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# one+

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COVER ART BY JASON JUDY

**A Defining Moment +62**

Bad press & misinformed lawmakers create an opportunity for a unified industry to prove its worth and help its members succeed.

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Mitzi Montoya measures the perceived value of virtual reality.

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This year's MeetDifferent opening general session set the tone for the rest of the conference.



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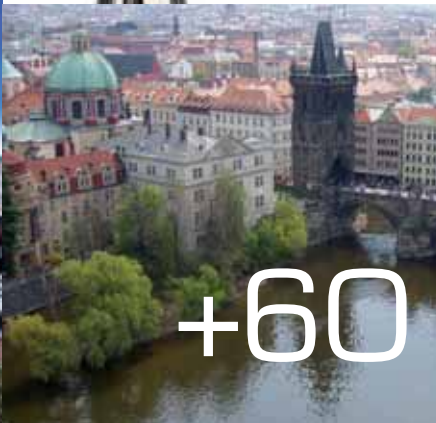
The American Wind Energy Association's WINDPOWER 2008 Conference and Exhibition took Houston by storm when it visited in June.

**The Great Motivator +56**

Stereotypes about far-away places and cultures were put to rest when a North American group visited Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan, last May.

**Making the Connection +60**

Prague is easy to get to from just about anywhere. Its value compared to other European cities makes it enticing, and its service standards, culture and history make it irresistible.



# The Great Motivator

BY ROWLAND STITELER

**TO THE CURSORY OBSERVER, JAPAN— WITH ITS WORLDWIDE REPUTATION FOR HAVING A HUGELY COMPETITIVE, PERFORMANCE-OBSSESSED CORPORATE CULTURE** in which 12- and 14-hour work-days are the rule and not the exception— would hardly seem like the ideal destination for an incentive group to relax, recharge, reflect and take a respite from the stress-inducing perils of 21st-century life.

But stereotypes about far-away places and cultures often fall away upon closer inspection, and that was exactly the case for planner Robin Hulsey, assistant vice president of Austin, Texas-based National Western Life Insurance (NWLI), who took a group of 360 top sales achievers to Tokyo and Kyoto in May 2008 for an incentive and sales conference.

“The great surprise for anyone who has not been to Japan before is that even in intensely urban places like Tokyo, you can go just a few steps off a busy street and find hidden, serene gardens that are tranquil places where you can essentially take a step back in time,” Hulsey said.

Almost every attendee on the NWLI incentive trip was in store for that surprise, because virtually none of the attendees—top salespeople from 12 countries—had been to Japan before.

“That was part of the appeal,” Hulsey said. “Even though our salespeople are world travelers, most of them had not been to Tokyo or Kyoto, and they had a huge

## What's New in Tokyo and Kyoto

A new landmark that will have great options for groups, the 610-meter (2,000 feet) **Tokyo Sky Tree** tower broke ground last summer and will open in 2012. The tower, which will be the tallest structure in Japan, will have an observation area and restaurant near the top.

The **Shangri-La Hotel Tokyo** opens this month and has 202 guest rooms and a 4,000-square-foot ballroom and conference center on the 28th floor.

The **Hotel Granvia Kyoto**, one of the city's primary convention properties, installed a new Wi-Fi system in December that offers wireless access that is five times faster than conventional 802.11 a/b/g service (the service you will find at most any Starbucks or McDonald's in the U.S.). The new service offers access at 300 Mbps and is free to guests and meeting attendees, with multiple broadcast points set up in the hotel conference center.

Happo-en Gardens in Tokyo



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curiosity about Japan and a desire to go there.”

And the attendees' desire to see Japan and learn about its culture did one thing that incentives are created for: motivate.

The salespeople involved in the trip were independent insurance agents who typically sell for multiple insurance companies, she says, and when the Japan trip was announced, the potential incentive winners showed great enthusiasm for qualifying for the trip. Because the two-city trip—for which attendees would literally be transported halfway around the world—was relatively expensive, the sales achievement qualification bar was set a little higher than previous incentive trips, and the attendees worked hard to qualify, Hulsey says.

“These people are sales achievers who could certainly choose to go other places, and we were pleased to see they were inspired to work hard to qualify for our trip,” she said.

The reward the qualifying attendees got for their hard work was an enriching cultural experience that each of them will undoubtedly remember for years to come.

“What most people who have not been to Japan before probably don't realize is that this is a culture that maintains the traditions and values of a bygone era,” Hulsey said. “And it's refreshing to experience that.”

Japan is a place where one's word on something is an iron-clad pledge, and pride in a job well done is paramount. Hulsey was initially uneasy when the hotels involved

The Ginza shopping district in Tokyo.



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did not want written contracts, but that uneasiness faded fast when she realized that hotels were following out in exact detail every promise they had made. It was also refreshing in Kyoto to see cab drivers in sparkling uniforms and white gloves and see them jumping out to open doors for their passengers—these are not just limo drivers, but regular taxi drivers as well. Hulsey was pleased, upon bringing the group of 360 into Narita International Airport in Tokyo from points worldwide, to discover that not one single piece of baggage had been lost—a first in her experience when working with groups of that size.

James Kent, international marketing coordinator for the Kyoto Convention Bureau, says that at least for the past few centuries, Japan as an island nation looks outward to the world. (Kent identifies with that because he hails from an island nation as well—England.) Young people in Japan tend to travel the world before they settle into their careers back home, so there is a huge world-experience level within tourism and meeting-related industries, such as destination management companies, in Japan.

That level of international support was put to its test with Hulsey's event, in which attendees spoke English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Russian, and needed translation services in their native languages—not a problem in Tokyo or Kyoto.

Once in Tokyo, attendees were given a grand tour of the most popular sites,

including the Imperial Palace; the famous Meiji Shrine complex, which includes an evergreen forest area, Shinto shrines, an Imperial treasure museum and an art gallery; the Ginza shopping district; and a side trip to the nearby town of Hakone, home of the Hakone National Park, with a great view of Mount Fuji.

One of the high points of the Tokyo leg of the trip was an awards banquet at Happoen Gardens, a venue with winding walkways through a tranquil garden, complete with a pond surrounded by 200-year-old bonsai trees and teahouses.

"We wanted our agents to experience a traditional Japanese garden and immerse themselves in the Japanese culture," Hulsey said. "And this place met and exceeded our expectations."

The Kyoto portion of the trip was essentially an incentive within an incentive, reserved for the 160 top qualifiers in the main group of 360, making the total trip a nine-day event for the top qualifiers, members of the NWLI Champions Club. Attendees on that portion of the trip took the "bullet train," which covers the 350-mile route from Tokyo to Kyoto in two hours and 15 minutes.

Once in Kyoto—an ancient city of 1.5 million with more than 2,000 historic temples and shrines—the attendees had a reception at another tranquil garden, The Garden Oriental Kyoto, a 450,000-square-foot garden and restaurant complex that includes the



## Fun Fact

Most everyone has heard of what is arguably Kyoto's most famous company: **Nintendo**. The company began as a playing card manufacturer and has kept its headquarters in Kyoto, even after its mega-success, because company managers like the city's creative atmosphere.



## Transportation Tips

A new sightseeing bus, **The Tokyo Shitamachi Bus**, which goes to major tourism attractions such as the Imperial Palace and Ueno Park, began operation last spring, offering an economical way to see city highlights. The bus leaves every 30 minutes from Tokyo Station and costs ¥200 (approximately US\$2.)

The Kyoto CB offers the **Kyoto Convention Pass**, which provides discounts on local transit systems.



Event attendees enjoying a function in Kyoto.



KYOTO CB (2)

former villa of Japanese artist Seiho Takeuchi and includes a gallery of his works.

The Kyoto attendees also visited Arashiyama, a pleasant, tourist-attractive town on the outskirts of the city, with shrines and shops and a view of Mount Arashiyama as a backdrop; Kinkakuji, or the Temple of the Golden Pavilion, a famous structure dating from the Muromachi Period (1336-1573) and included on UNESCO's World Heritage List; the Heian Jingu Shrine, which consists of four gardens around the shrine, representative of Meiji-era (1868-1912) garden design; and the Nijo Castle, built in 1603, a base of power for the shoguns that ruled Japan for almost 300 years.

### Joint Tokyo-Kyoto Incentives and Meeting Marketing

The joint Tokyo and Kyoto incentive trip by NWLI is particularly significant to the two cities involved because the Kyoto and Tokyo bureaus are currently engaged in a worldwide joint marketing effort, the first ever by two Japanese cities, according to Kent.

"We realize that right now, because of the world economic situation, it might be viewed by some as not the ideal time to be marketing to incentive and meeting groups to come halfway around the world to visit us," Kent said. "But we also feel that if we do our work well and show our value as compelling destinations, we will be laying groundwork for later this year, or 2010 or whenever the world economy gets better and groups are looking for great new destinations."

Kazuko Toda, director of convention promotions for the Tokyo CVB, says that right now is certainly a value period for those groups who do have the budget to consider visiting.

"Like most cities, we have had cancellations or postponements of conventions and incentives coming from outside the country, so there is definitely competitive value to be found here for hotel room nights and services that are components of those events," she said.

Kent says the joint marketing effort has something of an MPI heritage, in that the two Japanese bureaus first came together for the 2007 MPI World Education Congress (WEC) in Montréal, and a marketing partnership was born. He says Kyoto and Tokyo will market jointly at the 2009 WEC and also at this year's IMEX show in Europe.

Hulsey says that with the economy not withstanding, groups like hers will undoubtedly be attracted to Tokyo and Kyoto as the ultimate solution for the "been-there, done-that" syndrome.

"As far as Japan goes, our attendees had certainly never been there and done that," she said. "And our feedback shows they are now really glad they did." **one+**

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Ichi En Sou  
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Like this planner in the picture open your mind, leave preconceptions behind and uncover a harmonious environment for your meeting in Kyoto, Japan. Kyoto is the home of the Japanese spirit and this calligraphy of *Ichi En Sou* describes that spirit as well as indicates the successful event you can arrange in this cultural city. Just as the circle is endless, possibilities to inspire and create in Kyoto are infinite. Find your enlightenment in Kyoto, Japan.

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