

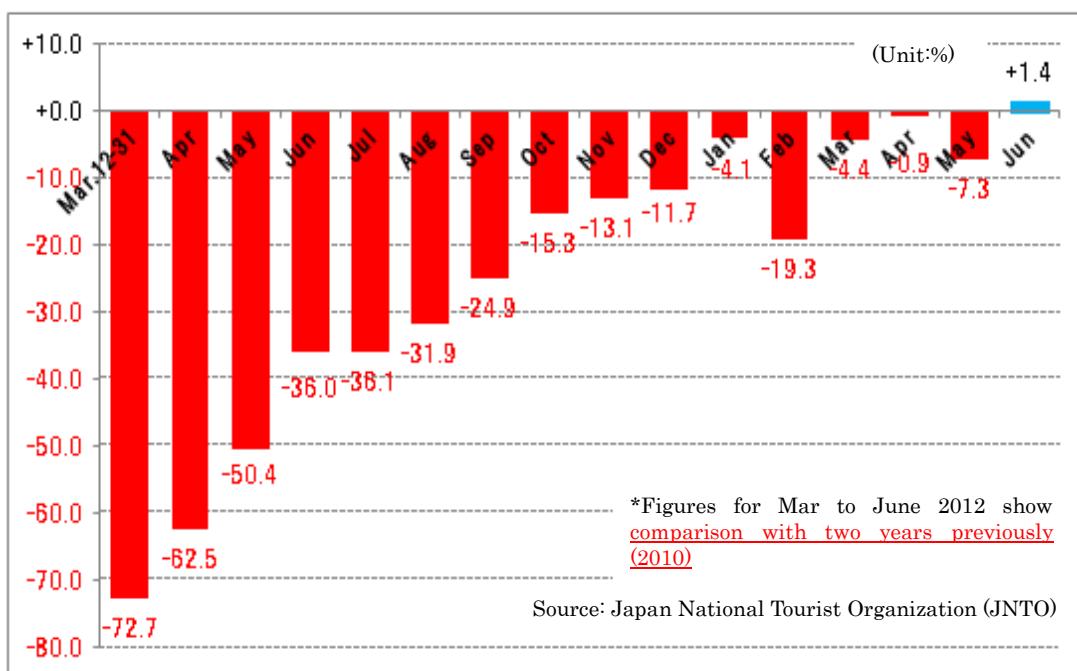
July 20, 2012

Foreign visitors to Japan recovers to pre-disaster level

The number of foreign visitors to Japan has, for the first time since the Earthquake on March 11, 2011, exceeded the pre-disaster level. The figure for June 2012 was 686,600, an increase of 1.4% over the level recorded in June 2010 according to statistics published today by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

The Earthquake severely decreased the number of foreign visitors, driving the figure down to 295,800 in April 2011, which was a sharp drop of 62.5% from a year earlier. Despite a gradual recovery, the number of foreign visitors to Japan for 2011 as a whole was 6,220,000, down 27.8% from 2010, and the worst rate of decline on record.

It gives me great pleasure to report that foreign visitor numbers have bounced back to the pre-earthquake level in a little more than a year. This result has only been possible through the tremendous support and cooperation that we have received from everyone around the world. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincerest gratitude for such heartwarming support.



On July 9, Taleb RIFAI, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), commented: “It is very encouraging to see demand returning to countries such as Japan, Egypt and Tunisia. These are long standing tourism destinations ready to fully welcome back the millions of tourists that each year chose to visit them.” The recovery of Japanese tourism was given a further boost in April this year, when the World Travel & Tourism Council Global Summit 2012 was held in Japan. Again let me express my deepest appreciation not only to these organizations but to everyone associated with tourism around the world.

On July 9, the American travel magazine “Travel+Leisure” listed Kyoto among the top ten in its 2012 World’s Best Cities rankings. Even since the Earthquake, Japan or Japanese cities like Tokyo or Kyoto have already ranked at or near the top of many world rankings such as the Guardian Travel Awards and the Wanderlust Travel Awards. There has been a spate of new tourist spots, among them the TOKYO SKYTREE, which opened in May. The Japan Tourism Agency has put together “Three Reasons to Visit Japan,” so be sure to take a look (see Attachment 1).

On July 9, the Japan Tourism Agency conducted an inspection that involved actually spending a day touring around Tokyo and measuring the amounts of radiation that a tourist would be exposed to throughout the day, including radioactive material in food products. The inspection confirmed once again that Tokyo is as safe as other major cities worldwide (see Attachment 2). Future efforts will continue to focus on providing accurate, straight-forward information to put potential international visitors at ease.

The Japan Tourism Agency and the JNTO continue our efforts to encourage even more people to visit Japan. Our prime minister, Yoshihiko NODA has stated, “Tourism is precisely the frontier for Japan.” We sincerely hope that as many people throughout the world as possible visit Japan including the Tohoku Region which was hit by the disaster but has already recovered to welcome you.

Norifumi IDEE
Commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency