

Sweden national day

Expanding options to develop tourism

Sweden promotes tourism in Japan through the Sweden Tourism and Culture Center, which was established inside the Swedish Embassy in 2013.

Japan is one of the most important markets for the Swedish tourism industry as the amicable bilateral relationship encourages many tourist exchanges.

The center's mission is to promote the Scandinavian country's natural beauty and other tourist attractions to Japanese people.

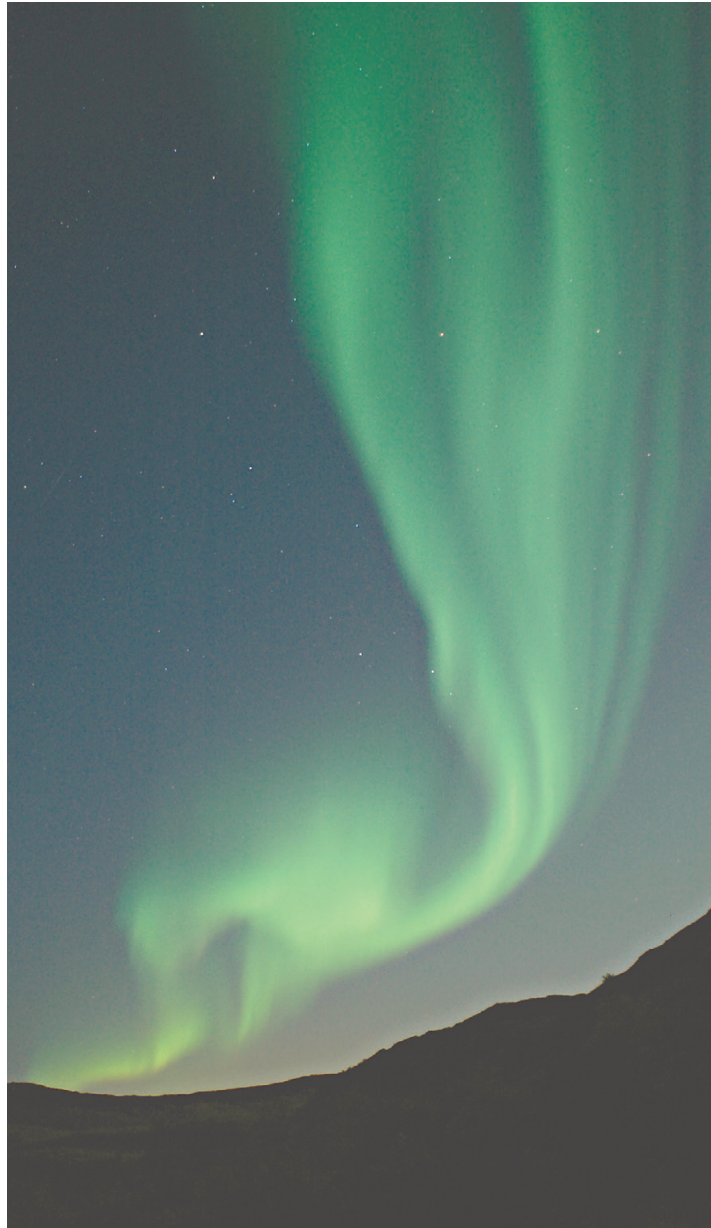
In an example of the center's promotional events, it held "Sweden Travel Day" on May 15 together with the Embassy of Sweden, the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Japan and 19 companies involved in the travel industry from both countries at the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo. Japanese travel businesses exhibited a deep interest in Sweden as a travel destination and more than 100 people from the travel industry attended the workshop.

The focus was on introducing the great charm of a journey to Sweden, with emphasis not only on traditional tours, but also on unique and new travel offerings.

There were four new trends appearing in Sweden that were introduced.

1. There are now more deluxe four-star hotels in the north and in the Swedish countryside where visitors can enjoy beautiful Swedish nature. These hotels are also famous for Swedish cuisine, allowing guests to enjoy their stay in rooms finished in fashionable Swedish-designed furniture not only in the cities, but also in the countryside.

2. There are many more attractions and activities — other than the famous Ice Hotel — in northern Sweden and Swedish Lapland. The "Ice Music Concert" in Lulea, aurora borealis viewing in Abisko



The area around Kiruna is one of Sweden's most popular aurora borealis viewing spots. FREDRIK BROMAN/IMAGEBANK.SWEDEN.SE

and the Aurora Spa at Camp Ripan in Kiruna are attracting worldwide attention. At Camp Ripan, guests can even observe the northern lights from the spa.

3. Many Japanese travelers visiting Sweden want to see more than the beautiful capital city of Stockholm. They also

want to experience the beautiful Swedish countryside such as the island of Gotland, the province of Dalarna and southern Sweden. Tourist information provided by Sakura Tours highlighted the beautiful and wonderful experience of a tour to Skane in Southern Sweden, easily accessible by

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) direct flights from Tokyo to Copenhagen.

4. Tourists enjoy communicating with Swedish people and want to learn more about the Swedish lifestyle, not just visiting sightseeing spots. New venues have been set up where tourists can enjoy and experience modern Sweden hands on. Swedish cultural activities such as textile handicrafts, design, music and sports are also drawing attention.

There is more good news for travelers: Finnair began operating flights between Helsinki and Lulea from May 19, and also between Helsinki and Umea, the "Cultural Capital of Europe 2014." Additionally, SAS has announced that there will be a direct flight to Kiruna again this winter. This makes access to northern Sweden much easier.

The embassy also honored Kohei Yamashita, who is the first Japanese to win the Santa Winter Games in Sweden last year. Yamashita outclassed his Santa Claus peers in the tournament, coming out on top in competition events such as stacking Christmas gifts. At the event, he wore a red Santa costume, and spoke to the audience in his cheerful Santa voice. Adam Beijs, in charge of cultural affairs at the embassy, presented him with a round trip ticket to Sweden and said, "We hope you win the competition again this year."

Also at the seminar, Yuriko Mori, author of "Nordic Delicious Story," Shinya Moriyama, the author of "North Latitude 66.6 Degrees," Tetsuya Miwa from the Nordic specialty travel agency Finntour and Saeko Ueda from Visit Gallivare gave lectures introducing unique products and some suggested travel ideas.

After the seminar the embassy hosted a reception for the participants featuring



Above: Fabrique is a stone oven bakery in Stockholm that focuses on leavened and sourdough bread. Right: Sarek national park is a part of the Laponian area, which was registered a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. TUUKKA ERVASTI/IMAGEBANK.SWEDEN.SE, ANDERS EKHOLOM/FOLIO/IMAGEBANK.SWEDEN.SE

Swedish cuisine from the Lilla Dalarna restaurant, made using Swedish ingredients such as reindeer meat and rhubarb. ABBA, an ABBA tribute band, sang several ABBA songs and guests enjoyed raffles carried out by two

Japanese Santas. It was truly a delightful Swedish tourism promotion event.

Excerpted from the website of the Embassy of Sweden in Japan

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