

St. Patrick's Day Special

Long traditions mark strong relations

PAUL KAVANAGH
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND



I wish the Irish community here in Japan, as well as all of our Japanese relations, friends, hosts and partners, a very happy St. Patrick's Day.

This year, in Japan as elsewhere, our

St. Patrick's Day celebrations unfortunately will be greatly limited by the effects of the pandemic.

In a regular year, we would welcome to Japan a senior minister from the Irish government. In Tokyo, we would march in the St. Patrick's Day parade on Omotesando-dori, organized by the Irish Network Japan, and celebrate all things Irish at the I Love Ireland Festival, in Yoyogi Park. Combined, each year, these gatherings represent the largest Irish event in Asia, attracting 183,000 people in 2019.

In 2019, there were Irish parades, cultural

and other observances in 17 Japanese cities, a record number, stretching from Kumamoto to Sapporo.

Let me thank our remarkable Irish community organizations across Japan for bringing this St. Patrick's Festival from strength to strength over many years. A special word of thanks goes to our esteemed Japanese friends and partners. These range from local authorities to business, cultural and community groups, as well as the media.

The Japanese government and this country's corporate sector extended similar support to Ireland during the dark days of the pandemic in 2020, by arranging for the supply to our country of advanced medical equipment, in quantity. In typical Japanese fashion, this was accomplished efficiently, effectively and without fanfare.

We wish for Japan and its people the successful XXXII Olympiad and Paralympics that they fully deserve, unavoidable constraints notwithstanding. Ireland is truly appreciative of the wonderful cooperation our Olympic bodies are receiving from the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Japanese Olympic Committee and all of our

terrific host cities and towns. These include of course Tokyo, as well as Fukuroi, Hamamatsu, Narita, Masuda, Miyazaki, Iwate, Sapporo, Engaru and Matsue.

As COVID-19 strictures begin to ease and we look toward a brighter day, let me echo the values that Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins highlighted as essential in these times: solidarity, compassion, care and kindness. The Irish in Japan have certainly felt these.

This year, we will celebrate virtually, or in hybrid format. A number of monuments and iconic buildings around Japan will "go green," joining the Tourism Ireland Global Greening campaign. These include Matsue Castle in Shimane, Ise Ohtorii in Mie Prefecture, the Cosmo Clock Ferris Wheel at Minato Mirai in Yokohama and Fukui Happiterrace.

Ireland's embassy in Tokyo will host a virtual St. Patrick's Day reception. It will feature a message from the Taoiseach, Ireland's Prime Minister, Micheal Martin, along with cultural performances from Ireland and Japan. It will stream live from 6 p.m. on March 17 on www.ireland.ie/japan. Please



St. Patrick's Day parade along Omotesando-dori on March 17, 2019

YOSHIAKI MIURA

join us for this celebration of our national day and of our friendship with Japan.

Japanese people are becoming more and more interested in Irish food and drinks. Ireland is blessed with an abundance of clean air and green fields, and is surrounded by vast seas. Thus our food is naturally nutritious and tasty, produced in harmony with nature. Here we speak especially of our world-renowned dairy products, pork, whiskey and beef (for more information please visit www.irishbeef.jp). I hope that you get to taste delicious Irish food and drink this year.

The Irish in Japan and all of our friends and partners here look forward to your joining us for a full rebound, St. Patrick's Day Festival in 2022. Until then, stay safe. And today, please think of wearing something green!

Happy St. Patrick's Day from Team Ireland in Japan!



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