

BEST PRACTICES



Japan Incentive Travel Awards 2016



From left: Mr Ryoichi Matsuyama, President of JNTO; Ms Makiko Yamamoto, President of MPI Japan Chapter (Jury member); Mr Yuji Andreas Wendler, teamtravel premium; Ms Emma Ho, Lion Travel Service; Ms Kumiko Hardy, JTB Australia; and Mr Masataka Ota, Chief Consultant of JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. (Jury member).

Best incentive itineraries

Originality, effectiveness and local engagement mark this year's winners

INCENTIVE TRAVEL TO JAPAN has grown rapidly in the last few years as planners introduce increasingly creative ways for visitors to experience the country. In view of the growth potential of this sector, Japan National Tourism Organization has taken a further step to strengthen Japan's brand image by launching JAPAN Incentive Travel Awards in 2016. The award programme recognises best practices by international incentive travel planners who bring a group of at least 50 to Japan for at least three days.

Submissions are evaluated for the effect the trip has on the participants and their employer as well as the trip's contribution to the local economy, itinerary and sustainability considerations.

This year's winners succeeded in combining originality and effectiveness while showcasing Japan as a unique and inspiring destination. The award ceremony was held on December 7 during International Meetings Expo (IME) in Yokohama.



Enjoying Sapporo - visiting a revitalised school and cheering a compatriot at a baseball match at the Sapporo Dome.



GRAND PRIZE

Reaching for the stars

Destination: Sapporo
Group size: 500 (first group), 6,000 (second group)
Length of trip: 5 days (first group), 7 days (second group)
Incentive planner: Lion Travel Service, Taiwan
In recognition of: Excellent planning for a large group, special programming that included a keynote by a prominent person, attending a sporting event featuring a celebrity from the participant's home country, visits to special-interest local attractions, and generating valuable publicity in the media about incentive travel to Japan

SUCCESS FACTOR

Emma Ho, Senior Manager, Incentive Travel Division, Lion Travel Service, explains her company's winning approach

Japan has a special place in the hearts of Taiwanese travellers, who are always keen to personally experience Japanese culture in various forms, such as tea ceremony (*sado*), flower arrangement (*ikebana*) and martial arts (*bushido*). Our itineraries were designed to not only deliver all that but also an appreciation of the destination's unique characteristics — Hokkaido's breathtaking sceneries, wildlife and environmentally friendly approach to living. The itineraries were defined

by three themes. The first was 'Beauty of Architecture'. We planned a tour of buildings by Tadao Ando, one of Japan's most famous architects, and invited him to speak at our award ceremony. The participants truly cherished the opportunity to hear this much-revered architect speak about his ideas in person. The second theme was 'Sportsmanship'. We brought participants to a baseball match at Sapporo Dome to cheer Taiwan-born Dai-Kang Yang, who plays for the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters baseball team. Considered the pride of Taiwan, Yang is an inspiration to the participants, and a role model for them to achieve their own dreams. The third theme was 'Sustainability', which is an important philosophy for our client's business. We made a special arrangement to visit an elementary school in Bibai City. This once-deserted school has been transformed by sculptor Kan Yasuda into a beautiful sculpture park brimming with life known as Bibai Art Plaza today. We are grateful for the assistance from the Hokkaido authority who gave each of our participants a welcome kit that included postcards and chocolates. The special Yosakoi dance performance at the award ceremony was a welcome touch."



Our client's requirement was always safety and less than five hours' travel time from Taiwan. Based

on that, we have proposed various destinations through the years. However, year after year, Japan was their first choice. Since 2012, we have organised incentive trips for this client — an insurance company — to Osaka/Kyoto, Tokyo and Kansai/Shikoku. The 2015 trip to Hokkaido is our biggest group ever.

PRIZE FOR PLANNING

Discover Tokyo on five senses

Destination: Tokyo
Group size: 55
Length of trip: 4 days
Incentive planner: teamtravel premium GmbH, Germany
In recognition of: Innovative teambuilding idea that encourages interaction with local people and discovery

SUCCESS FACTOR

Yuji Andreas Wendler, Managing Director, teamtravel premium, on mixing learning and fun for a new way to experience Tokyo

Our trip was an interactive meeting with an unconventional way to discover Tokyo. Our client was a luxury goods company and the participants came from various Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, China, South Korea and



Getting ready to explore Tokyo on five senses.

Refining, Yield', the seminar featured two expert speakers on customer service and loyalty, topics that would greatly benefit the participants in their daily duties. The teambuilding activity, which followed the seminar, was called 'Five senses to explore Tokyo'. The group was split into smaller teams to explore the city on different routes. Armed with an iPad, GPS router, Japan Rail/subway passes, they were given tasks to complete and riddles to solve along the way, some of which were related to contents from the seminar. We built in opportunities for interaction with locals so that participants were meaningfully engaged as they explored the city. We also planned a Wadaiko Japanese drum session for a fun close encounter with Japanese culture, where each team was tasked with creating its own 'HURRY' sound. The farewell dinner was held on a *yakatabune* (Japanese-style pleasure boat), where everyone got to enjoy sceneries of Tokyo in the evening amid the newfound camaraderie. This trip was the culmination of 10 months of work. The goal was to build strong, positive emotions that will endure."



Creating a special sound to drum up team spirit.



For many of the participants, Japan is a new and attractive destination. Its culture of

hospitality (*omotenashi*) too is very relevant for the participants because they work for a luxury goods retailer. Japan is still a relatively unknown destination for incentives. We have endless possibilities to introduce new ideas and combine it with all that Japan has to offer. It has the perfect foundation for the perfect incentive trip.

the client's home country France. The trip had a seminar component as well as a teambuilding component. With the theme 'HURRY — Helping, Upgrading, Reminding,

PRIZE FOR CONTRIBUTION

Into the heart of Japan

Destination: Okayama, Kagawa, Tokushima, Kobe
Group size: 25
Length of trip: 8 days
Country of origin: Australia
Incentive planner: JTB Australia
In recognition of: Highlighting Japanese local culture and excellent route planning and time management

SUCCESS FACTOR

Kumiko Hardy, General Manager, JTB Australia, explains how her team created an itinerary that delighted even seasoned travellers to Japan

Our group was made up of very experienced travellers, so the usual attractions on the Golden Route between Tokyo and Kyoto would not be suitable. The client, a manufacturing company with headquarters in Japan, wanted to give the participants something out of the ordinary.



A highlight of our itinerary was taking part in the famous Awa-Odori festival — Japan's largest street-

dancing festival — and giving the participants an opportunity to experience first-hand the vibrant and very unique local culture. Also, the fun part of dressing up in traditional costumes and dancing and mingling with the locals as they parade through the streets really appealed to them.



Dancing in the Awa-Odori festival.

JTB, being the largest travel agent in Japan, had the advantage of experience, trust and local knowledge. We put 'Experiencing local culture' on the priority list and included historical attractions, beautiful sceneries, gardens and theatre. The highlight was having our group participate in the Awa-Odori — Japan's most famous dance festival. It was nothing they had expected! The festival dates back some 400 years, and features groups dancing in the streets of downtown Tokushima in the evening. The participants not only had the chance to dress up in traditional costumes but actually danced and mingled with the locals. For planners from Australia, Japan's advantages are lack of jetlag, safety, cleanliness, punctuality and reliability of service. Also, Japanese culture is completely different from Australia's. Japan's rich history, nature, culture, technology, cuisine and the welcoming and courteous nature of its people all worked in its favour."