

### **Associations and Cities Connect in Special 30th Edition Meet Japan**

Three decades is a long time – and we're proud to say that as of December 2019, JNTO has been welcoming associations to Japan as part of the Meet Japan programme for 30 consecutive years. The conventional gift for a 30th anniversary is a pearl, and through Meet Japan we aim to introduce participating association executives to the hidden pearls of the events world: destinations they may not find otherwise.



Meet Japan showcases destinations event organisers may not be familiar with, which this year included the cities of Nagoya, Gifu, Hiroshima, Chiba, Kitakyushu and Kumamoto, as well as the islands of Okinawa. From the 8th – 13th December 2019, the 15 participants were split into four groups and took part in tailored site inspections. Each group visited two cities or one region, where they took in venues, hotels, and local cultural experiences.

As always, the variety and versatility of Japanese destinations was on show, including the uniquely Japanese blend of the modern and ancient. Participants in Kumamoto visited a newly opened state-of-the-art venue where medieval castle views dominate the skyline, while those in Gifu visited an architecturally striking conference centre by Tadao Ando that stands on the beautiful Nagara River, where the ancient practice of traditional cormorant fishing thrives to this day. The tour of Hiroshima incorporated a sobering visit to the peace memorial, and a message of hope through a paper-crane origami workshop. Those visiting Okinawa got to experience the natural beauty of the coastlines and caverns, alongside luxury beach resorts.



Upon returning to Tokyo, the group had the opportunity to connect and discuss Japan with regional convention bureaus, before wrapping up with a farewell party in the heart of Tokyo. The farewell party was held in the Tokyo Kaikan, a landmark venue of Tokyo since the 1920s, and featured dynamic entertainment from Okinawa. Guests were treated to performances of *eisa*, *sanshin*, and a lion dance.



When asked about her experience, Ms Gergana Georgieva from Kenes Group commented that the “hospitality, warmth and excellence in every part of the organization of this trip were above any expectations that I had before visiting [Japan].” As the Japan Convention Bureau, we would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all the participants for their time, and look forward to the next opportunity to inspire and inform through the Meet Japan programme.

For more information on Meet Japan and other ways that you can meet us, please click [here](#).

