

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Japanese tourism fights back despite a hard 2011**

**SYDNEY January 24, 2012** – Australian arrivals to Japan for 2011 numbered 162,700, a 27.9% average annual decrease compared to 225,800 in 2010. The figures recently released by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) indicate that tourism has picked up in the latter half of 2011 climbing up to only 11.7% decrease in December 2011, despite the dramatic drop Japan saw after the unprecedented natural disasters and nuclear power plant accident, which hit Japan in March 2011.

JNTO sees the decline is mainly due to the unstable situation at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, worries about food and water safety and radiation issues. In addition, the strong Japanese yen to the Australian dollar is another variable diverting Australian tourists to countries like the USA and Europe.

Mr. Yukio Yamashita, Executive Director JNTO Sydney office commented: "Australian tourists are returning to Japan since September 2011 when the Smarttraveller Advisory for travel to Japan by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade returning to the normal pre-event level of "Exercise normal safety precautions". And in December 2011 the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda announced that the Fukushima nuclear power plant's cold shutdown was completed. We are seeing last minute bookings for this ski season, which has received generous snowfalls and the best snow in years creating ideal conditions for skiers, and also Sakura (cherry-blossoms) tours in March-May 2012."

"Thanks to the continuous efforts of local travel agents, airlines, media and the Australian public, Japan prevented a further decrease in tourist numbers. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to everyone who has been supporting us."

"JNTO Sydney Office will continue its promotional activities throughout 2012. In February and March for example, consumers will encounter more of Japan online, in print media, through travel agents. In 2012, we hope to see more Australian visitors in Japan."

Total visitor numbers to Japan for the year 2011 ending December were 6,219,300, a 27.8% decrease from 2010's figures of 8,611,175, which was the best record thus far.

Australia retains its sixth position in terms of visitor numbers to Japan, ahead of Thailand, the UK and behind South Korea, China, Taiwan, USA and Hong Kong.

The figures released by JNTO are based on arrivals of Australian passport holders and include business,

leisure and stopover visitors.

Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Sydney <http://www.jnto.org.au>

JNTO Tourism Statistics: <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/ttp/sta/PDF/E2011.pdf>

DFAT Smarttraveller Advisory: <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Japan>

-Ends-

**For more information contact:**

Japan National Tourism Organization, Sydney: <http://www.jnto.org.au/>



**Japan.** Endless Discovery.



*Mt. Fuji and Chureito Peace Pagoda ©Fujiyoshida City/ ©JNTO*