

# Iceland National Day Special

## It's an easy road to a good friend, no matter how long the journey

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AMBASSADOR OF ICELAND



Japan and Iceland live on different sides of the globe and the journey between is long, but the ever-increasing exchanges between our peoples are a good indicator that our bond has been

strengthening since the start of diplomatic relations in 1956.

A famous passage from an ancient Viking poem has been celebrated and often quoted to describe the nature of true friendship:

*It's a long and crooked walk  
to a bad friend, even if he lives nearby.  
But it's an easy road to a good friend,  
no matter how long the journey.*

Indeed, the friendship between Iceland and Japan is true and thriving, and the celebration of our National Day on June 17 is an excellent opportunity to recall what elements define the strong relationship between Iceland and Japan.

Democracy, rule of law, freedom and human rights are common values that we

share. Seldom has it been as pertinent as now to remind ourselves that these values should not be taken for granted. It is of major importance for like-minded countries across the globe to work together to promote and defend these principles. And indeed, Japan is an important actor in the promotion of these principles. Likewise, Iceland will strive to protect these values and the sanctity of internationally recognized borders as a bedrock principle of international relations.

From this November, Iceland will hold the presidency of the Council of Europe — Europe's leading human rights organization. During our presidency we will host events and meetings, one being the annual IDAHOT+Forum, which will be held in Iceland in May 2023. The forum is organized around the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, which takes place on May 17 each year.

Iceland may be one of the smallest economies in the world and Japan one of the biggest, but we enjoy vibrant and dynamic trade relations. Japanese consumers enjoy Icelandic seafood products like *shishamo* (capelin) and *karasugarei* (Greenland halibut).

And Japanese machinery and technology has been vital for Iceland to build up

its sustainable-energy sector over the past few decades — a valuable lesson in the use of renewable energy we strongly believe we can use to the benefit of many countries around the world, including Japan.

Japan has been very active in international initiatives regarding the Arctic, which is highly appreciated by my country. The Arctic Circle, based in Reykjavik, is the largest network of international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic and our planet. An official side event to the Arctic Circle, the Arctic Circle Japan Forum, will be hosted in Tokyo next March, in collaboration with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

Exchange is also vibrant in culture, education and the arts. The Icelandic sagas, written almost 800 years ago, have inspired manga and television, one example being the Vinland Saga series, which has been transformed into a Netflix animation series. And this summer we look forward to welcoming Icelandic musicians back to Japan when the well-known band Sigur Ros will be returning after a long absence.

Furthermore, with the gradual reopening of Japan's borders we look forward to welcoming Icelandic tourists back to Japan, and of course Japanese tourists to Iceland.



**Above: A child waves from a rainbow-colored staircase during the Reykjavik Pride event. Right: A girl holds a placard with the gender equality slogan "Women Forward" during a demonstration.** EMBASSY OF ICELAND



*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

## Congratulations on the Occasion of the Icelandic National Day



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**ISCCJ**

Icelandic Chamber of Commerce in Japan  
在日アイスランド商工会議所

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