

Speech
Presented by Mr NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the Japan Roadshow 2024 Perth
Hosted by the Japan National Tourism Organization
On Wednesday February 7, 2024

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wadjak people of the Noongar Nation and pay my respect to their elders, past, present and emerging,

It is my pleasure to welcome you at the 'Japan Roadshow 2024 Perth' hosted by Japan National Tourism Organization, JNTO, Japan's official Tourism Board. I remember this venue is exactly where Ambassador of Japan and I welcomed Prime Minister Kishida 14 month ago, which was a turning point for a series of positive developments that have since followed.

I wish to thank JNTO for organizing this timely event in Perth. This last year has seen a boost in exchange activities, including the resumption of All Nippon Airway's Perth Narita direct flights after three and a half years of suspension. In October last year, the WA Premier, the Hon Roger Cook, and the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Tourism, the Hon Rita Saffioti, became the first passengers on the direct flight for their first official visit to Japan, further strengthening the Japan-WA relationship.

Since then, more people from WA have been visiting Japan, with Tokyo overtaking Bali as Australian's favorite holiday destination in December. Delegations have been pouring into WA from Japan, including officials from Nagoya Port Authority in celebration of the 40 year anniversary of their sister port partnership with Fremantle Ports last week. I will also have the pleasure of receiving the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs who will be attending the Indian Ocean Conference in Perth this weekend.

This sudden rise in popularity is an encouraging sign of opportunity, with Tokyo now more popular than Hawaii, Paris or any other Asian city including Singapore and Bangkok. The reasons are for you to discover, but there is no doubt that skiing and snowboarding, world class food, traditional culture such as shrines and temples, and pop culture such as anime and gaming, are what attracts so many visitors from Australia. This is on top of the overall value for money on travel fare and shopping opportunity due to the current exchange rate.

If I may add one more thing, it is also thanks to the amazing love Australians have for Japan, especially those in Western Australia. This bounce back of tourist numbers following the pandemic has been like the blossoming of wildflowers after a long winter. For your interest, according to an opinion poll by the Lowy Institute last year, Japan held the trust of 85% of Australians to act responsibly in the world, higher than any other country.

I would like to thank ANA for their contribution to this jump start in visitors between Western

Australia and Japan through the resumption of Perth-Narita direct flights. Now, all of you should know that there will be a technical pause of this line as from April 14 due to a shortage of aircrafts caused by the “Pratt & Whitney” engine issue, but ANA has also announced that it will re-start again in October this year, aiming to have even more flights than currently in a very near future. I appreciate ANA for its continued strong commitment to bring Japan and WA closer together.

The Japan-Western Australia relationship is supported by robust personal ties built over many years, since the Japanese Pearl divers some 140 years ago. There are many cultural ambassadors of Japan here in Perth, sharing the beauty and culture of Japan.

In fact, 2024, is anticipated to be a milestone year. The City of Perth will celebrate the 50th anniversary of their sister city relationship with Kagoshima City, the longest standing of any of their sister city relationships. This will be honoured by a Kagoshima-themed Perth Japan Festival on Saturday March 23 at the Supreme Court Gardens, where it is expected that more than 16,000 people will attend, also supported by ANA. Shinju Matsuri in Broome and the South West Japan Festival are other opportunities where Japan and its culture will be showcased.

The Japan Education and Culture Center of Western Australia was officially opened last weekend and Curtin University’s Japan Center for Engagement will be launched later this year. I am overwhelmed by many Japan-related events which I will attend this year.

Today, tourism promotion bodies from different parts of Japan are here to meet with travel consultants in Western Australia. Among them is a group from Kanazawa in Ishikawa Prefecture.

We were all saddened with the news of Noto Peninsula earthquake on New Year’s Day and I wish to express my sincerest sympathies to those affected. While Japan is pulling its efforts together to provide assistance to the affected areas and to the people who are suffering now, they are also working hard to achieve the earliest possible reconstruction of the economy. Please meet the group from Kanazawa today and plan your tourists flow to Kanazawa that offers beautiful Japanese gardens and food.

In conclusion, the Japan Roadshow in Perth is held at no better time. I hope today’s presentations and networking will be useful and productive.

Thank you for your attention.

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