

Introduction

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This second issue of Volume 5 is our tenth issue, and marks the completion of the fifth year of both the journal and its parent body the *International Association for Asia Pacific Studies*. It is also the second issue that can be considered a “themed” issue. In this case, most of the general articles were presented at an International Geographical Union Pre-Conference Meeting held at APU on August 1, 2013. This meeting was held in advance of the International Geographical Union Regional Congress 2013 in Kyoto, held the following week. The Pre-Conference Meeting was organized by the IGU Commission on Tourism, Leisure and Global Change and the Association of Japanese Geographers Study Group on Tourism and Leisure. The theme was “Tourism between Tradition and Modernity,” a topical and interesting theme for our journal. As mentioned in an earlier issue, it is our intention to continue working with selected conference presenters in the future to develop their work into articles we would be proud to publish in *Asia Pacific World*.

Our Special Feature in this issue grew out of a keynote speech delivered at the 2012 IAAPS Conference, held in Hong Kong, by Professor Amitendu Palit of the National University of Singapore’s Institute of South Asian Studies. Entitled *The Trans-Pacific Partnership: Identifying the Implications*, Professor Palit’s work looks at various implications of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on the Asia Pacific region, including not only economic and structural implications, but also implications for regional integration efforts and geo-strategic dynamics. Professor Palit was kind enough to update his paper these past few months to take into account the many changes which have occurred with TPP since the time of his keynote speech. As we all know, the TPP is a hot subject at the present time, making this an important reflective piece on current events in our region.

We then move to the special Travel and Tourism section I mentioned earlier. The first article in this section is an interesting and original exploration into disaster tourism by Professor Carolin Funck. In her article, Professor Funck focuses on tourism in Kobe City in the wake of the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and examines the various messages being conveyed at monuments and memorial facilities. Unlike many disaster sites in which tourism is focused around one central memorial, many separate memorials are scattered around Hyogo prefecture. These memorials were created by multiple levels of government as well as by citizens’ organizations. Interviews with key people at these in-



stitutions provide a look into the character of earthquake-related tourism in the affected areas. Special attention is given to citizen engagement in place management, a process termed *machizukuri*.

Our second article in the Travel and Tourism section takes a detailed and descriptive look at changes in the landscape of Niseko-Hirafu ski resort in Hokkaido. With the number of skiers in Japan maintaining a steady decline since the 1990s, ski resorts have faced progressively increasing problems. As nearly a quarter of the total number of ski fields have already closed, finding approaches to attract new customers is important for the industry's survival. Professor Masaaki Kureha examines the methods by which Japanese ski resorts are trying to increase inbound tourism, notably by attracting tourists from foreign countries. Professor Kureha focuses on the construction of new accommodation (condominiums, cottages, etc.), mostly done in a Western style, to support the new wave of tourists coming to the region.

Chuntao Wu and Lei Peng's contribution to the special section is an article that conducts an overview of airplane charter operations in Japan from the 1970s to the 2010s. The focus is on how changes in Japanese aviation policies have affected airline operations. Japan-China, Japan-Taiwan and Japan-Russia charter route networks are analyzed to examine the responses of network airlines during the process of the deregulation of Japanese aviation.

Next, Seo Jaeseung and Carolin Funck look at tourist behavior at Japanese festivals. This article provides a means-end chain analysis of two festivals in Japan that accept participants from outside the region of the festival. The study is unique in that it looks into tourist behavior and the motivations of team participants. Participants were interviewed to determine the main factors influencing participation.

Honggang Xu, Tang Zhouyuan, and Ni Sisi take a different approach to the study of the attraction of culture for tourists. Based on a case study of silver handicrafts from Xinhua, a Bai ethnic village, this article explores the impact of cultural tourism on the innovation of ethnic handicrafts. The issues are addressed from the perspective of both ethnic entrepreneurs and tourists.

Finally, Shien Zhong, Jie Zhang, Hao Luo, and Honglei Zhang analyze the development of theme parks (and similar tourist attractions, such as gardens and amusement parks) in China. They compare characteristics of parks constructed before the current century with those of the present day. The article not only considers the parks themselves, but also the urban development that accompanies them.

We conclude with one additional research article, not part of the Travel and Tourism special section. Anh H. Nguyen contributes an interesting analysis of the performance of the Vietnam Credit Information Center (CIC), an independent organization operating under Vietnam's State Bank. Nguyen used a survey of hundreds of small and medium enterprise (SME) owners to examine the perceptions and attitudes of customers on credit information sharing activities in general, and on the CIC in particular. The results suggest

that customer knowledge of the function of Vietnamese credit information bureaus is limited. However, she found that borrowers had a positive attitude to credit information sharing activities.

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