

Pursuit of Top Tourist Destination with World-standard Airport Quarantine System

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1. Japanese government has eased the coronavirus-related airport quarantine system for travelers arriving from abroad, effective September 7, 2022. Prime Minister Kishida has suggested his policy behind, which is to aim for a smooth immigration control like those in other Group of Seven countries. The latest measures taken, however, have neither reached the level of other G7 countries that abolished most of the restrictions, nor achieved the world standard that includes ASEAN members that are stricter relative to western countries.
2. Japan is deemed by overseas travelers to be a country of cumbersome procedures, due to its current daily entry cap, a ban on individual tourist visits, and visa requirements. Consequently, Japan's international flight recovery in July 2022 is as low as 20%, far behind other G7 countries (70%-80%+) and key ASEAN members (30%-50%+).¹
3. On the business demand front, Japan's urban areas are leading the recovery, making it more challenging to attract inbound tourists to regional areas. Under the inbound and outbound flights running short, Japan is struggling with responding to the needs of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), which are reviving around the world.
4. Without solving these issues right away, Japan cannot tap inbound demand this winter, and must face its negative impact on its economy amid the weakening yen. Winning the MICE businesses necessitates a response from an early stage. Therefore, uncertainty on the recovery of international flights will hinder the incoming businesses in the next year and beyond.
5. Aiming to strike a balance between combatting COVID-19 infections and economic revitalization, while making a strategic move to a top tourist destination, implementation of the following measures is Japan's pressing issue.
 - (1) Swiftly lift the ban on individual tourist visits that account for over 90% of total visits made in advanced nations, expecting more inbound tourists in regional areas
 - (2) Re-start visa waiver tourist travel available in the pre-pandemic era
 - (3) End the daily entry cap to appeal for the impression that Japan is open
 - (4) Revive the international flights including those of regional airports and devise a strategy to bring in MICE businesses

¹ OAG, The Outlook for International Air Travel in 2022.