

Commercial Manager (Japan)

Brand: InsideJapan Tours
Branch: Nagoya, JP
Work location: Office/Hybrid
Reports to: Global Head of Operations

Our Values

In everything we do at Inside Travel Group, we strive to deliver a Quality and Friendly service with Integrity, Determination and Passion using our collective Knowledge. This is at the heart of the organisation, and the company looks for every individual to demonstrate this daily. Each member of the team is expected to exemplify the company values through their work and professional conduct. We expect everyone to set an example to those around them and to be conscious that they are representing the company when working with customers and partner organisations.

Our Culture

You'll be part of a fun, friendly team of employees, all of whom share a passion for our destinations, a belief in our brands and a strong collective sense of values and purpose. Our work culture is supportive, creative and dedicated, and it's at its best when we all try to lead by example; the more you put in, the more you and the team get out, and it'll be important that you play your part.

Job Purpose

To lead the design and delivery of the overall buying strategy of the company in Japan, contributing to the success of the business through commercial negotiation, securing access to the necessary product (accommodation, experiences, museums, restaurants, etc.) to meet the growth ambitions of the company, and establishing win-win relationships with our various partners and suppliers.

The Role

As an industry leader in Japan travel, the business must secure access to the right products (experiences, accommodation, guides, etc.) to support the company's planned growth, and these products must be secured at a competitive price and that price must be available to our travel consultants so they can quote quickly and accurately. This is at the heart of your role.

Our product needs to be competitively priced whilst being a win-win for our suppliers. You will ensure we have a solid commercial process in place for working with suppliers, and negotiating rates. You will own the key supplier relationships – those with which we do most business and which are key to our offering.

You will work with the Senior Tailormade Product Manager and Groups Programme Manager to select product that meets the standards and goals of these two complementary product lines. Whereas these two individuals act as the bridge between Product and Marketing/Sales. You are the bridge between our Product function and our suppliers.

Your position is integral to our systems and processes for quoting and booking; by guiding our buying policy and providing insight on accommodation rates and pricing, you will give our Sales teams the ability to quote quickly and accurately.

As a senior manager in our business, you will be leading projects to enable growth through innovation and implementation of new services (some potential examples include implementing an in-house JR MARS ticketing machine, working with developers on an API linked booking system, and finding creative ways to increase efficiency and productivity).

You will coordinate with our Group Tour and Senior Tailormade Product Managers to analyze product usage, model product needs based on future sales forecasts, and implement a strategy to meet those future needs. In addition to accommodation, transport, experiences, and restaurants, you will be responsible for our ticketing policies and overseeing contracts with our suppliers where required.

Sustainability and Health & Safety are core considerations. You are accountable for the H&S audit process for Japan product, and for ensuring our product balances people, planet, profit, and purpose in line with our B Corp ambitions. We are a caring company, and this value should be held dear in relationships with our suppliers, customers, and all other stakeholders.

At all times we must make decisions which ultimately will benefit our clients, our staff, our suppliers, the local communities within which we work, and the environment. In this role you are responsible for helping to deliver on the company's commitment to these principles and where necessary, leveraging our position in the market to encourage positive change or prioritizing suppliers who share our philosophy.

Who you will be working with

This is a highly collaborative position and will have multiple touchpoints with other teams and functions. Here are a few of the key relationships that you will be working with on a regular basis:

- **Global Head of Operations** – Line manager and core collaborator on strategy, systems, budgets, negotiations, ongoing work with your team, and projects.
- **Senior Tailormade Product Manager** – You will work with the tailormade manager to provide access, availability, rates, audits, and booking procedures for the suppliers used in our Japan tailormade trips.
- **Groups Programme Manager** – You will work with the groups manager to negotiate access, availability, rates, audits, and booking procedures for the suppliers used in our Japan group tours.
- **Product Team** – The rest of the Product team members will work with you daily. You will also have direct reports within the function that will help provide you with the resources by which you can achieve the accountabilities of your role.
- **Booking Delivery and Operations Teams** - A strong relationship between Product and the Booking Delivery Team (BDT) is key to the success of delivering our product and a core consideration for you when engaging with suppliers.
- **Global Sales Team** – Bookable quality product with rates and favorable terms gives our sales team a great advantage over competitors. Your work directly impacts the global sales teams and, as such, you will need to be coordinating with the Sales function closely.
- **Sustainability** – Travel that balances people, planet, profit, and purpose is something we are committed to as a business. You will work closely with our Sustainability team to ensure this is being considered in all aspects of our product.

- **Key Suppliers** – Working with our suppliers is at the heart of your role. You will constantly liaise with our suppliers to create productive, win-win relationship both in person and virtually.

Level of budgetary responsibility

You will have a high level of budgetary responsibility, working with the Head of Operations. You will be actively involved in the annual budget plans for your department.

What you will be doing

Strategy development

Product is at the heart of what InsideJapan exists for: to provide amazing experiences of Japan for its clients. And it is at the heart of every trip quoted on, every trip sold and delivered, and every group tour scheduled and run. The purchasing strategy in Japan must support each of these elements. As such, your strategy is a collaborative effort. You will first need to understand our selling position by collaborating with the tailormade and groups product managers so that you can construct a purchasing strategy to run alongside and support the plans for our two Japan product lines. You will be the link between Tailormade & Group Tours and our suppliers. By taking an overview you can ensure buying is consolidated where appropriate, diversified where required and that the different needs of these product areas do not compete against one another for resources. As you develop your purchasing strategy you will be sure to keep your colleagues in the loop and on board.

You'll look at what product is required, when it is required, what rates we pay, how that product is booked, payment terms, what/when rates are available, what educational support can be provided to our staff (both in Japan and in the sales offices), and what special treatment we can secure for our passengers. You will consider the policies of suppliers and where possible support them in developing more sustainable practices.

Data analysis and reporting

You will hold overall responsibility for specifying what data is required to model the future product needs of the company. You'll need to work across multiple departments to determine this, collaborating with different managers across the sales, group tours and product departments. Where such data is currently unavailable, you will work with the systems analyst and our tech partners to design ways of accessing this data. You will then either use this data yourself to construct models of future requirements, or commission others to do this on your behalf. You will be required on occasion to provide data to the board and other departments (for example sales, product, marketing) to assist them with delivering their goals or to illustrate how the company is performing against its commercial goals and targets. Your data analysis will form the foundation on which the commercial strategy is built.

Implementation and relationship building

Relationships are at the heart of implementing any commercial strategy. You'll make sure that we are on good terms with all our key suppliers. You'll develop a communication strategy, combining in-person visits with other comms, all with the aim of making sure InsideJapan Tours wherever possible gets what it needs. Through relationship building, you will help us gain access to experiences, museums, ticketing, restaurants, accommodation and other product for our clients.

You'll develop, document, and share across the business a calendar of activity which aims to support your strategy as well as documenting the cycle of commercial activity. By undertaking review and analysis of our systems, you'll determine where we can make improvements in workflows and implement change to assist the other business functions.

Team Management

As the Commercial Manager for product, you will have direct reports to manage. You will be a primary figure in overseeing their recruitment, onboarding, training, weekly check-ins, and appraisals. It is your responsibility to motivate and oversee the productivity of the Japan Product team members that report to you. You will ensure a positive, productive team through staff development and team building.

Health and Safety

You will oversee the on-going health and safety audit of our accommodation and vehicle providers. This includes:

- Ongoing oversight of our Health & Safety system (in cooperation with our external H&S partner)
- Quality control/Health & Safety of products (hotels / experiences / guides) that we sell

The nuts and bolts

Obtaining and processing rate cards, negotiating favourable rates and payment terms, and putting in place efficient systems for doing so are all central to the business-as-usual activities of the Commercial department. You will look to improve systems and reduce the administrative burden of these tasks.

Working with our suppliers and our internal Finance department, you will coordinate payment terms and ensure smooth payment methods. You are responsible for our processes and systems within Japan Product function and optimizing them for internal customer service and efficiency. Working the rest of the Japan Product team, you will oversee product database maintenance and continually review processes, systems, and structure to ensure we are working as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Outputs & Deliverables

- The buying strategy for our Japan product, annual plans, and quarterly 'rocks'
- Updates on the Japan Product SharePoint for communication with the rest of the business
- Periodic review and update of our 'Core' accommodation list
- H&S audit requests in collaboration with our external partner (all regularly used accommodation to be audited within 3 years)
- Booking access to sites, experiences, and product
- Tracking and monitoring of our KPIs
- Annual rate updates in our booking system (Axum product maintenance)
- Up-to-date contracts where needed for ticketing, accommodation, and other suppliers
- Product booking data analysis and reporting
- Project briefs and updates for any ongoing initiatives
- Profit analysis reports
- Leading and delivering a high performing, motivated team
- Appraisal documentation, personal development plans and ongoing records of catch-ups with team members

KPIs

- % of 'Core' product with rates in our bookings system for proceeding 12 months or greater
- % of core product that is H&S audited within the last 2 years (H&S)
- % of core product with silver or gold sustainability ratings
- Monthly commission received and value of negotiated discounts from supplier
- Staff satisfaction scores (to subjectively understand your team's wellbeing)
- Staff capacity scores (to subjectively understand your team's workload levels)

What you will need

- **Team management:** be able to build and motivate the team to get business-as-usual and projects delivered to a high standard. Previous experience managing a team is required. You should have tangible results that show your ability to oversee and effective group of direct reports.
- **Personal development skills:** have a vested interest in your own personal development and be a key driver of extracting this from your team and inspiring them to develop
- **Analytic capability:** you will be able to analyze performance to identify opportunities to increase profitability, productivity, and conversion.
- **Streamline systems and processes:** Ability to analyze, revise, streamline and implement processes and systems to increase productivity, profitability, and sales.
- **Collegiate collaborator:** able to work with your leadership team, immediate team, and other managers effectively to plan product development in tandem with marketing strategies and sales requirements needs.
- **Great communicator in Japanese:** able to fluently engage with suppliers, negotiate, review important documents, and write business-level communications.
- **Strong command of written English:** collaborating on the content that is supplied through our database, website, brochures, and documentation.
- **Problem-solving skills:** able to identify risks or blockers and put plans in place to help tackle them effectively.
- **Ability to prioritise and get things done in a 'busy' environment:** you will have a developed repertoire of strategies for delegation, saying "no", and work planning.
- **Strategic thinker:** able to input on the 'bigger picture' plans, take them to implementation, and inspire the team to understand the goals and get their buy-in. You will need to have overseen multi-year strategy and have proven that you can distil this into daily workflows.
- **Japan travel industry experience:** Understanding of Japan travel, how it works, and what our clients want. You have proven knowledge of Japan and a love of travel.
- **Planning and commercial acumen:** able to understand and implement the commercial strategy, communicate it to the team and plan workloads accordingly enhance profit, maximise margin, conversion, and the quick turnaround of quotes.

What we are looking for from you

We are looking for a confident, collegiate and enthusiastic individual whose love and knowledge of Japan shines through in everything they do. You'll exhibit an understanding of what product is needed for our business to be successful, now and to achieve the future growth of the business. This will inform how you negotiate booking terms, rate availability, access, contracts, and pricing for the products that make up a trip for InsideJapan Tours' clients.

Managerial prowess, systems oversight, and relationship building will be key to success in this role. You'll be someone who communicates charismatically, maintains a positive and professional demeanour whatever the weather and leverages this to build mutually beneficial partnerships with other business functions, suppliers, and partners.

You will also be someone who can identify and oversee long-term projects that help our sales and booking delivery teams better achieve their accountabilities. Your ability to empathise and actively engage in solving any issues will ensure you build familiarity, trust and expertise across the business.

Beneficial skills and experience

- Good database skills: able to understand and use product database systems to achieve outcomes
- Negotiation skills: able to work with a supplier and come to a resolution that benefits all parties
- Project management skills: able to organize major projects, stick to a timeline, and maintain focus on achieving the 'big picture' goals
- Data analysis: able to analyse and understand sales and product data to inform product decisions
- Experience recruiting: having previously recruited for roles and able to conduct a thorough and thoughtful interview
- Working internationally: able to cooperate and coordinate with staff in other offices and lead meetings virtually

Pay and Conditions

Candidates will need to have the unrestricted right to work permanently in the relevant branch country. For this position, we are able to sponsor visas for eligible candidates. It is expected that the majority of your initial induction and onboarding will take place in the office. We are happy to consider applications for hybrid, or remote working in line with our flexible working policy, subject to demonstrating task competency.

JP

Salary	L26 – L31 (6,513,324 JPY to 7,550,728 JPY)
Hours	37.5hours per week
Holiday	23 days annually plus national holidays and an extra days' leave for your birthday
Health	The Company will enrol you in the Japanese Health Insurance, Employee' Pension Scheme and Employment Insurance, for which you and the Company share the premiums. Also you are covered by Labour Accident Compensation Insurance, for which the Company bears the premium; Annual Health Check
Bonus	Annual discretionary performance-related bonus of up to 125% of monthly salary
Benefits	Hybrid working • Volunteering leave • Regular staff socials • Discounted travel for staff, family and friends

About Inside Travel Group

Inside Travel Group Ltd is a growing travel company whose head office is in Bristol, with other sales branches located in Broomfield, Colorado and Brisbane, Australia, and an operations branch based in Nagoya, Japan. The company consists of specialist travel brands, InsideJapan Tours which was established in 2000, and InsideAsia Tours, established in 2012 and specialising in travel to South-East Asia. The multi-award-winning company offers unique group tours, tailored travel, and cultural experiences that few get the chance to discover. Our team have had years of experience living, working and travelling in destination countries, and we offer unrivalled advice and support, whatever the customer budget or personal interests. Our holidays grant people the chance to experience both the popular and little-known aspects of local culture, giving customers an insight into the diverse character of the country they are visiting.