

Austria national day

Lively exchange continues between Japan, Austria

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.



Relations with Japan

Relations between Austria and Japan are free of any tensions and based on deep mutual esteem that the people of Japan and Austria hold for each other. This manifests itself in many ways and makes representing Austria in Japan as an ambassador such a rewarding experience.

There is a lively exchange between the two countries documented by a large number of Austrian-Japanese Friendship societies throughout Japan as well as partnerships between Japanese and Austrian towns. The number as well as the variety of concrete cooperations — such as between Osaka Castle and the Castle of Eggenberg, the latter only recently dedicated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, as "Friendship Castles" — not

only are of mutual benefit but also represent an important contribution in working toward a better understanding of each other's cultures, heritage and history.

Even though Austria is not a big country, it has a strong image in the mind of many Japanese people. Of course, classical music, beautiful landscapes and skiing are aspects that contribute to foster this phenomenon. Over 200,000 Japanese tourists visited Austria last year — Vienna, Austria's capital, and Salzburg, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's birthplace, being the most popular destinations for our visitors from Japan.

Austrian cultural institutions like the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna Boy's Choir are welcomed with enormous enthusiasm by the Japanese audience, which makes performing in Japan a special experience and honor for the artists. Over the years, thousands of Japanese music students have studied in Austria, taking with them experiences of my country that become multipliers for the relations between Japan and Austria on so many levels. The cultural exchange is a two-way street, to mention the careers of the Japanese star conductor Seiji

Ozawa as musical director of the Vienna State Opera and the Austrian conductor Christian Arming as musical director of the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra only as examples.

Japan-Austria Year

In 2009, Japan and Austria took the opportunity of celebrating 140 years of bilateral relations during our Japan-Austria Year 2009 in a worthy fashion. On Oct. 18, 1869, Japan and Austria concluded the Treaty of Trade, Shipping and Amity, thus establishing diplomatic relations. This anniversary contributed to deepen our excellent relations even further with a number of high-ranking official visits and a broad range of

events in the cultural, economic, and scientific and other fields taking place over the year.

U.N. Security Council

The strengthening of the United Nations in working toward peace and stability has always been one of the guiding principles of Austria's foreign policy. In that spirit, Austria has participated in various U.N. peacekeeping operations and hosts one of the headquarters of the United Nations. It's only natural that Austria also wants to participate as actively as possible in the United Nations policy deliberations in the organs of the U.N. I am particularly pleased that both our countries are at present nonpermanent members par-

ticipating in the U.N. Security Council, giving us the opportunity to work together even more closely on many global questions facing the international community.

Business relations

Japan is the one of the most important trading partners overseas and the second-most important market in Asia. Austria exports a great variety of goods to Japan, with machines and vehicles accounting for about one-third of those. Austria also exports wood products, chemicals, beverages and other specialties. In 2009, the total exports to Japan amounted to about ¥772.1 million and the first half of 2010 promises that we again

will reach the magic number of ¥1 billion that we had achieved before the economic and financial crisis.

Austria is an ideal hub for foreign companies wishing to do business in Central and Southeastern Europe as well. Austrian banks and companies are very well-positioned in these markets, with Austria being among the top three direct investors in most of the countries in this region.

I would like to close by taking the opportunity to express my sincere wish that the readers of The Japan Times will follow the example of the large number of Japanese tourists who visit Austria every year to come to my country to enjoy its many features.



Festive mood: An open-air market at the Belvedere palace in Vienna provides a pleasant time during the Christmas season. EMBASSY OF AUSTRIA



Baroque: Hercules Hall in the Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna is adorned with an elegant 18th-century fresco on its ceiling. ©LIECHTENSTEIN MUSEUM

Museum to re-create baroque atmosphere in Japan

Tomoko Otake
STAFF WRITER

The Liechtenstein Museum in Austria will hold its first exhibitions in Japan in the fall of 2012 and officials are working hard to make the museum's shows here a success.

The museum in Vienna is home to a vast private collection of paintings, engravings, drawings, sculptures and other art objects spanning five centuries, acquired by the princes of Liechtenstein, a small country between Austria and Switzerland.

For the exhibit in Japan, the

museum plans to display around 150 to 200 objects — not just paintings and sculptures, but furniture, porcelains and even ceiling frescoes — in the hopes of re-creating the baroque atmosphere of the family's Vienna estate in Japan, museum director Johann Kraftner said in an interview in Tokyo.

"What's really our goal is not to install something like a dry museum on the wall," he said. "What we are trying to do is to bring the atmosphere of the Vienna palace to Tokyo."

The estate is extravagant, yet cozy, with a beautiful garden and regular concerts by

high-class musicians for museum visitors, Kraftner said.

With some of the biggest private collections in the world, the museum's holdings include works by Anthony van Dyck, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Raphael, Rembrandt van Rijn, Salomon van Ruysdael and Peter Paul Rubens.

The House of Liechtenstein started acquiring major works of European art in the 17th century, in line with the baroque ideal of princely patronage of the arts. After losing nearly all of its possessions during World War II,

the Liechtenstein family worked hard to rebuild its finances, leading to the reopening of the museum for the Princely Collections in Vienna in March 2004, offering visitors an insight into the forgotten, rich cultural heritage of the Austrian capital, Kraftner said.

Prince Hans-Adam II, who lives in the Liechtenstein capital of Vaduz some 600 km west of Vienna, spent €25 million of his personal money to finance the reopening of the museum and is spending another €100 million for a second museum to open in 2012, in the Vienna city center close to the Hofburg imperial palace, Kraftner said.

The shows in Japan, which will take place at the National Art Center in Tokyo and two other venues beginning in fall 2012, will feature such masterpieces as Ruben's portrait of his daughter Clara Serena.

The Japan shows come on the heels of the success last year of the "Treasures of the Habsburg Monarchy" exhibition, which drew 640,000 visitors to its Tokyo and Kyoto venues. Kraftner is aware of the success of the Habsburg shows, noting that he wants to beat any other art exhibition coming from Vienna.

"We are in a hard competition," he said, chuckling, "and we always want to be better than others. It's a high goal we have to reach, (but) it's useless to send things over and afterwards (be told), 'OK, but other things have been better.'"

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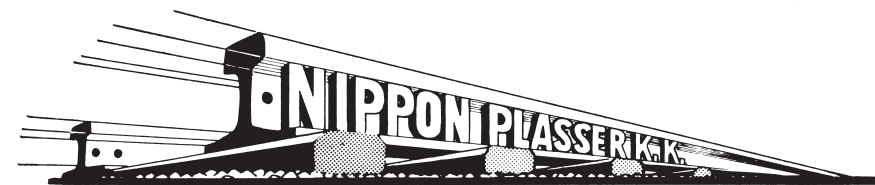
Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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