

New luxury train in Japan on track for high demand

Julian Ryall, Tokyo, December 9, 2016 (TTG Asia)

Despite the high ticket prices ranging from 250,000 (US\$2,187) to 1.3 million yen, the trade is expecting West Japan Railway's upcoming Twilight Express Mizukaze to attract significant interest from domestic and foreign travellers alike when the ultra-luxurious sleeper train debuts on June 17 next year.

The Twilight Express Mizukaze will offer two- or three-day trips departing either Kyoto or Osaka to Shimonoseki, passing through either the Sanyo region on the Pacific coast of Japan or the San'in region on the Sea of Japan.



Twilight Express Mizukaze

The train can only accommodate about 34 passengers in its 16 guestrooms across three classes – singles, twins and a suite. Guestrooms will occupy six carriages, with the remaining four carriages respectively housing a lounge, dining area and two observation cars.

"This is an extremely luxurious train and we are certain that many people will want to experience it," said Motohisa Tachikawa, spokesperson for JTB.

West Japan Railways is presently handling all ticket sales but JTB plans to include the new offering in brochures and package tours from spring onwards, he added.

But with "demand so strong and capacity so limited", Simon Pielow, co-founder and managing director of the UK-based Train Chartering expects international buyers like himself would have to wait over a year to obtain tickets.

"Once that first take-up runs out, the operators will be more interested in dealing with companies like us and developing their international business," he commented.

The luxury train sector in Japan is picking up steam in recent years. In October 2013, the Kyushu Railway introduced the Seven Stars in Kyushu luxury cruise train, while JR East is scheduled to start journeys on its Train Suite Shiki-Shima between Tokyo and Hokkaido in May 2017.