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PRESS RELEASE

JNTO AND JTA DESIGNATE 2024 AS U.S.-JAPAN TOURISM YEAR



New York - September 22, 2023: The new "U.S.-Japan Tourism Year 2024" was announced at a special event hosted by the [Japan Tourism Agency \(JTA\)](#) in partnership with the [Japan National Tourism Organization \(JNTO\)](#) at The Glasshouse in New York, coinciding with the UN General Assembly week. The event welcomed more than 170 media, travel advisors and other related industry dignitaries to celebrate American tourism to Japan (which reached an all-time high in 2023). The celebration featured cuisine from renowned chef and restaurateur Nobu Matsuhisa, virtual performances and interactive experiences, and a panel discussion with leaders in travel media.

The event kicked off with a demonstration from hologram performance group HITOHATA, which integrated the multitude of experiences to be had in Japan. Opening remarks were made by the Commissioner of JTA, Ichiro Takahashi, followed by a speech from the

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Japanese Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Tetsuo Saito. Saito commented: "In order to expand mutual exchange, I am pleased to announce that 2024 will be designated as the U.S.-Japan Tourism Year, which will include special events and initiatives in both countries. I would like to ask all the tourism professionals here to join us in these initiatives."



Afterwards, both Saito and the State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Norikazu Suzuki, led the crowd in a kagami-biraki, or ceremonial sake barrel opening to celebrate the over 170 years of US-Japan relations. Alongside the regional food tasting offered at the event, famed chef Nobu introduced the intricacies of Japanese cuisine through a special video message, and "sake sommelier" Leila Miyuki Anraku introduced the seven different types of sake available to try. The President of the Japan Association of Travel Agents, Kuniharu Ebina, presented the statistics of 2019 visitor arrivals in both countries that illustrates significant presence of mutual traffic.

Following that, JNTO highlighted Japan's tourism strengths - tying into the event experiences such as the virtual tea ceremonies - and introduced Geoffrey Weill from Geoffrey Weill Associates, who led a lively panel discussion about traveling to Japan. Weill was joined by Deputy Global Editorial Director of *Condé Nast Traveler* Jesse Ashlock, Deputy Editor of *AFAR* Katherine LaGrave, and Emmy-nominated TV personality and global culinary expert Nilou Motamed. The event concluded with a lucky draw for a free trip to Japan, chosen by former New York Yankees star Hideki Matsui.

In a video message, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida detailed the importance of the U.S.-Japan Tourism Exchange for 2024: "Even in New York, a hub for food connoisseurs, Japanese cuisine featuring delicious seafood, Wagyu beef, authentic shochu, and sake has been gaining popularity. However, Japan still has numerous hidden culinary gems and unique experiences that you can't find anywhere else. At this reception, I hope you'll get a glimpse of some of Japan's undiscovered charms."



For images from the event, visit:

<https://jnto.box.com/s/49wbg8u0crktv5cq7ctalt8m8fhuf06o>.

For more information about travel to Japan, visit <https://www.japan.travel/en/us>.

*Pictured: (header image) Attendees executing the kagami-biraki, or ceremonial sake barrel opening © JNTO;
(inset images) performance from HITOHATA © JNTO;
panel discussion with Geoffrey Weill, Nilou Motamed, Jesse Ashlock, and Katherine LaGrave © JNTO;
former Yankee star Hideki Matsui presenting the award to the lucky draw winner © JNTO*

ABOUT JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION (JNTO)

As the official tourism board, JNTO seeks to inspire international travelers to visit Japan. Focusing on sustainability, diversity and preservation of its history and culture, JNTO encourages travelers to explore the country while supporting local businesses, learning about indigenous cultures, and helping conserve its natural sites.

For more information about travel to Japan, visit <https://www.japan.travel/en/us> or the JNTO pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#). To contact the New York office of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) directly, please e-mail jntonyc_press@jnto.go.jp.



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