

# Global Travel & Tourism Summit Visits Japan

**The 12<sup>th</sup> Global Travel & Tourism Summit organized by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) was held in Tokyo and Sendai, attracting around 1,200 participants from 53 countries.**

**"I**t was personally wonderful for me to see how much the progress has been made to restore Tohoku in Japan to normality. I was very pleased that the international delegates coming to Japan for this conference all took time in the Tohoku region and other places in Japan before we started great this summit," said David Scowsill, President and CEO of the WTTC, at the press conference on April 18.

Now in its 12th year, the WTTC Global Summit was held in Japan from April 16-19. Initially, it was planned to host the Summit in Tokyo only. However, to support reconstruction following the Great East Japan Earthquake through tourism, and to convey the recovery of the damaged Tohoku district as well as the attraction of tourism in the Tohoku region, part of the Summit was held in the quake-hit area of Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture.

At the Sendai venue, lectures and discussions were held concerning the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Asian tourism market. The welcome dinner included a performance by the Date Bushotai as well as displays of Sansa Odori, Hula Dance by the Hula Girls in Iwaki, and other local performing arts of the Tohoku region. Dishes made from local ingredients from the Tohoku region were also served.

Hiroaki Takahashi, Tohoku Tourism Promotion Organization chairman, reported confidently, "With the exception of the areas that were completely devastated by the tsunami, and the zones with restricted residency as a result of the nuclear power accident, Japanese-style inns, hotels, hot springs and other tourist facilities are all operating normally. Also, everyday life, food, and water are all completely safe."

At one point following the Great East Japan Earthquake the number of domestic travelers dropped by 30% and the number of foreign travelers to Japan dropped by 60%. However, the number of domestic travelers returned to normal in the summer of 2011, and the number of foreign travelers to Japan too recovered to slightly below normal in March this year. The government is also implementing initiatives to attract overseas visitors to Japan such as issuing multiple-entry visas to Chinese people visiting Okinawa, and waiving the visa issue charge for foreign tourists visiting the disaster-hit prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima.

At the Tokyo venue, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said, "I believe in the power of tourism. Tourism brings new encounters and the joy of the seasons, and encourages the region and vitalizes the economy. Tourism also results in fostering a relationship of trust among people beyond national borders." 



**PHOTOS 1** Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda speaks at the opening ceremony of the WTTTC Global Summit, April 17. **2** The Summit in Sendai attracted more than 600 participants. (MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO) **3** A panel discussion at the WTTTC Global Summit in Tokyo **4** WTTTC President and CEO David Scowsill speaks at the Sendai venue. (MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO) **5** Summit participants in Tokyo enjoy making the traditional paper fans of Chiba Prefecture (MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO) **6** The Hula Girls (THE JAPAN JOURNAL) **7** The Date Bushotai (THE JAPAN JOURNAL) **8** Sansa Odori (THE JAPAN JOURNAL) **9** Taiko drumming (MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO)

