

J-WING TRAVEL

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***Issues of general passports in 2007 reduced by 2.2%**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently reported that issues of general passports in 2007 reduced by 2.2% to 4,209,097 compared to 2006, resulting in year-on-year reduction for the first time since four years ago. In 2006, issues of general passports increased because many passport holders had to renew their 10-years valid passports, which were available from November in 1995. In 2007, the reduction of outbound travelers was just linked with the reduction of passport issues.

The number of valid passports as of December 28 2007 also reduced by 2.9% to 32,576,539 compared to a year earlier, following 4.0% year-on-year reduction in the end of 2006. The numbers accounted for 25.5% of the entire population as of January 1 2008, lower than 26.3% as of 2006.

General passports issued in 2007 were broken down into 1,540,658 for 5-years valid, 10.4% less than 2006, and 2,667,567 for 10-years valid, 3.3% more than 2006. 10-years passport holders accordingly accounted for 63% of all passport holders, higher than 60% in 2006.

The number IC passports, which have been available since March 20 2006, increased from 3,439,003 in 2006 to 7,648,100 in 2007.

Out of passport issues in 2007, passports for male Japanese were down 1.2% to 2,088,149, while those for female Japanese were down 3.1% to 2,120,948. It is noteworthy that passport issues to 20's female Japanese decreased by 7.4% to 476,132 in 2007, which resulted in the largest year-on-year reduction. On the contrary, passport issues to 60's female, 70's female and over 80's female Japanese increased by 4.5%, 5.1% and 2.4% respectively.

Among male Japanese, passport issues to over 60's increased, however those to 20's and below 19 years old decreased in the same manner as female Japanese.

A share of passport issues to 20's lowered from 30% at the peak to 20.7% in 2007, while a share of those to 60's rose to 11.3% in 2007.

Also the statistics finds that Tokyo, Shiga and Okinawa were only prefectures to increase passport issues in 2007. The followings are top 10 prefectures to issue general passports in 2007:

1. Tokyo = 658,071 (up 0.2%)
2. Kanagawa = 412,384 (down 0.8%)
3. Osaka = 327,085 (down 2.5%)
4. Aichi = 291,525 (down 0.4%)
5. Saitama = 258,330 (down 2.4%)
6. Chiba = 247,299 (down 1.4%)
7. Hyogo = 211,341 (down 2.4%)
8. Fukuoka = 154,713 (down 3.9%)
9. Shizuoka = 121,723 (down 2.6%)
10. Hokkaido = 111,325 (down 4.3%)

***VWC will start in full swing with a new leader in April**

Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA) officially announced on February 20 that it has selected Hiroshi Sawabe, Regional Director and Marketing Starwood Hotels Japan, as a leader of "20 million Promotion Office" for Visit World Campaign (VWC), which aims to increase Japanese outbound travelers to 20 million by 2010. He will officially take office on April 1 this year.

Sawabe was elected unanimously, valued his strong leadership and effective communication with the travel industry, the airline industry, tourism bureaus, the government and local governments.

VWC 20 million Promotion Office, led by Sawabe, consists of 10 members from JTB, Kinki Nippon Tourist, View Travel Service, HIS, JALPAK, ANA Sales and Nippon Travel Agency.

VWC 20 million Promotion Special Committee, the upper organization of the promotion office, will hold the first meeting in April. The committee, led by JTB President and CEO Takashi Sasaki, is joined by JAL and ANA presidents, Narita, Kansai and Centrair airport companies' presidents, JNTO President Tadatoshi Mamiya and probably BOAR and ANTOR.

The committee will release an official roadmap for actions toward the goal of 20 million in April and will develop promotional campaigns for focal overseas destinations after April in partnership with the tourism offices, airlines or local governments.

In parallel, the Outbound Travel Committee of JATA will tackle so-called structural issues, such as deregulations for visa or school trips or promotion for passport acquisition. JATA places promotional campaigns and solution of structural issues as two wheels to increase Japanese outbound travelers. JATA President Harumi Umeda said that the travel industry has to make efforts for two-ways tourism, promoting both outbound and inbound travels.

VWC will be the first effort for the travel industry of Japan to boost demand of outbound travels in a cooperative way.

***JAL follows ANA for rise of fuel surcharges**

JAL applied for rise of fuel surcharges to Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport on February 20, matching the ANA's level that was already announced. JAL has also decided to raise the benchmark of fuel surcharges from a range of \$5 today to a range of \$10 on the average oil price for the latest three months.

In this rise of fuel surcharges as well as rise of domestic airfares, ANA took the initiatives in reality, unlike before.

The followings are the JAL's rise of fuel surcharges by destination:

Korea = from 2,400 yen to 2,500 yen

China = from 5,900 yen to 6,500 yen

Hong Kong, Philippine, Taiwan, Guam and Vietnam = from 7,500 yen to 8,000 yen

Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India and Hawaii = from 12,500 yen to 14,000 yen

Europe, North America, Middle East and Oceania = from 17,000 yen to 20,000 yen

Brazil = from 21,000 yen to 24,000 yen

For rise of fuel surcharges, JAL sets a range from \$110 to \$120 (ZONE G) and a range from \$120 to \$130 (ZONE H) as new benchmarks of the average oil prices in addition to a range from \$100 to \$105 currently. If the ZONE H benchmark is applied, fuel surcharge on its China flight will be 8,500 yen, for example.

***Hong Kong Express to open five routes for Japan at the same time**

Hong Kong Express will begin serving scheduled flights to Naha on April 4

(two flights a week), to Okayama on April 26 (three flights a week), to Kagoshima on April 28 (three flights a week), to Hiroshima on May 1 (two flights a week) and to Central Japan International Airport or Centrair on May 15 (six flights a week) this year, if approved by the government of Japan. All of the scheduled flights will be served with 164 seats B737-800.

The new businesses are based on the recent agreement between both aviation authorities of Japan and Hong Kong for aviation liberalization at all local airports of Japan except airports in the Tokyo Metropolitan area.

Hong Kong Express will establish a local office in Naha on March 3 this year and a business function to control all of the businesses in Japan in Nagoya. Naha, Okayama, Kagoshima and Hiroshima are airports that Hong Kong Airlines, a sister company of Hong Kong Express, has served program charter flights before.

***Kansai expects Eva's Los Angeles flights as a new transpacific operation**

Kansai International Airport Co. Executive Vice President Tadakuni Hirano said at a news conference on February 18, "We welcome new three Kansai-Los Angeles flights a week by Eva Airways. The service will be a good opportunity not only for Japanese people to fly to Los Angeles but also for Taiwanese American people to visit Japan for sightseeing."

Eva Airways will begin serving the new Taipei-Kansai-Los Angeles flights on March 30 this year, and with the service, the airline will operate ten Taipei-Kansai flights a week.

Kansai is supposed to handle Los Angeles flights for the first time since JAL suspended its Kansai-Los Angeles flights a year and a half ago. The airport used to handle 63 international flights on transpacific routes, however today it handles seven San Francisco flights a week by United Airlines and seven Detroit flights a week by Northwest Airlines only.

For this coming summer schedule, JAL will increase its Qingdao flights to four a week, and ANA will increase its Qingdao flights to daily a week and its Dalian flights to daily a week.

Kansai handled record-high 170.8 flights a day (both international and domestic flights) on average in 2007, 9% more than 2006. The number of international flights a day also resulted in record-high 106.8 on average, 7% more than 2006. The number of domestic flights a day increased by 12% to 64.0 on average in 2007 compared to 2006.

The number of passengers in 2007 was 16,622,853 in total, almost the same as 2006. Out of the yearly total, the number of international flight passengers was slightly down 1% to 11,056,622, broken down into 7,365,580 Japanese (down 5%), 3,290,278 foreigners (up 10%) and 400,764 transits (down 21%). The airport is still booted by increase of foreign visitors to Japan, but continues suffering from reductions of Japanese departures and transits.

***Kansai still suffered from reduction of Japanese international flight passengers**

Kansai International Airport Co. recently reported that the number of Japanese passengers on international flights in January this year was down 4% to 585,420, while the number of foreign passengers was up 11% to 249,720 compared to January 2007. Including 45,110 transits, the monthly total of international flight passengers was down 1% to 880,250 compared to a year earlier.

Kansai succeeded in increasing domestic flight passengers in January this year by 8% to 422,854 over the same month 2007 mainly because of new flight services by Star Flyer and movement of several scheduled flights from busy Itami Airport.

Kansai handled a total of 10,688 aircraft take-offs and landings in January this year, 8% more than a year earlier. The monthly total was broken down into 6,689 for international flights (up 8%), including 5,086 for passenger flights

(up 1%), 1,469 for cargo flights (up 32%) and 134 for others (up 60%), and 3,999 for domestic flights (up 9%).

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The logo for the Japan Visit USA Committee. It features the text "official" in small white letters on a blue background, followed by "Japan Visit" in blue, "USA" in large red letters, and "Committee" in blue. To the right, the Japanese text "アメリカ旅行委員会" is written in white on a blue background.

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(English news).

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