, including detailed mapping and information systems, aid this process. Collaboration with local communities and sustainable resource management contribute to improved transportation, green energy initiatives, and overall regional development.



Balancing Innovation, Culture, and Sustainability for Regional Value

H.E. Ms. Simonida Kordić

Montenegro, Minister of Tourism

Tourism is a platform for peace and stability, not just an industry. Engaging youth is crucial for sustainable practices. We must emphasize social and environmental values, encouraging young people to become cultural ambassadors through responsible travel. For tourism to be sustainable, it should focus on quality experiences rooted in authentic local identity, protecting natural resources and cultures while boosting local economies. By showcasing how tourism preserves traditions and creates immersive, economically beneficial experiences, we can attract travelers seeking authentic encounters. This approach engages youth in shaping their communities' future while delivering high-value experiences for visitors and local people.



Advancing Sustainable, Resilient US Tourism Through Technology and Partnerships

Mr. Curt Cottle

United States of America, Senior Policy Advisor/Team Lead for Outreach and Engagement Policy & Planning/National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) International Trade Administration/U.S. Department of Commerce

The US government plans to increase the value and volume of tourism by investing heavily in technology. The aim is to reduce tourism's emissions and impact on climate change, building a tourism industry resilient to disasters and public health issues. We will further promote facilitation, diversification, and sustainability by broadening the benefits of tourism and developing diverse travel products that capitalize on cultural and natural resources. In partnership with the private sector, we will support local communities and the travel industry while promoting healthy development that can be integrated with the protection of natural resources through public-private cooperation.



Promoting Sustainable and Authentic Tourism in Europe

Mr. Eduardo Santander

Executive Director, European Travel Commission (ETC)

As Europe remains the top tourism destination, responsibility and accountability in tourism are essential. Rather than focusing solely on tourist numbers and spending, we prioritize promotion of authentic, sustainable experiences. We need to educate the younger generation and offer experiences related to culture and nature to foster responsible travel. By supporting local artisans, sustainable accommodations, and cultural engagement, we aim to offer meaningful travel that emphasizes quality over quantity. Educating the younger generation and encouraging longer stays with local interactions are central to this vision. In cooperation with the Japan Association of Travel Agents, the "Oishii Europe" campaign will spotlight food culture and responsible travel.



Sustainability to Drive Future Development in ASEAN

Dr. Aladdin D. Rillo

Managing Director for Policy Design and Operations, Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

In ASEAN countries, where tourism plays a vital role, sustainability will be at the heart of future development. Achieving positive outcomes requires a pragmatic approach and close collaboration between public and private sectors. Clear frameworks and guidelines are essential for guiding sustainable policies and development. Digital technology should be embraced as a key driver for transformation. It is also critical to raise awareness of sustainable tourism within the private sector and consider necessary policy interventions to address market-driven tourism. Ultimately, sustainable tourism must be part of an inclusive strategy that benefits future generations and promotes long-term growth.



The Future of Tourism: Sustainable, Meaningful, and Youth-Driven

Ms. Liz Ortiguera

Managing Director for Asia Pacific & Sr. Advisor to the CEO and Interim SVP for Membership & Commercial, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC)

Tourism's future aligns with the values of the younger generation. Innovation and technology will accelerate "slow travel" with an emphasis on sustainability, climate action, responsible travel, and environmental and cultural protection. The tourism industry will create 60 million new jobs, requiring attractive work environments and opportunities for workers. For tourism to be sustainable, it must be inclusive and diverse while benefiting communities. Travel needs to be not only entertaining, but also meaningful and experiential. High-quality tourism incorporates cultural elements, contributes to local economies and employment, and develops cultural identities.

Moderator



Reimagining Tourism: Insights From Global Leaders on Quality, Sustainability, and Youth Engagement

Ms. Marjorie Dewey President, Connect Worldwide Japan Co., Ltd.

In the wake of recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic, we have discussed how we can reimagine the travel industry by involving young people, creating new high-value tourism, and increasing sustainable regional development through discussions on the theme of Creating a New Travel Journey. Speakers from different countries and international organizations gave interesting insights. I believe this has provided many useful takeaways for attracting younger generations to tourism and creating sustainable tourism that values natural and cultural resources.