



**For Immediate Release
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Japan, Egypt Tours, Vacation Packages Rebound, Reports USTOA

The U.S. Tour Operators Association reports that tours and vacation packages to Japan and Egypt are rebounding.

Japan departures resume by late April

While most USTOA companies serving Japan proactively cancelled trips following the devastating Japan earthquake and tsunami on March 11, two thirds of members responding to a new, informal survey said they plan to resume their departures by the end of April. Two USTOA companies -- Super Value Tours and Goway Travel -- are currently operating programs to Japan, while two other member companies are scheduling departures for June and beyond.

According to Roy Liao of Super Value Tours, whose company had guests arriving in Japan the day of the earthquake, "There is quite a bit of misinformation ...about the current state of Japan..... This is particularly unfortunate because the country needs support from the tourism industry now more than ever."

One Super Value guest, Margaret Miller, of San Francisco Bay area, remarked, "Our trip was wonderful. We were taken great care of by [tour guide] Maiko. Her generous and loving spirit did much to calm any anxieties that the group had. I have never been to Japan, so I was struck by the grace of the Japanese people."

Another passenger on the same tour said, "Maiko was essentially my Japanese ambassador who helped me, 7 Canadians, and 13 of my fellow Americans to relax and make the most of what is [sic] left of our time in Japan. We missed a few planned events on our itinerary but she helped us pick up right where we left off. Despite the disaster Japan was undoubtedly one of the most amazing countries I've ever been to."

More companies return to Egypt

Developments in Egypt continue to be positive. Since the last informal member poll February 28, seven out of 11 responding USTOA companies now say they are returning to Egypt earlier than previously anticipated. In fact, by May 1 three-quarters of responding member companies will have returned to Egypt, reports Terry Dale, USTOA president. Another two companies will include the destination beginning May, and an additional three companies plan to resume Egypt departures in the fall, at the beginning of the traditional tourist season, observes Dale.

He cites initial reports from a USTOA company, saying that their first clients came back "absolutely ecstatic" with their trip. According to a company representative, there were so few tourists that they had unprecedented access to all the sites. The company added that all their passengers commented on how welcoming the Egyptians are.

"Travelers' actual experiences to Egypt have been highly positive. But, perceptions may differ," notes Dale. "Although some of our USTOA member said they are getting requests for travel to Egypt, about half of responding companies said they are still receiving cancellations from people scheduled for future trips to Egypt."

USTOA calls for travelers to support Egypt and Japan

“Both Egypt and Japan --while highly different countries-- have many similarities. They are rich in history and culture, and their people are warm, welcoming and hospitable to travelers. Both countries provide travelers with a rich and rewarding travel experience, and they deserve our support. Travel is not only about sights, it’s about getting to know people and cultures.

“That’s where tour operators and vacation packagers come in. Their local guides and representatives not only help travelers learn about a destination. They are there to go the extra mile, to help travelers through unforeseen situations that can arise anytime and anyplace. Our USTOA member companies helped travelers navigate the unrest in Egypt, going to extraordinary lengths to get their passengers home safely. In Japan, tours were rerouted and tour escorts were there to assist travelers, providing a safe and rewarding experience for all passengers” says Dale.

For more information on USTOA member companies serving Egypt and Japan, visit www.ustoa.com, or consult your travel agent.

Founded in 1972, the United States Tour Operators Association is a professional association representing the tour operator industry. Its members are made up of companies whose tours, packages, and custom arrangements encompass the entire globe but who conduct business in the U.S. As a voice for the tour operator industry, USTOA represents this sector in matters pertaining to the travel industry as a whole, both here and abroad. Among USTOA’s goals are consumer protection and education.

USTOA member companies have met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the association’s Travelers Assistance Program, which among other things protects consumer payments up to \$1 million in case the company goes out of business. USTOA is the premier association of companies providing vacation packages, tours, and custom travel itineraries for more than 11 million people yearly.

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