

## The Northeast Asian Region and Japan's Tourism Exchange and Inbound Promotion Measures

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I will explore the current situation for the “Northeast Asian Tourism Subregion” and consider the future activation measures. At the same time, I will look at the rapid growth in Japan's international tourism and wonder if it is able to contribute to the tourism subregion. The figures for global tourist arrivals have been rising even with the changes in the economic environment and terrorism. “Northeast Asia” has grown 5.7% over the past decade, whereas the global average has been 3.8%. And then how about the “late-starter”, Japan? Former Prime Minister Koizumi announced the “Road to a Tourism-based Country” in 2003, and the strategy for overseas visitors to Japan of “10 million in 2010”. They started the Visit Japan campaign, and it went smoothly in its first half, but did not reach its targets in the second half with economic downturn and the like. After going through the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, it reached the 10 million level in 2013, and afterwards rose rapidly to a record 28 million last year. It is the fruit of public-private cooperation. The dependence on Chinese visitors is an issue, however. Meanwhile, with young people tending not to travel, Japanese overseas travelers have stood at approximately 17 million for many years. Japan-China and Japan-ROK diplomatic tensions also act as a brake. This is “soaring inbound” and “plodding outbound”. The government is vigorously undertaking promotion with targets of 40 million overseas visitors in 2020, and 60 million in 2030.

What is special about the “Northeast Asian Tourism Subregion”? And how to activate it? First, there are “international exchange fiercely distorted by change” and “extremely little international exchange between neighboring countries”. The former case has “2.59 million Japanese visiting China as against 6.37 million Chinese visiting Japan”. The latter, between Japan and Russia, has “84,600 Japanese visiting Russia as against 54,800 Russians visiting Japan”. Second, there is “the arduousness of travel and the great seasonal fluctuations”. Mechanisms for visa relaxation and waiver measures are necessary. Third, “local receptivity is weak and there are few tourism professionals”. Development of the receiving area and the nurturing of guides and interpreters is important. Fourth, “there is little tourist information and promotion is weak”. One nation alone is weak, and we must construct an advertising network and conduct PR. There is also the strategy of joint cruises centered on the Sea of Japan. Incidentally, how can we promote Japan's activation and what can we contribute to the tourism subregion? I suggest “two-way tourism” which is not skewed toward inbound. In particular, while they are measures targeting young people tending not to travel, we must promote “overseas educational travel”, and “independent travel” by young women. With the current low “Japanese departure rate of 12.8%”, the “measures for attracting visitors to Japan” will stagnate in the near future. If it grows to 30–40%, Japan will become a genuine tourism-based country, in balance with the 40 million visitors to Japan, and be able to contribute to the tourism subregion. In addition, it will enable either “cooperation” in or “counteraction” to the “One Belt, One Road” concept using the dramatic increase in Chinese visitors as a “weapon”, and can contribute to the stability of the “Northeast Asian Tourism Subregion”. Lastly, if we can jointly undertake the promotion of tourism and preparation of receptivity, the ethos of “international understanding” and “international cooperation” within the subregion will be fostered.

(Note: The “Northeast Asian Tourism Subregion” in this paper is Japan, China, the ROK, the DPRK, Mongolia, and Russia. Accordingly, it differs from the statistical region of the United Nations World Tourism

Organization (UNWTO.)

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