

Greece National Day

Nations share similar values of hospitality

Loukas Karatsolis
AMBASSADOR OF GREECE

Greece and Japan are island nations. Nature and climate obliged both peoples to exploit the sea and its resources, while modeling their lifestyles according to their maritime activities. Especially within 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 to a great shipping tradition that, nowadays, is more important than ever. An important portion of the Greek-owned fleet is being built in Japanese shipyards, continuing a trend that started in the 1950s and considerably contributed to the efforts made by Japan to revitalize

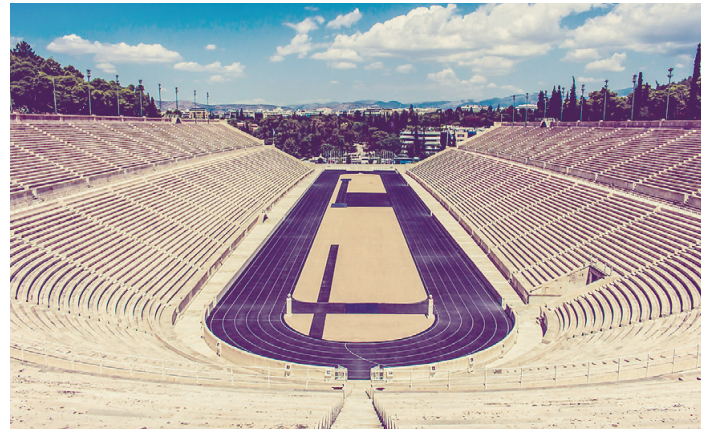


its economy after World War II.

The Japan-Greek relationship steadily developed 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 many similarities exist, albeit they are not readily obvious. From the two countries' unwavering dedication to preserving their values, to the love of nature and observance of certain rules and traditions, the parallels between Japan and Greece include many elements such as tenacity in hardships, 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 strengthen and mature, new

possibilities are being opened in sectors where there is complementarity and mutual interest such as renewable energy, maritime activities and innovative products.

Both our peoples share the notions of philoxenia and *omotenashi* (hospitality) that have long shaped relations with outsiders, and today represent a concept that calls on all nations to come together in a spirit of respect, cooperation and peace, an idea the ancient Greeks valued above all else. When Tokyo secured its Olympic bid, the Olympic ambassador Christel Takigawa invoked the concept of *omotenashi* in her speech to the International Olympic Committee. As preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games gains momentum, we believe that the ancient Greek Olympic ideal, as well as the Olympic spirit, should be presented properly and appreciated by all athletes and spectators.



Panathinaiko Stadium in Athens

Another significant aspect of our relationship is related 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, which so well symbolizes the ancient and modern spirit of endurance and personal self-improvement and reminds us of the eternal values of peace and

solidarity between peoples. In particular, the classic marathon in Athens has been won, both in the male and female categories, more times by Japanese athletes than from any other nation in the world.

Gradually, as awareness of the cultural affinities grows in the future, many initiatives and proposals can be formulated,

fostering a higher level of cultural ties, strengthening economic flows and joint projects, while promoting people-to-people exchanges between our two countries.

As the summer tourist season approaches, Greece looks forward to providing unparalleled travel experiences to visitors from around the globe. Last year, more than 25 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 an abundant natural diversity, Greece offers a wide variety of attractions to explore. Furthermore, a rich gastronomic tradition with exquisite flavors from local products such as the excellent olive oil and many different varieties of wine, provide additional incentives for every visitor.



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on Their Independence Day

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