

The Spirit of Hospitality

MASATO SAKAMOTO

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あみず 餅 じゃがバター



A city of contrasts: From the colorful old Senso-ji temple in Asakusa, said to have been completed in 645, one can see the rapidly rising structure of Tokyo Sky Tree, which will be the tallest free-standing tower in the world when it opens in 2012.

MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO

Japan has a fast-growing reputation as a tourist destination, with recent years seeing an almost annual increase in the number of overseas tourist visitors.

Japan has a diverse range of tourism resources, namely a spirit of warm “hospitality” to travelers, abundant nature, history, traditional and modern culture, world-class cuisine, and regional ways of life. In this month’s issue we introduce some of the various types of “hospitality” that greet travelers, from Japanese-style inns (*ryokan*) to mascot characters.

In the Guardian Travel Awards 2010, announced in October 2010 by the British daily newspaper the *Guardian*, Tokyo was voted No. 1 in the favorite city category, with Japan voted No. 2 in the favorite long-haul country category. Tokyo took No. 1 place for the first time with a high satisfaction rating of 97.4%, beating Berlin in second place with 96.9%, and Sydney in third place with 95.4%.

Guardian Travel Editor Andy Pietrasik said of Japan’s appeal, “People are endlessly fascinated by the country because innovation—the neon lights, the hi-tech gadgetry, the costume drama of the streets—cohabits peacefully with centuries-old culture. You can indulge yourself in the bright lights of the city, but then can easily escape to the mountains or the islands to seek out the more spiritual side of the country. I think people are also realizing that, in spite of its reputation, it’s also a lot more affordable than many think.”