

Vocational School and University

Great

“Ichariba Tourism”

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Okinawa is one of the top destinations areas for tourists in Japan. Kokusai-Dori (street), which is the nearest tourist site from my house, is always crowded with tourists and school trip students. A popular tourist spot is not only Kokusai-Dori, but also the many other popular places, such as Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, which was recognized by the Guinness Book as the largest aquarium viewing window in the world, Shuri Castle, which was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the King of Ryukyu lived in the castle in the past, and dugongs in the ocean. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that Okinawa is a sufficient condition as a tourist destination because it is blessed with culture and nature.

However, should we be content with the present circumstances? It could be sure that the people in the tourist industry are always trying to meet the customer demands such as a new tourist tours or a development of a souvenir, whereas travellers from foreign countries have decreased since the accident at a nuclear power plant in Fukushima and it has affected the whole areas of Japan. How should we deal with and what should we think about the present situation?

Is it really true to say that tourism is a problem only for people in the tourism industry? My answer is “No”. The general feeling seems to be that tourism is unrelated to people who are not involved in the work of tourism such as business men, students and shop keepers. However, there are plenty of reasons that tourism industry is related to us. If more tourists come to Okinawa, consumer spending increases. Then the money circulation is improved, and in its turn influences prosperity of the economy. If every single person in Okinawa contributes to tourism indirectly by increasing tourists may bring a benefit to us even though it is not related to incomes to us directly. Hence, we have to behave with consciousness that Okinawa is a tourist destination.

In terms of the whole of Okinawa, a variety of roles of people also have to think about current problems of tourism from various view. For example, it may need to establish an entertainment that is not affected by weather, or introduce new services and plans in order to obtain understanding from international visitors.

Although people who are not involved in a tourism industry also need to cooperate to take part in tourism, it could be difficult to do it. In this case, how do other tourist destinations cope with tourism in the entire prefecture? For instance, Kyoto has much cultural architecture and provides truly traditional “Japanese-style”. The city has tried to install utility poles and electric cables in an inconspicuous way at the historical buildings and the surrounding areas in order to maintain an atmosphere of old townscape. The equipment is managed by electrical companies. Although it seems there is no relationship between the companies and tourism, the city offers careful

consideration because the entire city has consciousness as a tourist destination. Thus, the effort of the city could attract a variety of travellers from abroad every year.

Okinawa should take a leaf from the spirit and the attitude of Kyoto. For example, we are proud of the abundance of nature in Okinawa so that there are many things to do for people in general such as “to treat nature” to “protect the natural environment”, “to pick up litter” and “to use public transports rather than private cars” to provide eco-environment to tourists. Therefore, we can encourage to visitors to come back even with such small actions. These activities are not only for visitors but our lives as will contribute to preventing global warming.

Okinawa is most proud of “the warmth of the people in Okinawa”. In Okinawa, there is a word “Icharibachode” which means all becoming brothers and sisters once you have met. I think that it is the origin of Okinawan culture that the people treasure every meeting. The values will not change even if the number of people who can speak Okinawan dialect decreases. For instance, we can see a scene frequently that junior and high school students for school trips wave their hands from their buses to the same generations as them. However, when I went to the main land in Japan and then waved to the local people, they did not wave back to me. In contrast, Okinawan people waved back with smiles to travellers all the time when they waved to us.

From my own experience, there was a happening that my friend was late for our appointment. When I asked the reason to her, she explained that she took foreign travellers to a place when they asked her the way to the place. Although she knew the route and told it to them, they did not understand her explanation in English.

“Come with me,” she said and took them to the place where it was actually opposite to the actual place.

Therefore, it would appear that Okinawan people might have true hospitality mind and carry on the spirit of Icharibachode since early times.

However, the spirit has not been taken to all of us. Although there are people who are reluctant to get along with tourists, it could be the chance to encourage continuous visitors who would come to Okinawa if every local has the awareness as a tourist destination. In addition, if more people welcome tourists to Okinawa with the spirit of Icharibachode and develop the place as a tourist destination, not only improving the economy but also they may reflect on what is good about Okinawa. In terms of the current issues of American bases in Okinawa, it also could be the chance to express our opinions and get recognition about the problems from the people in the world.

I would like people in Okinawa to think about a tourist destination as an issue affecting collectively the entire of Okinawa and would also like them to cope with the tourism activities even the small things that can be possible to do by individuals through the spirit of Icharibachode.

I think that tourism is to understand a culture, customs and spirit of the people who live in the destination as well as scenery and food culture.

The quality of tourism that appears whether it is worth experiencing and learning for tourists is also important so that we need to preserve Icharibachode carefully and provide Ichariba tourism to visitors in order to improve the quality.