

Central America Independence Day

Five countries boast great potential in many areas

The Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua commemorate 196 years of independence, declared on Sept. 15, 1821.

Throughout their history, the five countries have strengthened their numerous bonds overcoming times of armed conflict in several Central American countries, while also building peace and economic integration, together with the friendly countries of Panama and the Dominican Republic, to form the Central American Integration System. Today, we are a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

This year we want to share with the readers of The Japan Times one of our shared principles, namely that of sustainable tourism as a way to strengthen the links between Japan and our countries.

Our five Central American countries have adopted sustainable tourism development policies as an engine of economic and social development, taking into account the countries' comparative advantages. Sustainable tourism effectively contributes to the generation of employment, incorporating young people, women and the elderly in productive activities. Other advantages are the creation of decent work, protection of the environment and our cultural heritage, while strengthening the national identities of our countries.

Another relevant aspect is that the benefits of this economic activity are

extended to related sectors, such as transportation, craft production, telecommunications, food, fuels and general services among others. With this, tourism activities are also sources of revenue for governments.

It is important to note that in the Central American countries, regional tourism has been identified among the economic activities with the greatest advantages for the region to be an active player in the global economy, through the services that can be included in commercial agreements. The basis to that assertion is our geographic position as a bridge between North and South America and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans that is strategic to create links between different cultures and languages, ecological diversity, unique environmental resources and stable climatic conditions throughout the year. Most important, the region includes the Mayan world.

Visiting Central America is an immersion into a myriad of tourist and cultural activities offered in each country, where visitors can discover the mysteries of ancient cultures, UNESCO's World Heritage sites, architectonic colonial legacy, intense colorful motifs of their hand-woven clothes, traditional dances and culinary experiences. All of this can be combined with virgin beaches, crystal-line waters, water sports such as surfing and fishing, jungles and majestic volcanoes, adventure sports, mountain climbing, rafting or skiing on volcanic sands.

Central America offers the experience of a diverse and complementary multi-destination trip where travelers find a combination of attractions, services, and interconnectivity that will enrich their journey.

Together with the enormous potential of the five countries, there are efforts to be made and scourges to fight against that still persist in many other fields related to sustainable development and consolidation of the integration. The five countries achieved their independence at the same time and our bonds are strengthened every day to achieve the common goals.

This year is also the commemoration of 82 years of diplomatic relations with Japan, the people and government of which have been crucial for social and economic development through financial and technical cooperation, having had a strong impact in the five countries, in areas such as education, health, disaster management and infrastructure, among others.

We are committed to work together with Japan for the peace of the world, the achievement of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals and the strengthening of the friendship between our peoples.

Guatemala Ambassador Angela Maria Chavez Bietti wrote this article on behalf of the chiefs of missions of the republics of Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.



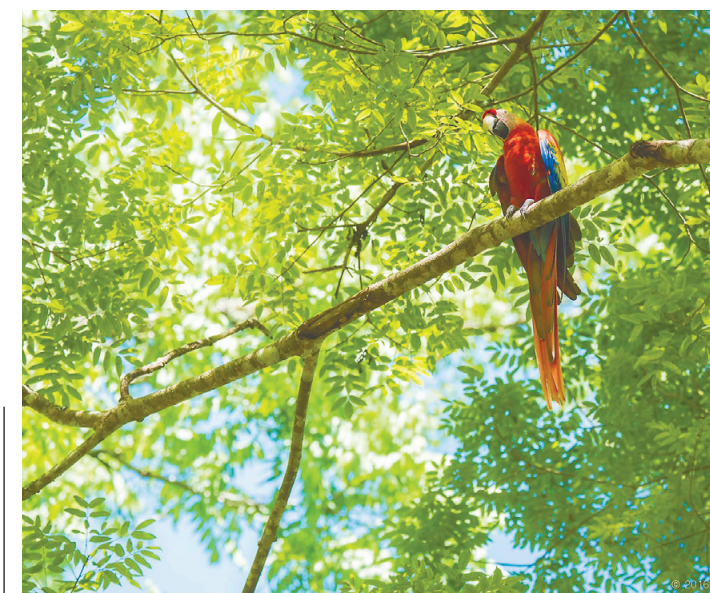
Manuel Antonio Beach, located in the southwest of Costa Rica, consists of three adjacent white sand beaches and is the most visited due to its scenic beauty. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF COSTA RICA



The beaches of El Salvador: paradise for avid surfers, with enough waves for everyone. Tourists can also enjoy the Salvadoran cuisine and hospitality. MINISTRY OF TOURISM, EL SALVADOR



Guatemala's valleys, mountains and forests offer perfect places and natural attractions for outdoor activities such as hiking or trekking, providing a chance to see incredible scenery. VISITGUATEMALA.INGUAT



The national bird of Honduras, scarlet macaws live out their days freely among the Maya — a timeless bond between a culture and bird that cannot be broken. MARCA HONDURAS



El Gueguense is a satirical drama and was the first literary work of post-Columbian Nicaragua. It is regarded as one of Latin America's most distinctive colonial-era expressions and is Nicaragua's signature folklore. NICARAGUA

Congratulations

to the People of
Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala,
Honduras and Nicaragua
on the 196th Anniversary
of Their Independence

Takehige Ogawa
Honorary Consul of
the Republic of Guatemala in Yokohama
and
Group Representative

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