
Norway National Day Special

Long-term partners in trade and innovation

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May 17 marks Norway's National Day and commemorates the adoption of our constitution in 1814. It laid the foundation for Norway as an independent and democratic nation and remains one of

the world's oldest constitutions still in use.

Across Norway, the day is celebrated with children's parades, music and gatherings that reflect our strong sense of community and openness.

The connection between our nations dates to the age of sailing ships and early trade. Norway's maritime community played an important role in opening commercial links with Japan, and Det Norske Veritas was among the first Norwegian

companies to establish a presence in the country, opening an office in Kobe in 1865.

Today our economic ties include sectors of high importance to both our countries, with investments going both ways. We are still close maritime partners, with a focus today on the need to make the shipping industry greener and more digital. We work closely in developing offshore wind power, with a focus on the floating segment. Other important sectors include defense materials, space, health tech and seafood.

One of the earliest and most remarkable people-to-people connections was created by Johan Martinius Thoresen from Arendal, also known as William Copeland, who arrived in Yokohama in 1864. In 1869, he founded Spring Valley Brewery, which became Kirin Brewery, one of Japan's leading beverage companies. His story remains a unique example of how Norwegian entrepreneurship and Japanese innovation came together as

early as the 19th century.

In 1905, Japan became one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent Norway. Last year, we proudly marked 120 years of bilateral relations.

Culture continues to be at the heart of this relationship. Exchanges between Norwegian and Japanese artists, architects, authors, musicians and institutions create lasting connections ranging from theater, concerts and jazz to design, visual art and architecture. Norway is also proud to have participated in the Osaka Expo in 2025, where innovation, sustainability and cultural dialogue were brought together.

Gratulerer med 17. mai (congratulations on May 17) to all our Japanese friends and Norwegians living in Japan!

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