

**Japan National Tourism Organization London Office**  
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## **Rise in Pop Culture-related Tourism Expected for Japan in 2010**

UK awareness of Japanese animation will be on a high in 2010 after the release of Astro Boy in January and the new Hayao Miyazaki film, Ponyo soon after in February. Japanese animation first really caught on in the UK with the phenomenal success of Nintendo's multi-billion pound Pokemon franchise, which included an animated cartoon series, games and a mind-boggling range of merchandise. It is hope that these two new films will inspire similar cartoon character worship.

Japan National Tourism Organization has seen an increasing number of people travelling to Japan because of an interest in Japanese animation. *JNTO London Deputy Director, Ayako Itagaki said, "We are increasingly seeing parents contact our office saying their children want them to go on a family holiday to Japan – the birthplace of Nintendo Wii, PSP and animated characters such as Hello Kitty. Requests for anime related information have become so frequent that we now have a dedicated "Animation in Japan" guide that provides details for museums, theme parks, exhibitions and shops that Japanese anime enthusiastic can visit in Japan."*

Tapping into this heightened interest in Japanese pop culture, in June this year Rough Guides released their first Rough Guide to Anime. The bumper 292-page guide provides a comprehensive overview of anime's history and must see films, as well as animation related sights people can visit in Japan.

Japan specialist tour operator, Japan Journeys, has been quick to spot the potential of animation to inspire travel to Japan. *"Our customers typically go in search of all the weird and wonderful Japan has to offer" says James Greenfield, Managing Director of Japan*

*Journeys. "We've been running Manga/Anime Tours to Japan in Spring and Summer since 2005 and our usual clients on this tour include students, young professionals and parents accompanying their kids. Funnily enough it's the parents who come back raving about Japan the most!"*

*"When Miyazaki won the Oscar for Spirited Away that really was the breakthrough moment for anime in the West. Undoubtedly the forthcoming release of Astro Boy will continue to prompt more interest in travelling to this fascinating country".*

Japan Journeys next Manga Tour will run from 18-25 March 2010. For full details visit their website [www.japanjourneys.co.uk/manga\\_tour\\_2010.htm](http://www.japanjourneys.co.uk/manga_tour_2010.htm)

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Notes for editors:

- *Astro Boy* – the original Astro Boy was a Japanese manga cartoon character from the 1950s that was then developed into numerous Japanese cartoon TV series from the 1960s to the present day. Astro Boy is Japan's most popular animated series and many technology experts say it is because of this robot cartoon character that Japanese scientists are obsessed with developing robots! Astro Boy – the movie – will feature the voices of Samuel L Jackson, Matt Lucas, Donald Sutherland, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Cage and Bill Nighy. It will be released in the UK in January 2010. [www.astroboy-themovie.com](http://www.astroboy-themovie.com)
- *Ponyo*, also known as *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea*, is a 2008 Japanese animated film by Studio Ghibli, written and directed by the Academy Award winning Hayao Miyazaki. The plot centres on a goldfish named Ponyo who befriends a five-year-old human boy, Sōsuke, and wants to become a human girl. The voice cast features Cate Blanchett, Matt Damon, Tina Fey and Liam Neeson. The film has won several awards, including the Japan Academy Prize for Animation of the Year. It will be released in the UK on 12 February 2010.  
<http://disney.go.com/disneypictures/ponyo/>

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