

Austria National Day Special

Strong bond of friendship continues

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Two challenging years are behind us since I assumed my position as ambassador to Japan in autumn 2020. The pandemic has left deep marks in many countries world-wide. But now there

seems to be a glimmer of hope — travel is resuming and people around the world can finally see their families, friends and loved ones again.

As we had hoped to overcome one crisis, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has paralyzed the world again. So, while on the one hand we can be cautiously optimistic, the world has been stunned by a terrible war that hardly anyone would have thought possible in the 21st century. Like the pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine is causing unimaginable human suffering and disruptions felt around the globe.

At the same time, we must look forward and continue defending democracy and freedom not only in Japan as well as in Austria, but also around the world. Both our countries are thriving liberal democracies abiding by the rule of law, engaging peacefully and in deep mutual respect. Especially in these turbulent times, it is paramount for like-minded countries to work together. I firmly believe together with our partners and allies, we can contribute toward creating a better, safer and cleaner world.

To support economic recovery, the global business initiative “ReFocus Austria” was launched in September 2021 as part of the Austrian Federal Government’s comeback plan during and after the pandemic.

The focus of activities is on seven future-oriented areas: renewable energies, e-mobility, sustainability, digital transformation, infrastructure, urban technology and tourism. The global marketing of the “Made in Austria” brand, which stands for excellent quality, reliability and high-quality engineering and craftsmanship, is intended to secure jobs and further expand investments in Austria.

Also, when it comes to culture, there are important signs of recovery. Even during the pandemic, the Salzburg Festival managed to bring world-class art to the stage. True to the motto of Max Reinhardt, the founder of the Salzburg Festival, “Art is Food,” and art and culture are considered crucial for our well-being and social as well as human development. It is with great gratitude that I remember the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra coming to Japan for their only trip abroad in autumn 2020. This two-week tour was the only one by an international orchestra during the first year of the pandemic.

Austrian-Japanese relations have always been marked by profound appreciation for each other’s cultural heritage. In Japan, Vienna and Salzburg are almost always instantly associated with the classical musical tradition of Austria. On the other hand, Austrian art has been inspired by Japanese aesthetics. The famous ukiyo-e paintings of early modern Japan served as an inspiration for modernist Austrian artists such as Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

Still today, the rich cultural scene and innovative lifestyles of Japan, from anime



to traditional gardening, are admired in Austria. This mutual appreciation has led to a flourishing partnership and a thriving cultural link between our nations.

Despite the difficult current circumstances of our time, nothing can shake the strong bond between Austria and Japan that has existed for over 150 years. I am sure that this will continue in the coming years and decades, and I trust that we will carry on working together to deepen our friendship.

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

Lake Mondsee and Mount Schafberg are popular attractions in the Salzkammergut resort area.

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Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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