



Press Conference & Meeting at the Kyushu District Transport Bureau: WFTGA Convention in Fukuoka 2026

Fukuoka took centre stage during a press conference held by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) in preparation for the 2026 convention. Organised by K-iTG, the event provided an opportunity for WFTGA representatives to meet with members of the Kyushu District Transport Bureau and to inform attendees that the convention will officially be held in Fukuoka.

WFTGA President Sebastian Frankenberger and Head Trainer Viola Lewis led the discussion, emphasising Fukuoka's unique appeal, the ambitious plans for the convention, and its broader significance for the future of tourism.

The conference served as a platform to highlight the collaborative efforts between WFTGA, local authorities, and industry stakeholders in ensuring the success of the upcoming event. By bringing together global and regional expertise, the convention promises to reinforce Fukuoka's role as a leader in tourism innovation and sustainability.



Fukuoka: A Gateway to Asia

Fukuoka has received high praise from Sebastian, who described it as a "gateway to Asia." He emphasised the city's rich cultural and historical significance, particularly highlighting its shrines and temples, which offer an exceptional experience for first-time visitors. Local guides play a key role in this, providing clear and insightful explanations that ensure visitors are not overwhelmed. This makes Fukuoka an ideal introduction to Japan's heritage and culture.

In addition to its cultural offerings, Sebastian recognised Fukuoka's strategic location, noting that it serves as an ideal point of access for travellers wishing to explore Asia. This convenient positioning, he said, allows Fukuoka to stand out as a role model within the tourism industry, offering easy connections for international visitors while showcasing the best of Japan.

Viola echoed Sebastian's sentiments, highlighting the city's warm and welcoming atmosphere. Beyond its renowned cuisine and captivating sights, she emphasised Fukuoka's unique way of life, which set it apart from other destinations. Viola concluded that Fukuoka exemplifies Japan's inclusive and hospitable culture, offering an authentic and heartfelt experience for all who visit.



Why Host the WFTGA Convention in Fukuoka?

When asked why Fukuoka was chosen as the host city for the 2026 convention, Sebastian commended the city's outstanding bid:

“Your bid was amazing. The biggest team effort—local dresses—the best bid we had in WFTGA’s history. Everything was well prepared.”

Sebastian outlined WFTGA’s global mission, which spans 87 organisations across 50 countries, representing over 200,000 tourist guides. The convention in Fukuoka will focus on advancing guide professionalism, discussing education and regulations, and raising the value of guides and their income.

He emphasised that the convention’s primary goal is to support the continued growth and evolution of the tourism industry, while highlighting the vital role that tourist guides play in shaping the visitor experience.

Shaping the Future Through Training

The press conference highlighted WFTGA’s ambitious plans to establish Fukuoka as a central training hub for tourist guides across Asia, with a particular focus on neighbouring countries such as South Korea, China, and the wider region. Sebastian outlined that this initiative aims to create a dedicated training centre for guides, extending beyond Japan. It is part of a broader strategy to establish training hubs on key continents, building on the existing European hub, to meet the diverse and evolving needs of guides globally.

Sebastian stated, “It’s the first step, looking forward to having a training centre on each of the continents.”

Viola emphasised that the initiative goes beyond simply training guides, with a strong focus on “training the trainers.” By collaborating closely with guides in Fukuoka, the goal is to establish a hub of excellence that can share knowledge, best practices, and innovative training methods throughout the region.

"It's very much about long-term cooperation, global support, networking, and recognising expertise. We train the guides according to their requirements and learn from each other," she said.



A Convention to Build Legacy and Innovation

Sebastian shared his vision for the convention as a model for the future of guiding, emphasising its potential to attract not only tourist guides but also their families, creating a ripple effect that encourages repeat visits.

Sebastian noted, “They are likely to choose the same guides who they became friends with,” emphasising how this fosters lasting connections and encourages even more visitors to explore Fukuoka in the future.

Key topics at the convention will include accessibility, the role of AI in guiding, and fostering inclusivity. Additionally, WFTGA plans to introduce the “Fukuoka Declaration,” a statement of ethical and moral principles for the tourism industry.

The Fukuoka Declaration aims to address pressing challenges, including the rise of artificial intelligence and shifting political dynamics. By prioritising high standards of ethics and professionalism, it seeks to ensure the guiding profession remains relevant and sustainable. This initiative is designed to establish Fukuoka as a global leader in tourism, symbolising progress and innovation for years to come.

As Sebastian noted, "The name Fukuoka will be remembered for a long, long time."

The Unique Appeal of Fukuoka

Sebastian and Viola praised Fukuoka's unique blend of natural beauty and urban sophistication. Sebastian admired the city's organisation, noting its harmonious combination of ocean, mountains, and vibrant city life—a stark contrast to Austria's traffic jams. Experiencing Asia for the first time, he found Fukuoka an ideal cultural introduction.



A Forward-Thinking Vision

The press conference concluded with a strong call for local support and international collaboration, highlighting the importance of the 2026 WFTGA Convention in Fukuoka. As the first WFTGA Convention to be held in Japan, the event will showcase Fukuoka's cultural and natural beauty while positioning the city at the forefront of sustainable and innovative tourism practices.

This gathering presents Fukuoka with a unique opportunity to showcase its strengths and play a central role in shaping the future of global tourism. With plans to establish training hubs and foster global expertise, the convention is set to leave a lasting legacy for both the guiding profession and the tourism industry.

The 2026 WFTGA Convention is not just an event—it's an opportunity for Fukuoka to set a global example, inspiring the tourism industry to embrace sustainability and innovation.