

Austria national day

Year of celebration highlights warm relationship

Jutta Stefan-Bastl
AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRIA

In my capacity as ambassador of the Republic of Austria in Japan, I would like to extend my best greetings to the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of Austria's National Day.



Austria and Japan enjoy good and warm relations based on mutual esteem and respect. There is a lively exchange between the two countries documented by the large number of partnerships between Japanese and Austrian towns, and Austrian-Japanese friendship societies throughout Japan.

Moreover, many Japanese tourists visit Austria, enjoying classical music, the beautiful landscape or skiing as only some aspects of the strong image that Austria has in the minds of many Japanese people. Likewise, Japan has a distinct and strong image in Austria, also within the younger generation as I can report that the number of students taking up studies on Japan is constantly rising.

Austria-Japan Year 2009

My greetings on the occasion of Austria's National Day shall be all the more profound as we celebrate Austria-Japan

Year, which marks 140 years of relations and exchange between our two countries. On Oct. 18, 1869, Japan and Austria concluded the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Shipping, thus establishing diplomatic relations. Prime Ministers Wolfgang Schuessel and Junichiro Koizumi decided at their bilateral summit in Tokyo on April 24, 2006, to commemorate the 140-year anniversary.

As 2009 slowly draws to a close, we can look back at various events in the field of culture, business, science and also politics that have taken place. Having started the year with a great "Wien Ball" in January, in October and November the focus will be on fashion and design.

Just a few days ago, the very special cultural fashion event "Dirndl meets Kimono" enjoyed great acclaim in the framework of the Japan Fashion Week Tokyo. In a few days, Viennese design will be at the center of "100% DESIGN TOKYO."

Currently, Austrian exhibitions featuring different historic periods like the "Treasures of the Habsburg Monarchy" at the National Art Center, Tokyo and "Vienna at the turn of the century," with the paintings of Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and their contemporaries, at Takashimaya department store, as well as

an ultramodern installation by Austrian architects COOP HIMMELB(L)AU "Future revisited" at the NTT InterCommunication Center (ICC), can all be enjoyed in Tokyo.

In the framework of this year, a high-level exchange between our two countries has taken place. The Austrian Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Nikolaus Berlakovich, and the President of the National Assembly Barbara Prammer have visited Japan during the course of the year.

In the diplomatic domain, Austria had the honor to welcome Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino to Vienna in May this year. Federal President of Austria Heinz Fischer and his spouse accompanied by four ministers, the president of the Federal Economic Chamber and a large delegation paid an official visit from Sept. 30 to Oct. 3.

President Fischer was the first foreign head of state hosted for a dinner by new Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. The exchange of ideas showed that these two statesmen share a number of similar ideas on foreign policy matters.

Economic relations

Austria exports a great variety of goods to Japan, inter alia machinery, vehicles, specialized precision instruments, wood products, chemicals and beverages. As Austria lies at the heart of Europe, it is ideal for setting up a distribution center for Central and Southeastern Europe, and more than 3,000 international companies have their headquarters in Austria. Austrian banks and companies are also well positioned in the markets of Central and South Europe, with Austria among the top three foreign direct investors in most of the countries of the region.

To deepen the economic relations of Austria and Japan, Austria-Japan Year has also been taken as an opportunity. During the visit of President Fischer to Japan, the Federal Minister of Economy, Family and Youth Reinhold Mitterlehner had a bilateral meeting with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Naoshima Masayuki. Minister Mitterlehner also attended the investment seminar of the Austrian Business Agency (ABA) on Oct. 1.

Austria in the global arena

Strengthening the United Nations is one of Austria's key foreign policy goals in its work

toward peace and stability. Therefore, Austria has participated in various U.N. peacekeeping operations, with so far a total of around 60,000 Austrian soldiers, and has been elected as a nonpermanent member of the U.N. Security Council for the period 2009/2010.

Vienna is one of the headquarters of the U.N. It is also the seat of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) and other organizations. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) carries out its important work from Vienna. In addition, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights have their headquarters in Vienna.

Thus, Vienna can be seen as a center for international cooperation, and as an active part of international efforts toward disarmament, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and the fight against drugs and crime. Austria attaches great importance to human rights issues and the fight against root causes of con-



Viennese home: Commemorating the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and Japan, the "Treasures of the Habsburg Monarchy" exhibition at the National Art Center, Tokyo (through Dec. 14) features paintings and crafts selected from the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, established in 1891 by Franz-Joseph I, in the Austrian capital.

HIART DESIGN STUDIO/ITOH

flict, e.g., poverty, injustice and discrimination.

Austrian Airlines anniversary

2009 is also an anniversary for Austrian Airlines, which has offered nonstop flights between Vienna and Tokyo for 20 years. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my hope that the readers of The Japan Times will follow the example of the large number of Japanese tourists that visit Austria every year and enjoy the many different features of my country. You are most heartily welcome.



Schoenbrunn Palace: A former imperial summer residence, the Vienna palace and gardens illustrate the tastes, interests and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs.

AUSTRIAN NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE/TRUMLER



U.N. base: The Vienna International Center, UNO-City, is the campus/building complex housing the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV). AUSTRIAN NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE/POPP

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Vienna's Museum Quarter is one of the world's largest cultural complexes - A treasure house of arts from the Baroque to the modern era, where art lovers gather from all over the world. When you visit here, first sit down and relax in avant-garde, modern chairs and then set out to discover the enchanting worlds of Klimt, Schiele, Nietzsche and more. At Museum Quarter you can appreciate the masterpieces in a totally at home atmosphere.

Austrian National Tourist Office www.austria.info/jp