

# Greece National Day

## Nations share tenacity, similar spirit of unwavering hospitality

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AMBASSADOR OF GREECE

Recently, Greece has been undergoing an important transformation. Through extreme



effort and economic sacrifice, the main priority is to formulate proposals and implement structural reforms toward improving the

overall economic situation. The government's efforts are also aimed at creating a suitable environment for investment and job creation that will benefit all, contributing to a more vibrant, stable economy with renewed financial, economic and social perspectives, within a stronger European Union.

Additionally, Greece is obliged to take up the additional burden of the vastly increased refugee flow; a consequence of the political situation in the Middle East and the intensity of the Syrian conflict.

Greece and Japan are island nations and nature and climate obliged both to exploit the sea, while modeling lifestyles to suit

maritime activities. Especially in ancient Greece, the idea of using the sea for security and prosperity shaped its historical course. This notion evolved gradually into a great shipping tradition, which today is more important than ever. Shipping accounts for more than 7 percent of Greek GDP and plays an important role in the country's economic and social development. About 18 percent of the world's fleet is Greek and much of the fleet comes from Japanese shipyards, continuing a trend that started in the 1950s that considerably contributed to Japanese efforts to revitalize its post-war economy.

Japan-Greek relations have developed steadily and today are excellent. Cultural exchanges, the maritime sector and tourism are growing steadily, bringing forward new avenues of contact and cooperation. In this relationship many similarities exist, albeit not readily obvious. From our unwavering dedication to preserving values, to the love of nature and the observance of certain rules and traditions, the parallels between our countries include many elements. These include such things as tenacity in hard-

ships, natural self-sufficiency, pragmatism and frugality of the population and courage and spirit of solidarity in the face of natural adversity.

Trade between Japan and Greece is growing considerably. Greek exports to Japan rose by 37 percent in 2015 compared to 2014, while Japanese exports to Greece rose by 26 percent over the same period. Prospects for Greek products such as aluminum parts for the auto industry, advanced optical equipment, high-grade cotton, high-quality food products such as olive oil, bottarga (salted, cured fish roe), wines and juices, organic pasta and canned fruit are very promising. At the same time, Japanese companies are participating in various tenders concerning major infrastructure projects in Greece related to energy, logistics, ports and other areas.

Both our peoples share the notions of *philoxenia* and *omotenashi* traditional hospitality, which has long shaped relations with outsiders and today represent a concept that calls on all nations to come together in a spirit of respect, coopera-

tion and peace, an idea the ancient Greeks valued above all else. As preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games start to gain momentum, we believe that the ancient Greek Olympic ideal, as well as the Olympic spirit, will be presented properly and appreciated by the public.

An important exhibition titled, "A Journey to the Land of Immortals: 4,000 years of Greek Treasures" will be organized at the Tokyo National Museum (June 21 to Sept. 19), the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum (Oct. 14 to Dec. 12) and the Kobe City Museum (Dec. 12 to April 2). The exhibition will illustrate the amazing diversity of ancient Greek art through a presentation of more than 300 original objects from Neolithic Period/Early Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Period and including Cycladic, Minoan, Mycenaean and Macedonian civilizations.

Another significant aspect of our relationship is related to our common passion for the marathon. Japan is a country of countless marathoners and Greece is the country that gave

birth to this magnificent race, which symbolizes the ancient and modern spirit of endurance and personal self-improvement, reminding us of the eternal values of peace and solidarity between peoples. In particular, the marathon in Athens has been won, both by men and women, more times by Japanese than any other nation in the world.

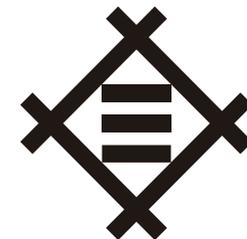
As the summer tourist season approaches, Greece looks forward to providing unparalleled

travel experiences to visitors. Last year, more than 25 million travelers were drawn to the splendor of the Greek islands, making Greece one of the most popular destinations worldwide. With its unique historical and cultural heritage and an abundant natural diversity, Greece offers a wide variety of attractions to explore. Additionally, a rich gastronomic tradition with exquisite flavors from local products provides additional incentive for every visitor.



People watch a performance at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus. EMBASSY OF GREECE

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