



West  
Bradley Brouwer

Country Manager of South African Tourism Japan

*With over 25 years in the tourism industry and a host of accolades and awards to his credit, Bradley Brouwer took over the position of SA Tourism Country Manager for Japan in early 2007, and is making great strides in promoting South Africa as a destination of choice for the East Asian Market.*

Text: Nicky Furniss  
Images: © SA Tourism

**What does your current position as Country Manager of South African Tourism Japan entail?**

“I am responsible for marketing South Africa as a preferred travel destination for Japanese and Korean travellers. We have a number of marketing activations and workshops in Japan and Korea each year to market South Africa to both the travel trade and to individual consumers. We have a great campaign which invites Japanese travelers to post pictures and stories of their experiences in South Africa on the website: [www.pictureperfect.jp](http://www.pictureperfect.jp), and I hope that the many Japanese travellers who plan to travel on the Blue Train in October will do the same. My office is very busy leading up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup, and I am lucky to be aided by two wonderful staff members, our marketing assistant, Ms Yuka Kondo and our finance and administration officer, Ms Akiko Isaka. I am in the office at 7am and most nights I only get home at 11pm, but this is normal in Japan.”

**South Africa has not traditionally been a top destination for Japanese tourists. Has that trend been changing in recent years?**

“Yes. Japan’s outbound travel worldwide has been declining since May 2007, but South Africa remained resilient to this trend with tourist numbers growing every year. In 2007, 32 000 Japanese tourists travelled to South Africa.”

**What is it about South Africa that attracts Japanese and Korean visitors?**

“We have introduced new areas in South Africa to both the Japanese and Korean markets which have been received really well. Japanese tourists traditionally visit “iconic” sites, and we have worked hard to introduce more of these places to them. As a result they are now visiting more areas in South Africa and spending more time here, which in turn helps to create jobs and build the South African economy. Some of the most popular sites include Table Mountain, Robben Island, and the wine estates in the Western Cape; the Blyde River Canyon (the only green canyon in the world) and the Panorama Route in Mpumalanga; The Kruger National Park, traveling on the Blue Train and visiting Gauteng to see Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu’s homes and for the flowering of the thousands of Jacaranda trees which is very much likened to the spring flowering of the cherry blossom or sakura trees in Japan. The Japanese always comment

on our friendly people, our vast open spaces, our game parks and animals, and most of all on the scenic beauty in South Africa.”

**With Japan and Korea producing such ardent fans during their own Soccer World Cup in 2002, do you envisage many Japanese and Korean soccer fans coming to South Africa during the 2010 FIFA World Cup?**

“Well I certainly hope so. We are working very hard to make a great success of the 2010 Soccer World Cup. This is dependant on the qualifying of the Japanese and Korean soccer teams, as their participation will certainly draw numbers. However, I do believe that many fans from this part of the world will come to the 2010 Soccer World Cup as soccer and baseball are the two most popular sports in Japan and Korea.”

**Living in Tokyo you must miss aspects of South Africa, what do you think of fondly when you think of South Africa?**

“I truly miss South Africa and am patriotic all the way, but in my opinion it is good to stay overseas for a while because you then realise just how great our country is, and what a wonderful nation we really are. We have won two Rugby World Cup trophies as a united South Africa and I believe we can apply this spirit to everything we do as South Africans. I have also managed to overcome some of my cravings for South African foods by helping to bring them to Japan. I taught the owner of a restaurant called Tribes, here in Tokyo, how to make some South African dishes and they now have South African classics like *boerewors* (spiced sausage), *bobotie* (spiced mince), *pap* (maize meal porridge) and *frikedels* (meatballs) on the menu. Although we are still unable to get South African beer in Japan, two months ago we did manage to import Amarula Cream. So now when I miss home I have some Amarula Cream and a *boerewors* and *pap braai* (BBQ) with some friends, and I am back in the South African spirit!”

**The Blue Train is one of South Africa’s most iconic symbols. How do you think the Blue Train appeals to a Japanese market?**

“The Blue Train is one of the top South African icons in Japanese travellers’ minds. I recommend the Blue Train to all I come into contact with as I believe that the Blue Train and its management team are doing a sterling job and are true ambassadors of South Africa.”■