

# Greece National Day

## Traditional hospitality links friendly nations

**LOUKAS KARATSOLIS**  
AMBASSADOR OF GREECE



Greece and Japan are island nations. Nature and climate impelled both peoples to turn to the sea and its resources, while modeling their lifestyles according to their

maritime activities. Especially across the ancient Greek world, the idea of using the sea to achieve security and prosperity became prominent and shaped its historical course. This notion evolved gradually into a great shipping tradition that, today, is more important than ever. A significant portion of the Greek-owned fleet is being built in Japanese shipyards, continuing a trend that started in the 1950s that considerably contributed to the efforts made by Japan to revitalize its economy after World War II.

The bilateral relationship is developing steadily as the two countries have achieved an excellent level of cooperation. Cultural exchanges, the maritime sector and tourism are areas that show great dynamism and bring forward new ways of contact and fruitful exchanges between our two nations. In this relationship, albeit not readily obvious, many similarities exist. From our countries' unwavering dedication to preserving values, to the love of nature and the observance of certain rules and traditions, the parallels between Greece and Japan are manifested in certain character traits. Among them are tenacity in hardship, the natural urge for self-sufficiency,

the pragmatism and frugality of the population and, most of all, the courage and spirit of solidarity in the face of natural adversity. Moreover, as our economic ties gradually strengthen and mature, new possibilities are being opened in sectors where there is complementarity and mutual interest, particularly in renewable energy, quality food products and innovative technologies.

Both our peoples share an understanding of hospitality in *philoxenia* and *omotenashi* traditional hospitality that have long shaped relations with outsiders. Today, this hospitality represents a concept that calls on all nations to come together in the spirit of respect, cooperation and peace — an idea the ancient Greeks readily embraced.

As preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games gains momentum, our efforts are focusing on promoting the core values along with the important symbolism of the Olympic Games and the Olympic truce, which provided the setting for the recent spectacular diplomatic breakthrough on the Korean Peninsula. Among other initiatives, we are putting together a program of events with the participation of Olympians, medalists from our two countries, with the aim to enhance understanding and raise awareness about the level of their athletic achievements and personal development in the contemporary world of sports. Next summer, we will bring the exhibition, "The Olympic Flame — From Olympia to Tokyo," to five venues in Japan with the entire collection of Olympic torches and other important Olympic mementos. We believe that the ancient Greek Olympic ideal and the Olympic spirit should be presented

properly and appreciated by athletes and spectators, as well as the general public.

Another significant aspect of our relationship is connected to our common passion for the marathon. Japan is a country of countless marathon runners and Greece is the country that gave birth to this magnificent sporting event that wonderfully symbolizes the ancient and modern spirit of endurance and self-improvement, reminding us of the eternal values of peace and solidarity between people. In particular, the classical marathon in Athens has been won, both in its male and female categories, more times by athletes from Japan than any other nation in the world.

Gradually, as awareness of the cultural affinities in both nations grow in the future, various initiatives and proposals will be undertaken, fostering a higher level of cultural ties, strengthening economic flow and joint projects, as well as promoting people-to-people exchanges in many fields.

As the summer tourist season approaches, Greece looks forward to providing unparalleled travel experiences to visitors from around the globe. Last year, almost 30 million travelers were drawn to the splendor of the Greek islands, ranking Greece as one of the most popular destinations worldwide. With its unique historical and cultural heritage and abundant natural diversity, Greece offers a wide variety of attractions to explore, while its rich gastronomic tradition with exquisite flavors from local products, such as excellent olive oil and many different varieties of wine, creates the perfect backdrop for an unforgettable and rewarding vacation for all tastes.



**Top: Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias and Foreign Minister Taro Kono shake hands at a 20-nation ministerial meeting in Vancouver on Jan. 16. Bottom: Santorini is an island in the southern Aegean Sea.**

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**Congratulations**  
*to the People of Greece*  
**on Their Independence Day**

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