



THE ASSOCIATION  
MAGAZINE

# JAPAN

INSPIRING YOU IN DIFFERENT WAYS

**SPECIAL MICE  
DESTINATION REPORT**



**Japan.**  
Meetings  
& Events  
*New ideas start here*

# JAPAN'S GRACEFUL AND SUPREME APPROACH TO MICE

Few destinations worldwide are as alluring and attractive as Japan. With its unique combination of tradition and modernity, beautiful landscapes and ultramodern experiences, the country is a must-visit for many travellers. No wonder the Conde Nast 2020 Readers' Choice Awards lists it as a top choice. They said, "Japan is a fascinating gift worth taking the time to unwrap." Many event organisers and planners seeking safe and secure destinations feel the same.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOKYO.NL

The Japanese government is committed to making the country shine as a prime destination for international conferences. It is working closely with industry professionals to address their needs and concerns, with the aim of raising standards for health and safety management to even higher levels. The process is underway to introduce hygiene measures that align with global standards, such as the one set by the **Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC)**, that help venues and cleaning professionals better prepare for, respond to, and recover from biorisk situations. **GBAC STAR (TM)** is the gold standard of facility preparedness: a performance-based programme based on quality management system principles (such as ISO 9001). It is especially crucial in the wake of COVID-19 as facilities seek guidance on operating safely and confidently.

One facility in Japan that has acquired GBAC STAR (TM) certification is the **Palace Hotel Tokyo**, located just opposite the Imperial Palace gardens, that was awarded the coveted Forbes Travel Guide five-star rating. That means it has demonstrated implementation of strict protocols, rigorous staff training, and deployment of appropriate equipment and supplies to give customers peace of mind. Their message is, "We look forward to welcoming you and your guests once travel restrictions are lifted. Whether you will be staying in our signature Deluxe Room with Balcony, dining in award-winning restaurants and lounges, or hosting meetings and events in our elegantly designed function rooms, rest assured we will do everything we can to ensure as comfortable and enjoyable of a visit as possible."

More transformations are on the way. In the Spring of 2020, **Narita Airport** started introducing an innovative passenger experience from check-in

through boarding: "One ID." It uses the world's most advanced facial recognition technology to allow passengers to flow through smoother procedures, with fewer repetitive processes and less time waiting in line.

Although most visitors will have to wait until travel restrictions are lifted worldwide to be able to experience all that Japan has to offer, some academic or industrial international conferences will simply have to go ahead and hold physical meetings. There are domains of core scientific research collaboration that cannot be entirely replaced online. And there is still a great demand for the kind of networking that is only possible through face-to-face interaction.

Coming up next you will hear from **Etsuko Kawasaki**, Executive Director of the **Japan Convention Bureau**, and in the following pages you will learn more about some outstanding regional cities that are ready and waiting to host your event.

# JAPAN CAN GIVE YOU WHAT VIRTUAL MEETINGS CANNOT REPLACE

HQ sat down (virtually) with **Etsuko Kawasaki**, the Executive Director of the **Japan Convention Bureau**, to discuss why Japan is such a fascinating destination and how the country is preparing to better serve the needs of the business events industry in the "new normal." Beyond the world-famous big cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, Japan offers many hidden-gem destinations where you can avoid big crowds and enjoy the wonders of regional Japan.



**Before the pandemic, Japan was one of the most attractive event destinations globally and a real star in the meetings industry.**

Indeed. Many meeting attendees have experienced first-hand Japan's merits as a destination for international conferences. In 2019, Japan ranked eighth globally in the **ICCA Statistics Report**. We also recorded our highest number of association meetings to date at 527. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 in 2020, a number of scheduled international meetings and business events have been postponed or cancelled, as happened everywhere else in the world.

**How did you react to the turn of events in 2020? Do you see an opportunity despite the challenges?**

We spoke with domestic and international association meeting planners. Based on their feedback, we believe that in this new era, meeting planners and PCOs now require two things from destinations: the ability to **host a meeting safely and securely**; and the ability to **contribute to core elements of research** that cannot be replaced with online interactions.

**So not everything can go virtual?**

Exactly. During the current stage of COVID-19, and continuing post-pandemic, international conferences are being moved online to a certain degree, but it is clear that some things cannot be replaced virtually. International meeting planners are especially aware of two cases that necessitate face-to-face events: **discussions about core elements of research**; and the **development of new networks**. In such cases, I believe people will want to have clear answers about why it is necessary to travel to a certain destination to have these discussions, and what the research benefits of attending such a meeting are.

**Do you believe that Japan offers an advantage in this context?**

Japan can contribute to research-oriented discussions because it is home to world-leading academic and industrial clusters that are well equipped to host conferences and international meetings. Better still, these excellent destinations are spread all over Japan. Nineteen Japanese cities rank in the top 100 of the ICCA Statistics for Asia Pacific meetings. Many world-class conferences and events have been held in cities other than Tokyo and Kyoto. So you can travel to Japan to facilitate innovation, but also enjoy





the traditional postcard Japanese scenes that everyone dreams of seeing with their own eyes. Local culture and sightseeing make a key difference to the way participants experience meetings, and this is something else that virtual meetings cannot replace.

### How can meeting organisers choose the best venue/location?

We just completed a guide called [“Japan: Competitiveness of Academia and Industry”](#). It introduces Japanese cities that have concentrated clusters of academia and industry. We believe these destinations can lead the way in contributing to research in international conferences. The guide contains plenty of data, key facts and information to help association executives and PCOs analyse the distinctive academic and industry strengths of each city and select future locations for their international conferences.

### You mentioned that meeting planners have been asking for guarantees on how they can safely host a meeting. What is your experience in this regard?

With regard to holding international meetings and business events while living with COVID-19, Japan is working on initiatives to ensure total safety and security from the moment you enter the country to the moment you leave. We are looking at ways for attendees to safely and securely travel from the airport to their hotel or meeting space, at how to prevent infections in hotels and restaurants, as well as, of course,

putting in place preventive measures at each venue.

We are already testing this. Japanese domestic events are now taking place in a hybrid format that combines online and offline elements. These meetings comply with [guidelines](#) from conference and event industry organisations such as the [Japan Congress and Convention Bureau \(JCCB\)](#) and the [Japan Convention Management Association \(JCMA\)](#). They also comply with independent guidelines from local authorities such as Osaka and Kyoto, and with strategies to prevent infections that are implemented at each hotel and venue.

### What else are you looking at to meet safety concerns?

As I mentioned, we are working closely with the meetings industry. Japan is home to many influential academic organisations, research institutions and renowned businesspeople. That prompted us here at JNTO to appoint 69 academic professionals as [Japan Conference Ambassadors](#). These ambassadors help to bring international conferences to Japan, and they promote Japan as a business event destination. Normally, when these Ambassadors gather, researchers can network and exchange information.

What we did this year, though, was to use the gathering as an opportunity for collective reflection. We focused on how to hold safe and secure

face-to-face events in the COVID-19 era. This is a concern, of course, for all event participants, as well as for international meeting planners. This discussion involving the Ambassadors fed into the actions that we are taking now, but the gathering also showcased measures that can already be applied to ensure safe and secure international meetings. Namely, provisions for no-contact temperature checks, alcohol-based disinfectant, transparent panels to prevent droplet transmission, and protocols for serving food and beverages. As it turned out, the whole event was well received by all participants.

### Have there been successful events that helped build your confidence in these measures?

Japan hosted [One Young World Tokyo Caucus 2020](#), a pre-event to One Young World Tokyo 2022. They used a BMW showroom as a unique venue and the meeting was hybrid, with 110 onsite participants from Japan and over 390 online participants from elsewhere.

At the end of October in Okinawa, Japan's tourism industry held [Tourism Expo Japan](#), the largest trade fair in Japan that promotes global and domestic tourism. The organisers implemented infection prevention measures to ensure the safety of the exhibitors and companies that attended the event. There were 24,080 participants in all!



## 2. HIROSHIMA

- Tokyo (HND) to Hiroshima Airport (1 h 30 min)
- Tokyo Station to Hiroshima Station (4 h)
- Manufacturing, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Peace
- Sightseeing spot:  
Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Itsukushima Shrine (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Miyajima, Orizuru Tower
- Previous major events:
  - G7 Hiroshima Foreign Ministers' Meeting (2016)
  - 25th International Congress on Sound and Vibration (2018)

## 1. KITAKYUSHU

- Tokyo (HND) to Kitakyushu Airport (1 h 30 min)
- Osaka Station to JR Kokura Station Shinkansen (2 h 11 min)
- Fukuoka Airport to JR Kokura Station Subway Shinkansen (30 min)
- Environment/Energy, Robotics and Automotive
- Sightseeing spot:  
Kokura Castle, Moji Port Retro Area, TOTO Museum, Kawachi Fujien Wisteria Garden, Mt. Sarakura, Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution
- Previous major events:
  - The 12th Asian Control Conference (2019)
  - The 3rd Asia Future Conference (2016)

## 3. TOYAMA

- Tokyo (HND) to Toyama Airport (1 h)
- Tokyo Station to Toyama Station (2 h)
- Manufacturing, Pharmaceutical and Electronic device
- Sightseeing spot:  
Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route, Gokayama Village (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Kurobe Dam
- Previous major events:
  - 10th World Congress of the International Federation of Esthetic Dentistry (2017)
  - 40th Progress In Electromagnetics Research Symposium: PIERS 2018 Toyama

## 4. SENDAI

- Tokyo Station to Sendai Station (1 h 30 min)
- Fisheries, Agriculture and Food
- Sightseeing spot:  
Matsushima, Zao Town, Akiu and Sakunami Hot Springs, Hiraizumi (First UNESCO World Heritage Site in Tohoku Region)
- Previous major events:
  - Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015)
  - 43rd International Conference on Coordination Chemistry (2018)



## KITAKYUSHU: INSPIRING FROM GREEN TRANSFORMATION

Conferences harness the transformative power of people coming together. Kitakyushu is an inspirational example of that same principle: a city where industry, academic institutions, government and citizens overcame the pollution that arose from a history of heavy industry. Together, they transformed Kitakyushu into a “Green Growth City.”

Today the city is a leader in robotics, alternative energy, and occupational health, as well as high-value steel products. Visitors also are treated to famously warm hospitality, and traditional culture including Kokura Castle.

Kitakyushu’s advanced environmental and energy measures, as well as local technologies and products. These on-the-ground activities are great catalysts for the irreplaceable networking of face-to-face events.

### Putting the environment first

Kitakyushu was the first city in Asia to be selected by The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** as a **Green Growth City**, a place that combines environmental and economic success. Efforts toward achieving a resource-recycling society continue. The **Kitakyushu Science and Research Park**, for example, hosts many public and private research facilities studying biomass energy. The city is also working through an industry-academia-government collaboration to build Japan’s largest offshore wind power generation facility. Then there is the **Kitakyushu Eco-Town Project**, which aims to attract even more academic institutions in the fields of environment and energy sciences.

### Cutting-edge care system

Kitakyushu hosts significant research directed at next-generation robotics, centred around the **Kyushu Institute of Technology**, which is developing robots that assist people dress up. The **Advanced Care System Promotion**

**Office** is pursuing the development of robots that can help provide nursing care to an ageing population. The city is also home to **YASKAWA Electric**, which leads the world in industrial robotics.

Despite advances in robotics, countless industrial jobs are done by people, who face risks from accidents and impacts on health. Kitakyushu is now known as a pioneer in rehabilitating industrial workers, and the **University of Occupational and Environmental Health** trains industrial physicians as experts in occupational health management.

### Glittering achievements

One unusual scenic attraction in Kitakyushu is the otherworldly sight of its factory lights by night, especially when toured by waterfront boat cruise.

The **Kyushu Works Yawata Area of Nippon Steel**, founded in 1901, is a base for global exports of high-performance, high-value-added steel products.

**TOTO**, meanwhile, is a brand that has amazed consumers worldwide with its innovative high-tech toilets. The company was founded in 1917, and in 2015, it opened a museum in Kitakyushu highlighting the role of plumbing fixtures in creating a sustainable society through environmentally friendly products and manufacturing processes.



The inspirational success story of Kitakyushu is all about transformation: turning hardships into opportunities and pursuing sustainability to solve economic and industrial challenges. Historically, Kitakyushu’s extensive mining and steelmaking helped drive Japan’s 20th century industrial development and modernisation. By the 1970s, economic changes threatened that prosperity, while the need to address pollution became acute. So Kitakyushu’s stakeholders banded together to achieve an unprecedented transformation to a cleaner, greener economy.

Now the city is sharing that experience with others around the globe as a convention city destination where attendees can have direct access to Kitakyushu’s sustainable ideas and inspiration. During the **2016 G7 Energy Ministerial Meeting**, venue exhibitions and pre- and post-meeting tours were used to showcase

## HIROSHIMA: RESEARCHING WITHOUT LIMITS

As the first city in human history to experience an atomic bombing, Hiroshima stands for the abolition of nuclear weapons and achieving lasting world peace. As a city that turned sites of destruction into symbols of peace, Hiroshima is an ideal destination for conferences on conflict-solving. A hub for industry and research, the city is located just a short trip from such iconic scenes as **UNESCO World Heritage Site Itsukushima Shrine**, an island shrine that appears to float at high tide. All of Hiroshima’s features work to the advantage of event organisers.

The president of **Hiroshima University**, **Mitsuo Ochi**, insists that developments in science and economics can only be realised on foundations of peace: “It has been 75 years since the first atomic bomb in human history was dropped,” he notes. “Since then, Hiroshima has accomplished a striking recovery as an international city of peace and culture, bursting with greenery. Hiroshima is now known to people worldwide as a sacred space for peace. This is why I am convinced that there is no city as fitting as Hiroshima to serve as a host for international meetings and events. Hiroshima University actively strives to facilitate international conferences attended by world-leading researchers and economic experts.”

### Progress in peace and prosperity

Both peace and prosperity are part of the identity and appeal of Hiroshima. The main industry is manufacturing, with a focus on the automotive, shipbuilding and chemical industries. Hiroshima is also number one in western Japan for transportation machinery. In recent years, the city has been a rising star in medical device manufacturing.

**Mazda Motor Corporation**, one of Japan’s leading automakers, has its headquarters, R&D and production

bases primarily in Hiroshima Prefecture, which also is home to many auto parts suppliers.

### From cells to space

Hiroshima University is the major academic institution, and the region overall has strengths in biology, medical research and space science. Key facilities include the **Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine** and the **Hiroshima Astrophysical Science Centre** at Hiroshima University, which operates the 1.5m Kanata telescope and engages in collaborative research with NASA on the Fermi gamma-ray satellite. In biological research, breakthroughs have been made here in livestock breeding, such as artificial insemination methods for swine.

### Savour the sublime Seto Inland Sea

Hiroshima is located in the heart of the Chugoku region on the Seto Inland Sea, a placid expanse of water connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan. Featuring a string of beautiful islands, the Seto Inland Sea is like a miniature Mediterranean. It serves as both a precious environmental, scenic and cultural resource, and a superhighway of vital shipping lanes. Its sheltered waters nurture a thriving **fishing and**

**aquaculture industry**. The region around Hiroshima supplies roughly 60% of Japan’s oysters. And as you might expect, Hiroshima does not disappoint the hungry diner. Imagine an ultimate post-conference itinerary that includes savouring fresh oysters and sipping sake on a boat as you gaze out at **Itsukushima Shrine**.



## TOYAMA: STRIVING TO DELIVER CURES

Toyama is one of Japan's leading pharmaceutical production regions. The proud heritage of innovation in pharmaceutical production and distribution here goes back 300 years. Today Toyama is energetically pursuing advances, and developing clusters, in the pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries. This energetic and pioneering spirit also extends to the hosting of international conferences. Poised between the Sea of Japan and the 3,000-meter peaks of the **Tateyama Mountains**, Toyama offers scenic and cultural attractions along with excellent conference facilities, professional services, and value for money. Toyama is about two hours from Tokyo by bullet train, and is also well connected by direct international flights to Asian neighbours.

Toyama's geography makes it one of the world's snowiest places. The benefits include abundant industrial water and inexpensive hydroelectricity that support manufacturing industries: pharma, electronics, metals, machinery, and more.

### A powerhouse of pharma and natural medicine

Synergy with the spirit of the host city helps elevate any conference. In Toyama's case, the spirit of pharmaceutical innovation is at the heart of the city's historic identity and current dynamism.

Centuries ago, Toyama-based travelling apothecaries developed a revolutionary system of marketing and supplying medicines widely to the public, long before railways made travel and logistics so much easier. Their solution: pre-stocked, post-paid medicine chests placed in people's homes. That legacy helped earn Toyama a reputation as Japan's "region of medicine" and now lives on in a \$6 billion pharma industry.

The industry is ably supported by the **University of Toyama**, whose School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences is globally recognized for its groundbreaking research in drug development and treatment. The university also hosts the Institute of Natural Medicine. **Toyama Prefectural University's Department of Pharmaceutical Engineering** and the **Toyama Prefectural Institute for Pharmaceutical Research** add to the city's strong academic and research foundation. They complement the approximately 80 manufacturing sites for novel and generic drugs around Toyama.

### The cure for your conference concerns

Toyama has all the facilities needed for holding conferences for up to 1,500 people on a relatively low budget. Generous subsidies and

personnel support are available from the prefectural and city governments, which are very active in attracting and holding international conferences.

Event organisers will benefit from Toyama's expertise, infrastructure, and its exclusive charm. In addition to the bullet train service from Tokyo, Toyama is also served by direct flights from Tokyo and Sapporo, as well as internationally from Seoul, Dalian and Taipei.

Toyama is a gateway to tourist destinations rich in traditional culture and architecture, including **Kanazawa**, famed for superb traditional crafts and contemporary art and **Gokayama Village**, whose steep thatch-roofed historic folk farmhouses are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

For conference delegates with an interest in regional delicacies, Toyama is renowned for masuzushi (pressed trout sushi), award-winning black ramen with a distinctive dark soy sauce-based broth, delicious sake, and much more.

In a world where striving for cures is more relevant than ever, let the forward-thinking spirit of Toyama be the catalyst for an international conference that taps into the key benefits of in-person meetings to spark innovation and collaboration.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOYAMA TOURISM ORGANISATION

## SENDAI: A LESSON IN RESILIENCE

Like a phoenix reborn from the ashes, Sendai is becoming an urban benchmark for disaster risk reduction and environmental sustainability following the devastating Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Sendai was right in the crosshairs of the tremors and tsunami, but the city bounced back strongly by pursuing community development in the spirit of "bosai"—the Japanese concept of comprehensive disaster risk reduction. That makes it a great fit for meetings and events in a world where resilience is needed more than ever.

### The city of "bosai"

Sendai is committed to sharing the bosai concept with the world. The **World Bosai Forum**, which has been bringing together industry, government, academia and citizens from across the globe every two years, was held in Sendai in 2019. Meanwhile, **Tohoku University's International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRiDeS)**, established in 2012, fosters interdisciplinary research on community disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

Sendai hosted the **Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**, and gave its name to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which was adopted on that occasion. This incorporates several key ideas, such as **Build Back Better**, that emerged from many years of bosai research in Japan.

Sendai's *bosai* spirit is also apparent in its measures to become a resilient city by developing levees that will resist collapse in the event of a future tsunami.

### A hub of innovative industries

Sendai has the largest urban economy in the Tohoku region and is a hub for thriving agriculture, forestry

and fisheries industries. It is home to Tohoku University, a research powerhouse with strengths in materials science and medicine. The **Super Lightsource for Industrial Technology, Japan (SLIT-J)**, which will push forward capabilities in nanoscience and nanotechnology, will be completed by 2023.

The **Tohoku Medical Megabank Organisation (ToMMO)** was established to provide state-of-the-art long-term health support for residents affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. It harnesses medical informatics to provide an advanced medical system based on a large-scale genome cohort study and a biobank combining that data with medical records.

### Enjoying nature's bounty

The land around Sendai is well watered by rivers. Since the 17th century, this region has been one of Japan's most productive farming areas for rice and other crops.

Outdoor attractions include **Zao Fox Village**, a unique zoo where visitors can interact with free-range foxes.

Looking to the sea, the Pacific coastline near Sendai is a treasure trove of scenic wonders for conference-goers

looking to get out and enjoy nature pre- or post-meeting. The crown jewel is **Matsushima**: an azure bay dotted with tiny, fancifully shaped islands topped by picturesque pine groves. It is celebrated as one of Japan's supreme scenic sites.

Nearby, the coast consists of rias: long, narrow, intricately branching bays, which are dramatically scenic and ideal for **aquaculture**. The collision of warm and cold currents off the coast gives rise to abundant plankton that support outstanding coastal fisheries. It is no wonder that Sendai is known for delicious *sashimi* and *sushi*.



PHOTO CREDIT: WORLD BOSAI FORUM 2019 IN SENDAI



## VOICES OF EXPERIENCE: HEAR FROM THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW!

HQ wanted to know attendees' impressions of Japan as a destination for international association conferences and business events, so we interviewed two event participants: **Benjamin Lok, IEEE Virtual Reality steering committee member**, who attended the **IEEE Virtual Reality 2019 Conference** in Osaka; and **Meenakshi Wadhwa**, president of the **Meteoritical Society** who was in Sapporo for the **Annual Meeting of the Meteoritical Society**, also in 2019.

### Interview questions:

1. Do you think holding the conference in Japan was scientifically meaningful and beneficial for the researchers who attended?
2. Did you hear any positive feedback about the city or Japan from delegates?
3. What was the most impressive highlight at your conference, compared to previous experiences?
4. Safety, security and flexibility are becoming top priorities for conference organisers and will remain so even after COVID-19. How do you evaluate Japan on these points?
5. What are the benefits of face-to-face meetings that can't be replaced?



*Since ancient times, Osaka has established itself as a major commercial hub, acting as a platform for domestic and international trade and cultural exchange. Today, the city remains the largest in western Japan, and several companies, universities and research institutes continue to focus on sectors such as engineering, robotics and new energies. Something that Benjamin Lok explained when proving IEEE's preference...*

1. Osaka was a fantastic location to host the **IEEE Virtual Reality 2019 conference (IEEE VR 2019)** in March, 2019. The location was very accessible for international attendees and the conference has large contingents of researchers from Europe, the Americas and Oceania, in addition to Asia. Japan is home to many of the virtual reality field's top researchers and thus, having the conference in Osaka enabled the mutual exchange of ideas among world class researchers.

2. Yes. Every attendee I spoke with, including many who have attended over a dozen IEEE VR conferences, were very positive about Osaka and Japan as the best venue for the

conference. Many stated that IEEE VR 2019 was the best conference ever held due to its quality, the leadership, the activities and food arranged by the conference and the quality of the interactions with other attendees.

3. One of the evening activities was a night market filled with restaurants and shopping reserved for conference attendees. This was a special dinner entertainment booked exclusively at the **Kuromon Market**, one of the largest and most famous markets in the Kansai region. We were able to try a large variety of fantastic cuisines and shop for unique gifts and items. The whole experience was additionally memorable as we were able to explore this space with many colleagues and friends.

4. As many of our conference attendees were first-time international visitors to Japan, I was interested in understanding safety and security for travellers. Speaking with many attendees, Japan was unanimously perceived as very safe and very welcoming for international visitors. Attendees reported feeling safe, walking around Osaka and surrounding towns easily and at all times. Communication supported multiple languages.

5. Conference attendees won't be meeting face-to-face if COVID-19 is still impacting people's health and travel opportunities. So, face-to-face meetings will regain importance as soon as COVID-19 is no longer a widespread issue.



*Set in a rich environment, Sapporo is the fifth largest metropolis in Japan, considered the cultural, economic and political centre of Hokkaido. This 'arctic giant' is one of the most attractive spots in the country for areas such as geosciences, environment and medicine, and has developed a vast body of work in collaborative research and education. Factors that played in the decision to hold the Annual Meeting of the Meteoritical Society, Meenakshi Wadhwa pointed out...*

1. Sapporo was a wonderful location for the annual meeting of the **Meteoritical Society (MetSoc 2019)** in 2019. The meeting was held on the beautiful campus of Hokkaido University, which is considered a centre of excellence for research in meteoritics and planetary science. In particular, many of the attendees enjoyed tours of the state-of-the-art research laboratories at Hokkaido University.

2. Yes. The attendees provided very positive feedback. The meeting was very well organised. The venue on the campus of **Hokkaido University** was conveniently located so that it was within easy walking distance of many hotels. There were a lot of very good restaurants nearby as well.

3. What made this meeting especially memorable for all attendees was that **JAXA's Hayabusa2 mission** completed a sampling event from the surface of asteroid Ryugu during the week that the meeting was held. Also, since 2019 was the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the first collection (a total of nine distinct stones) of Antarctic meteorites during a Japanese Antarctic expedition, the hosts organised a small meteorite exhibit during the meeting and a special lecture by Professor **Kazuyuki Shiraiishi** of the **National Institute of Polar Research** to commemorate this significant event. The lecture was delivered in English for the international membership of our

society, but it was a huge draw for the general public in Sapporo. A simultaneous translation to Japanese was expertly provided by a student member of the Meteoritical Society.

4. Attendees felt very safe and secure travelling and staying in Japan during the meeting. While most sessions were held during the daytime, there were some evening events, but our society members attending the meeting felt comfortable walking to and from these events at all times.

5. In recent months, we have seen many innovative technologies being applied towards holding virtual meetings and conferences. Nevertheless, it will be difficult to fully replace the benefits of in-person meetings with virtual ones. Informal conversations between meeting sessions often spark new ideas and new collaborations. The Meteoritical Society will be carefully monitoring the situation with COVID-19 before planning in-person meetings again because the health and safety of our attendees is a primary concern. It is quite possible that we may not be able to hold in-person meetings until a vaccine is widely available.





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