

Six Thoughts on Governor Brown's Asia Trade Mission

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What's on Curtis Robinhold's mind after participating in Gov. Kate Brown's Asia Trade Mission? Our executive director shares his top reflections.

1. Why?

Efforts like October's trade mission are really key to our role in promoting traded sector goods. That's especially true for the export of Oregon products to Asia and the recruitment of foreign direct investment from Japan into Oregon.

2. Inspiring

What inspired me most about the trade mission was seeing Oregon businesses on the ground pitching to Asian companies to sell products in Asia. A few examples were Ponzi Vineyards, Pacific Seafood, Oregon berries, and straw products from the Willamette Valley.

3. Important!

The most important thing I learned is that great connections are happening with Cathay Pacific's air cargo service linking Portland International Airport and Asia. Originally two flights per week, summer agricultural products boosted flights to five, and then go to three this winter. Without Nike's base cargo, this would not happen. Success results from the combination of large and small companies working together.

4. Concerns

Now that the U.S. administration has backed away from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, I'm concerned we are missing a great opportunity to cut tariffs that currently affect dozens of Oregon products from footwear to high quality beef. We're going to need to concentrate and coordinate our efforts even more to help open and maintain those trade pathways as the Asian middle class continues to grow.

5. Cool

I've been to Japan many times, but continue to be struck by the culture, which tends to be very formal and subtle. The culture is very conservative in many ways, and innovative in so many more. It's very male dominated, so traveling with a female governor was a cool cultural experience. I got a kick out of the sign you'll see in this photo spread, signaling that if it's over 82 degrees outside, you don't wear a tie. Coolbiz!

6. Fun

What could be more fun than visiting with Subaru's CEO and playing their digital video car game afterward with Nik Blosser, the Governor's chief of staff? Of course, spectacular sushi and a ramen bar at the end of a very long day of business meetings was also pretty great!

Thanks to Gov. Brown's office for sharing photos for this story.