

EURO BIZ JAPAN

JULY 2019

The hiring empire

Robert Walters Japan continues to flourish

➔ Stable and prudent

Andrej Bertonec, deputy prime minister and minister of finance of Slovenia

➔ A work in progress

Japan moves closer to adopting ILO standards

JEREMY SAMPSON,
MANAGING DIRECTOR



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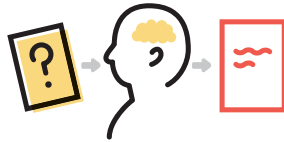
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SGS Japan

The Mission of the European Business Council

To promote an impediment-free environment for European business in Japan.



The hiring empire

By Toby Waters

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First Focus

This May, unseasonably hot temperatures swept Japan. The mercury rose to 39.5°C — a national record for the month — in Shimizu, Hokkaido, and close to 600 people across the country were hospitalised for heatstroke.

Increasingly, fountains in the concrete, such as this one in Minato Mirai, can be found outside train stations, around department stores and in parks and public squares. Wet pavement can decrease surrounding air temperatures by as much as 4°C.

Last year was Japan's hottest ever. This year has already broken heat records. The temptation to strip down and run about grows in intensity with the heat.

Photo by Mohd Nadzri
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Dan Sloan has covered Japan and Asia as a journalist, author and corporate content chief for over 20 years, seeing more governments than he can count. He is a former president of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, and an unrepentant Yokohama BayStars fan.

➡ *"In the Showa era, governments aimed for full male employment in Japan amid a growing economy and occasionally harsh working conditions. The Heisei era revealed economic disparities and a darker side of the labour market as that expansion rapidly slowed. What will the Reiwa era mean for labour in Japan?"*



Allison Bettin received her degree in journalism at the University of Hong Kong before relocating to Tokyo. She has written for *Eurobiz Japan* for more than three years on topics such as environmental technology, international economics, and wine.

➡ *"Japan has always been admired for its artisanal work, and its food and beverage scene is no exception. In this month's Cellar Notes, I look at how Japanese producers are upholding this heritage of craftsmanship in winemaking — and how it's beginning to bear fruit."*



A former newspaper and wire service reporter, **Geoff Botting** has called Japan home for over a quarter of a century. He now works as a freelance journalist and translator, writing mostly about business, economics and travel.

➡ *"Research shows that investments grow in value over the long term, even after sharp market downturns. That is why the EBC Asset Management Committee is urging its industry and the Japanese government to create incentives that will encourage people to keep their money in the market, so that by the time they retire, a sizable nest egg will be waiting for them."*



Philippe de Taxis du Poët is the general manager (EU side) of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Co-operation. A European Commission official for 20 years, he is now posted at the EU Delegation to Japan.

➡ *"The entry into force of the EU-Japan EPA is not the end of the story — ensuring that our agreement is fully implemented is our top priority. The EU and Japan now stand closer together. They are working to promote the benefits of openness, to move towards a circular and a digital economy, and to tap the great innovation potential of both sides to improve people's lives."*

EURO BIZ JAPAN

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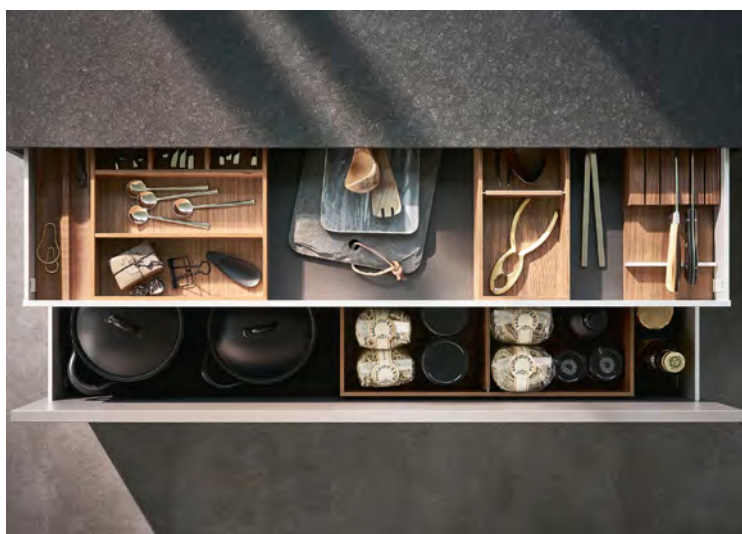
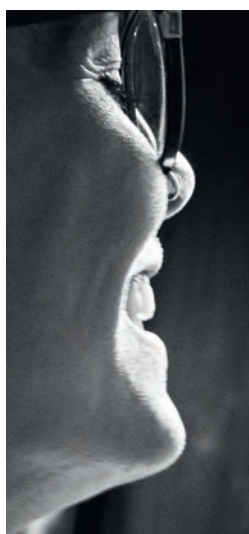
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Eurobiz Japan welcomes story ideas from readers and proposals from writers and photographers. Letters to the editor may be edited for length and style.

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Moving in a good direction

According to the Stability and Growth Pact, the EU's rules on fiscal discipline, EU member states should have a debt-to-GDP ratio not exceeding 60%. However, half of the 28 EU member states are currently above this limit — some significantly. Following the global financial crisis, Slovenia's debt-to-GDP ratio skyrocketed from 22% in 2009 to 82.6% in 2015, but the nation made prudent choices and, between 2015 and 2018, succeeded in cutting its debt by 12.5%. Now the fastest at reducing debt in the eurozone, Slovenia is moving in a very good direction, forecasting that it will reach 55% by 2022.

Andrej Bertoncelj, deputy prime minister and finance minister of Slovenia — who is at the helm of this project — believes that growth is a natural outcome of tackling debt. Read "Stable and prudent" (page 14) to learn

how he is managing Slovenia's debt and why he visited Japan last month.

Japan looks to be moving in the right direction — albeit slowly — with regard to its policies for workers. In "A work in progress" (page 18), Dan Sloan looks at hoped for changes in the work place during the Reiwa era and the expectation that Japan will soon ratify two outstanding fundamental conventions of the UN's International Labour Organisation, which is celebrating its centenary.

This year also marks 100 years of bilateral relations between Japan and Finland.

In "A lot to be happy about" (page 20), Finnish Ambassador to Japan Pekka Orpana speaks about the extensive programme of events that have been organised, as well as his nation's collaboration with Japan in areas such as healthcare.

Finland was named the happiest country in the UN's World Happiness Report for the second year in a row. Perhaps not coincidentally, its debt-to-GDP ratio is below 60%. ●

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INVESTING IN JAPAN

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

PHOTOS BY KAGEAKI SMITH



THE HIRING EMPIRE

Robert Walters Japan continues to flourish

In the era of globalisation, every company with vision strives to build a business empire on which the sun never sets.

Founded in London in 1985, professional recruitment consultancy Robert Walters currently operates in 31 countries, and on all continents. However, it is the Japan office that has become the jewel in the company's crown.

Since opening in Tokyo in 2000, and in Osaka in 2007, Robert Walters Japan has grown to become the biggest international recruitment firm in the country. Its consultants work to meet the hiring needs of clients — from multinationals to startups — in a wide range of sectors.

"In Japan, we work in specialised teams," says Jeremy Sampson, managing director of Robert Walters Japan. "We've got more than 40 teams in total, with each one covering a specific segment, industry or function in the market."

Foundational to its growth are the firm's policies, which reflect the belief that taking care of its employees inevitably results in improved outcomes for clients and candidates alike. For example, all consultants must take a six-to-eight-week training course when they are hired, and they receive regular support and training throughout their career at the firm.

"We are arming our consultants to help clients win the war for talent," states Sampson. "Training is one of the most important factors for our company, so we develop our people to provide the most positive and productive customer experiences possible."

It has also put diversity at the heart of its business. Its over 300 employees represent more than 40 nationalities, and it has been awarded a 3-star Eruboshi certificate from Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in recognition of its promotion of women's advancement within the company.

"For us, diversity is something that's happened

organically, but not automatically — it's not something we've forced, but we've always been conscious of it," Sampson explains. "One of our leadership principles is: 'Diversity enriches the work environment, leading to innovation and creativity'."

The success of these policies is in evidence at the management level. All of its board members — made up of men, women, Japanese and non-Japanese individuals — have been with the company for at least 12 years, a longevity that is rare in the recruitment industry.

"I think it's really a testament to the cohesiveness that we have as a business and our culture of inclusiveness," Sampson says.

Instead of a commission-based payment system used by the majority of recruitment firms, Robert Walters operates a profit-sharing system for its consultants. This fosters a collaborative rather than competitive atmosphere among staff, allowing them to focus primarily on the needs of clients and candidates.

Eschewing a system favoured by other recruiters across the world might raise eyebrows — but you can't argue with results. Robert Walters Japan has achieved double-digit growth every year for the past eight years, and are on course to make it nine years in a row in 2019. This growth has made the firm's Tokyo office the largest in terms of consultants in Robert Walters' global network.

These efforts and achievements have not gone unnoticed. Robert Walters Japan was recognised as a Best Workplace in 2019 by Great Place to Work. At the Recruitment Industry Awards — Japan 2018, organised

"We're helping Japanese professionals compete on the global stage"



ROBERT WALTERS JAPAN

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"we develop our people to provide the most ... productive customer experiences possible"



by Recruitment International, the firm was named Banking and Finance Recruitment Company of the Year, Best Back Office Team of the Year, and the Growth Company of the Year.

While such recognition is a point of pride for the team, there is still the need to contend with the challenges of the Japanese labour market — and provide solutions.

"The acute labour shortage is no secret, and it's a real social issue for Japan," Sampson says, adding that, nationwide, there are roughly 1.62 jobs for every applicant, and that, in Tokyo, the number is 2.12.

Despite the government's labour reforms, which, Sampson notes, are attempting to address this shortage — a major obstacle to Japan's growth — the situation isn't going to improve any

time soon. But for Robert Walters Japan, these challenges play directly into their strengths.

"A lot of companies have become more open to the idea of importing talent from abroad," Sampson explains. "We have programmes in place to source Japanese and non-Japanese professionals outside of Japan and bring them into positions of employment here."

But, certainly, great talent can still be found at home. Owing to the firm's nearly two decades in Japan, it has amassed the largest curated database of Japanese and English bilingual professionals in the country.

Sampson also highlights Robert Walters Japan's willingness to propose less commonly considered solutions to companies' staffing problems, such as putting forward older, more experienced candidates for leadership positions — many Japanese HR departments still often think only in terms of the need to hire younger employees and new graduates.

"I think we're in a very fortunate place right now," Sampson says. "Despite the overall shrinkage in the Japan market, our particular segment is expanding, and I think we'll continue to grow at an even faster rate than the market."

Robert Walters Japan sees to it that this good fortune extends to the community at large. The company, both globally and locally, is committed to CSR and social initiatives.

"We have our Global Angels programme where, every year, we send a number of people — including employees in

Japan — to southern Kenya to build critical pieces of infrastructure to support sustainable farming and provide access to clean drinking water, something that's been hugely popular. We've also invested in building a new classroom at the local secondary school," Sampson says. "And we have volunteer leave in Japan. We give every employee, as part of their contract, one day of additional annual leave to volunteer at a charity of their choice."

Sampson also sees sponsorships as an important way to support Japanese society. Robert Walters Japan sponsors the Japan national rugby team, ultimately, "helping to raise the profile of rugby here", he states.

But it's not only major teams that get the firm's backing. It also sponsors Paralympians, as well as young, aspiring athletes who compete in more minor sports, such as cross-country skiing, women's baseball and finswimming.

"This is similar to what we're trying to do as a business," says Sampson. "We're helping professionals in Japan to compete and be successful on the global stage."

As Robert Walters Japan works for the common good, and wealth, of the nation, it clearly has many sunny days ahead. ●



FROM THE LEFT:
JORGE EIKI NAKAJIMA, DIRECTOR OF THE INDUSTRY DIVISION
TOMOKAZU BETZOLD, DIRECTOR OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
JEREMY SAMPSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR
CLIVE O'BRIEN, DIRECTOR OF THE COMMERCE DIVISION
RACHNA RATRA, DIRECTOR OF THE SALES & MARKETING DIVISION
JOSHUA BRYAN, DIRECTOR OF THE FINANCIAL SERVICES, LEGAL, HR & CONTRACT DIVISION



THE INTERVIEW

TEXT BY ANDREW HOWITT

PHOTO BY KAGEAKI SMITH

STABLE AND PRUDENT

Andrej Bertoncej, deputy
prime minister and minister
of finance of Slovenia

With a background in both business and academia, Andrej Bertoncelj brings decades of practical experience and theoretical understanding to his role as Slovenia's finance minister. For the first 20 years of his career, he worked at a pharmaceutical firm and then in investment banking, living both in Europe and the US. Then, during a 10-year stint at the University of Primorska, he became a full professor of economics and published 10 books and more than 40 articles. Bertoncelj, who is also deputy prime minister of Slovenia, was appointed to his current post last September to help consolidate public finances.

What's the reason for your visit to Japan?

My main reason for coming to Japan was to attend the International Monetary Fund's Public and Debt Management Forum. I was invited as a speaker to present our practices for reducing public debt. Slovenia is one of the 19 members of the eurozone, and we are leading in this area.

I also met my Japanese counterpart Minister of Finance Mr Taro Aso for the first time. We had the chance to exchange ideas on running monetary fiscal policy. Japan has done a good job in this respect, especially regarding how to spur economic growth. I also enjoyed hearing his views on current global developments. Despite being a small economy with a population of two million, Slovenia is, of course, affected by these developments, especially as

we are very export oriented — exports account for 85.2% of our GDP.

We have excellent economic cooperation with Japan. We are so far apart and so different, nevertheless, we have very much in common. I told Mr Aso that we are open to foreign investments and that we regard Japanese investments very highly. It was very good to express our willingness to enhance cooperation.

How would you describe Slovenia's economy today?

We are in good shape. Our economic outlook is positive — something said by ratings agencies, not just me. Prospects for real economic growth are good. Last year, we grew 4.5%. This year's expected growth is 3.4% — because everybody's slowing down. And then we hope to stay at around 3%, which is very



Exports account for

85.2%

of our GDP

good. The eurozone is growing at an average of 1.5%, so we're growing twice as fast as the larger economies around us. I would like to keep it that way.

Public debt reduction and management are very important in my eyes — strategic goal number one in fiscal terms — because they go hand in hand with growth. We finished last year with a public debt of around 70% of GDP. This year we expect to get to 65% and then, by the end of next year, 61%, essentially meeting the EU's Maastricht criteria of capping debt at 60% of GDP. Very few countries in the eurozone, unfortunately, are below 60%. The eurozone average is 85%, so we are well below already. And by 2022, we are forecasting that we will get to 55% of GDP.

Another of our strategic goals is to achieve a 1% general

"Public debt reduction and management are very important in my eyes ... because they go hand in hand with growth"

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budget surplus. Last year, we ended with a 0.7% surplus. If everything goes well, we forecast that we will reach 1.2% by 2022. We will then be fully compliant with the Stability and Growth Pact, the EU's fiscal rules.

Domestically, macroeconomic stability and fiscal prudence are okay, but external threats are looming, so I hope that there will be more cooperation, like the Economic Partnership Agreement and the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed by the European Union and Japan. Cooperation is always better than trade wars.

How are you working to reduce public debt?

Some of the proceeds are coming from the privatisation of our banking system. We made a commitment to the EU to sell our three banks, and we've sold two already. I was very strict on having 90% of the proceeds go towards lowering public debt. The remaining 10% is invested in a demographic fund. We will decrease our public debt over the next three years from €32 billion to €31 billion, which doesn't sound like a lot, but €1 billion for an economy is a huge effort.

I meet finance minister colleagues from the Eurogroup



We will decrease our public debt over the next three years to

€31
billion

"Practically all cooperation between Japan and Slovenia is in high-tech"



and the European Union once or twice a month, and nobody's thinking about actively decreasing debt. For most of them, the goal is not to increase debt, but we are actually reducing ours.

It's also very important that the interest on our debt decreases. At the worst times, it was almost €1.2 billion. Now it's less than €800 million. Our general government budget is slightly above €10 billion, so that extra €400 million means a lot. I can spend it on healthcare, education or investments.

On top of that comes a very unpleasant word: reform. We are currently implementing reforms in Slovenia, starting with tax optimisation. Right now, labour is over-taxed, and I have to increase net income, boosting disposable income, to spur domestic demand.

What are some other structural reforms you are implementing?

It is crucial for us, in order to be sustainable, to do more on pension system reform, healthcare reform, education reform and labour market reform, and to deal with the costs related to our ageing society, which in Slovenia is a huge problem, probably one of the worst among OECD countries. The

birthrate is too low, at 1.3% — practically the same as Japan's. So, we plan to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67, which is the trend in Europe.

What are some examples of cooperation with Japan?

Practically all cooperation between Japan and Slovenia is in high-tech. We recently had a very interesting and highly regarded investment: Yaskawa Robotics opened a factory in Slovenia this year. For us, it's very important because the firm deploys highly educated people, it's in a high-tech industry — robotics is the industry of the future — and it can serve as a hub for research, production or distribution activities. Japanese companies that invest in Slovenia can easily reach other European countries because we are part of the common market.

I think more can be done in this respect, especially when you consider our stable macroeconomic situation, attractive and predictable business environment, highly educated workforce, relatively low tax burden — our nominal corporate tax is 19% — and desire to move more towards high-tech industries. Japan is an ideal partner for us. ●



A work in progress

Japan moves closer to adopting ILO standards

The Reiwa era has begun in Japan with the tightest labour market in 35 years, with more women, seniors, foreigners and even robots in the workforce than ever. But will better working conditions emerge?

The UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) believes so, but recognises that it will take time and considerable effort.

"The ILO pays particular attention to the issues raised by Japanese social partners — the Japanese Trade Union Confederation and Nippon Keidanren," says ILO Japan Director Akiko Taguchi, noting the organisation's focus on labour organisation, work place safety, gender equality and sustainable development.

Japan is juggling increasing job vacancies in multiple industries, continuing population decline and strapped public finances. Like the Heisei (8 January 1989 – 30 April 2019) and Showa (1926–1989) eras before it, Reiwa will see extensive change in the work place.

Showa aimed for full male employment amid a growing economy and sometimes harsh working conditions. Heisei began to address the conse-

quences of this expansion, such as dangerous overtime, limited opportunities for women, sexual and power harassment and foreign worker exploitation.

Since it was established, the ILO, which celebrates its centenary this year, has worked to promote a better and safer work place, as well as poverty reduction. Japan was a founding member and is its second-largest financial contributor, holding a permanent seat on its governing body. However, the nation still has not ratified an ILO governance convention on agricultural labour inspections or, crucially, two of eight fundamental conventions, covering the abolition of forced labour and discrimination in the work place.

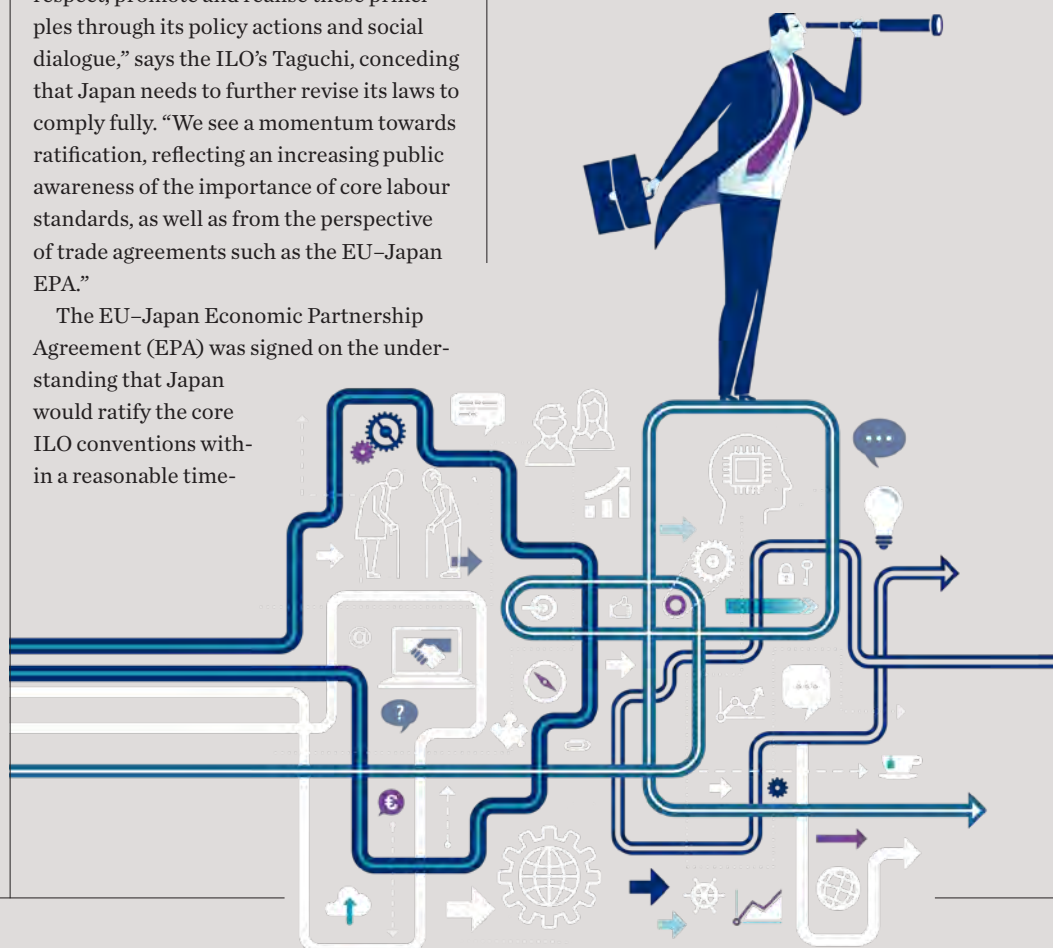
"The Japanese government has been making a fair effort to fulfil its duty to respect, promote and realise these principles through its policy actions and social dialogue," says the ILO's Taguchi, conceding that Japan needs to further revise its laws to comply fully. "We see a momentum towards ratification, reflecting an increasing public awareness of the importance of core labour standards, as well as from the perspective of trade agreements such as the EU–Japan EPA."

The EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was signed on the understanding that Japan would ratify the core ILO conventions within a reasonable time-

frame, and the EU has called for clear and concrete progress.

Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade Bernd Lange expects near-term action.

"We see ... an increasing public awareness of the importance of core labour standards"



"The EU-Japan agreement features a trade and sustainable development chapter, which binds both parties to work towards ratification of the ILO core labour standards not yet ratified," he says. "The [Japanese] government understands what it has committed to and has put the wheels in motion to deliver the ratification of the outstanding conventions."

Japan and the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Organising Committee, respectively, signed memorandums of cooperation and understanding with the ILO two years ago to advance socially responsible labour practices. However, Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) issued a red card in May with *The Dark Side of the Tokyo 2020 Games*, its report alleging harsh working conditions at Olympic construction sites and noting two worker deaths.

"The Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics was Japan's opportunity to address some of the long-running gaps within the construction industry," says BWI General Secretary Ambet Yuson. "These problems have just gotten worse."

The ILO, aware of the challenges, has launched a training programme for Games staff that will continue through the Olympics and Paralympics.



The ILO celebrates its centenary this year

"The [Japanese] government understands what it has committed to and has put the wheels in motion to deliver the ratification of the outstanding conventions"

"Two Sustainability Forums have taken place, and two more will be organised before the 2020 Summer Games," says the ILO's Taguchi. "We hope these actions can make change and become useful tools to achieve decent work."

The BWI report noted that the number of migrant construction labourers nearly tripled from 2014 to 2017, reaching 55,000. New visa categories for blue-collar workers were established earlier this year in 14 sectors, aiming to attract some 345,000 foreign labourers in a country with 1.62 jobs for every seeker.

Amid the pinch, Japan has also capped overtime at major firms at 45 hours a month and 360 hours a year. Still, overtime can reach 99 hours a month, to a maximum of 720 hours a year, during crunch periods — an amount considered unhealthy — while smaller firms do not need to comply until 2020, and the construction, taxi, and health-care industries until 2024.

Considering workforce protections, harassment remains a top issue. With a record 72,000 reported cases in fiscal 2017, Japan has enacted legislation requiring companies to prevent workplace intimidation and prohibit firing of harassment whistle-blowers — albeit without set punishments. It also says it supports the ILO's proposed convention on harassment.

"The ILO is prospecting adoption of a new convention ... 'Violence and Harassment in the World of Work'," says Taguchi. "This might, by-and-large, influence the national discussion on the set of legal amendments on sexual harassment and power harassment."



A mere

0.4%

of Japanese firms have a female CEO

The EU also supports a harassment prevention treaty.

"The agreement has created a platform for discussions on labour relations that can easily be extended beyond the scope of the EPA," says the EU's Lange. "I expect the European side to bring this to the table in the near future."

A record number of women are now employed, but the latest ILO report on *Women in Business and Management* shows less than 20% of Japanese businessowners are female, and under 15% are female managers. By comparison, 11% of Spanish CEOs are women, while Japanese firms have a mere 0.4% at the top.

Womenomics has been part of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's economic mantra, but his 20-member Cabinet currently has only one female minister. The prime minister did tap nine male Cabinet ministers 65 years or older; Abe himself turns 65 in September.

That greying dynamic is mirrored in the work place. One in every five employees is over 60, and parliament has unveiled plans to push back retirement to 70.

Citizens who worked and paid into social welfare in the Showa and Heisei eras are finding rules changing in Reiwa, which may not become labour's golden era in Japan, but certainly will be its silver one. ●



A lot to be happy about

Finnish Ambassador
to Japan Pekka Orpana

Of the 37 years Finnish Ambassador to Japan Pekka Orpana has been with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he's spent 24 of them abroad, serving Finland in a total of eight countries. Before arriving in Japan last year, he worked in Helsinki as senior advisor on external energy relations and climate change. He has also been ambassador of Finland to Serbia and Peru.

Could you share a few highlights from your time as ambassador to Serbia?

At the time I was there, from 2011 to 2015, Serbia was really moving forward. The Kosovo dialogue was taking place and, partly because of that, Serbia was able to start EU-membership negotiations. That created a very positive environment, which supported the strengthening of democracy and institutions in Serbia. This atmosphere also enabled a strong push forward in our bilateral relations, particularly in trade and investment.

Throughout my four years there, we worked on implementing district heating using renewables, which is related to

energy transition and climate change, issues quite close to my heart. We also had a very strong programme at the Serbian parliament to help empower female parliamentarians in their work, and, at the local level, we had programmes to increase the participation of women in politics. This led to a building up of networks between female politicians at local, regional and national levels, and we were extremely successful in that. We saw real, concrete results. For instance, in the Muslim areas where





**“It’s
important to
celebrate”**

there had been no women in the local municipalities, we saw several women elected to the local government.

How are Finland and Japan celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations?

We have an extensive programme of events and visits scheduled throughout the year both in Japan and Finland. We have a lot of cultural events, and, of course, the Moomins are part of the programme. The opening of the Moomin Valley Park in Hanno City [in Saitama Prefecture] coincided with the anniversary. There was a Moomin art exhibition at the Mori Art Museum, and we will have other Moomin-related events this year.

The Rut Bryk ceramics exhibition at the Tokyo Station Gallery was fantastic. And we have an exhibition, on until 23 September, at the National Museum of Western Art featuring artwork by female Finnish painters. Also, The Japan Philharmonic Orchestra visited Finland, which was a major event of the anniversary there.

In addition, we are hosting some business delegations

— they’re always a chance to focus on the future. For example, in May, we had a very important one at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation on the theme of energy transition. We came together to discuss what the future of energy will look like. Key companies and institutions in the field were there and gave talks. And I think it was a success. This event will help kickstart closer cooperation in the energy sector between Finland and Japan.

There are also the high-level visits. The most important was

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Auction closes: Wednesday, 14 August 2019, 6:00pm

Register now: www.rftcjapan.org

Note: All proceeds from Casino Night will go toward Run For The Cure Foundation's mission to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease in Japan.

the visit to Finland of Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko at the beginning of this month. We were honoured to have had them as part of our hundred-year celebrations. It really put Japan in the spotlight in Finland for that week.

It's important to celebrate. Through these events, we're building up stronger people-to-people connections. We're also raising the awareness of Finland and what we can offer Japan.

What are some areas of bilateral cooperation?

There's a lot happening in healthcare right now. That's related to the fact that Japan has the world's fastest ageing population and Finland has one of the fastest ageing populations in Europe — so we face the same challenges. There is ongoing cooperation between our governments, research institutions and companies to ensure our societies age well, using medical and social innovations to guarantee a good life for everyone.

In Finland, we have certain strengths in healthcare that you can't find anywhere else.

For example, we have a digital database of health information for our entire population going back several decades. We also have a gene bank with information on half a million Finns — and a good regulatory framework. It's open data for companies developing our digital healthcare ecosystem.

Trade relations are really booming. Trade figures have

been going up with very high percentage increases every year. There's a lot of interest from the Japanese side in Finland: in Finnish technological knowhow, and particularly in our startup culture.

What are you planning for the Tokyo 2020 Games?

We'll have a wooden pavilion, donated by the Metsä Group, here on the embassy grounds. Construction starts at the beginning of next year and it will open in June. During the Olympics, it will serve as a hospitality house for the Olympic Committee of Finland and for the athletes. It'll be a prime example of a modern Finnish wood building, which we also hope to promote here in Japan.

We have a lot of Finnish companies as partners. Nokia, for example, will build a 5G network here to showcase this new technology. There's also Finnair. Beginning this summer, there will be 41 direct flights from Japan to Helsinki per week.

I also want to use the pavilion for cultural events and to have open days so the public can see what we offer.

In the 2019 World Happiness Report, the World Economic Forum ranked Finland the happiest country. Why

do you think Finns are so happy?

I think there are three reasons. One is our functioning welfare system. People have security through the different phases of their lives, and this security network makes people happy because they don't have to worry too much at the end of the day. We also have equal opportunities for everyone, such as free education from the first grade to the end of university.

The second reason is our lifestyle. We're very close to nature and have a good, clean environment. I think that's a very important part of it.

Third, Finnish society is based on trust. It's a fact that helps to make politics, business and interpersonal relations easier.

I think the Moomins — their love of nature, trust and good relationships — still reflect who we Finns are. The Japanese love the Moomins very much. That's an important connection. ●

"We're ... raising the awareness of Finland and what we can offer Japan"





Finland

Deepening relations by the sweat of their brow

This year, Finland is celebrating 100 years of diplomatic ties with Japan. The two nations' close relationship is exemplified in certain shared traditions, such as a love of communal bathing. Last autumn, Visit Finland launched a sauna campaign, which runs until October of this year, encouraging people in Japan to visit the saunas of Finland. When you visit five of the nearly 100 participating saunas, you receive a gift; after visiting 10, you are given the title of sauna ambassador.

The two nations also share well-deserved reputations in the high-tech space. Finland is home to video and mobile game developers, such as Supercell and Rovio Entertainment, which have become major players in the industry in Japan and around the world. ●



Population

5,537,364 (July 2018 estimate)
Urban population: 85.4%
37.64% are 25–54 years of age (2018)



Main exports

Wood, charcoal and wood products; paper, paperboard and pulp; optical, photo, technical and medical apparatus; machinery.



Did you know?

- Finland has won more Summer Olympic gold medals per capita than any other nation.
- Finland has more saunas than cars.



Trade with Japan

Exports to Japan: €1.48 billion

Imports from Japan: €749 million

SOURCE: FINNISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN (2018)



Finland





BUSINESSES FROM ...

FINLAND

A look at some
companies from
the region



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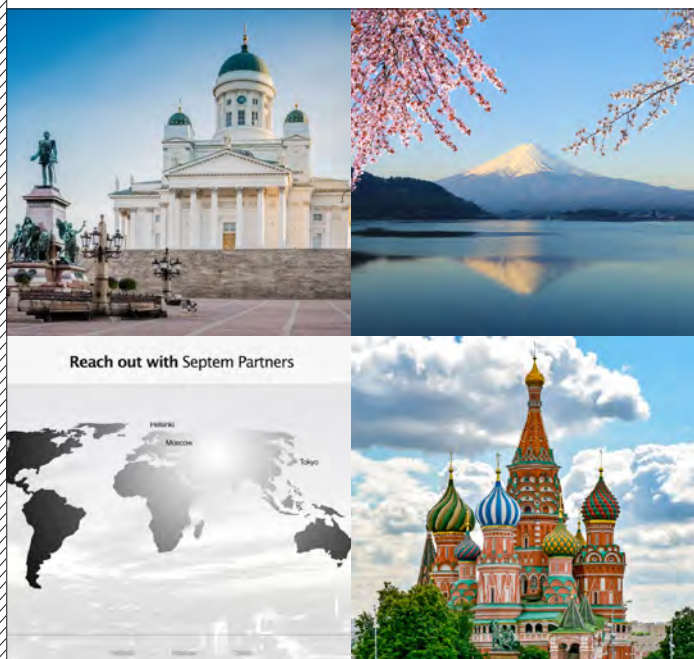
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The Netherlands

Continuing studies

The geographical distance between the Netherlands and Japan belies the closeness of the relationship that the two nations have enjoyed for more than 400 years. During Japan's Sakoku, or isolationist, period (1633–1853), the Netherlands was the only European country allowed to trade with Japan. Dutch trading became the medium of transmission for Japanese art and culture to the West; it also brought Western knowledge to Japan.



Scientific developments from abroad became known in Japan as *rangaku*, or Dutch studies, and gave Japanese scholars access to inventions and advances at the forefront of global study.

“There was indeed a rich exchange of knowledge and skills during the period in which the Dutch were exclusively allowed to trade from Dejima, Nagasaki,” says Dutch Ambassador to Japan Aart Jacobi. “Many Japanese scholars learned the Dutch language as a means of learning about Western scientific and technological achievements. The Dutch influence on Japan, through the introduction of modern medical sciences and maritime engineering, can hardly be overstated.”

The learning links between the two nations continue to this day.

“We see accelerating collaboration both on the academic level and through commercial arrangements,” he says. “This month, the Netherlands hosted the 7th bilateral Japan–Netherlands Joint Committee on Science and Technology. On the agenda were innovation and science policy, renewable energy and hydrogen, nanotechnology, 5G, and quantum technology.”

Cooperation between the Netherlands and Japan is becoming increasingly important as they both contend with similar problems.

“With ageing and soaring medical costs — challenges that both Japan and Europe are facing — I think recent developments in life sciences are something special,” Jacobi says.

Medical advances by the Amsterdam-based electronics firm Philips have been crucial in helping to extend longevity and improve the quality of life for people around the world. In ageing societies, devices such as their defibrillators, blood pressure monitors and respiratory machines are increasingly important.

Making sure that Japan’s resources are sustainable and healthy is also important. Fugro is a geo-intelligence and asset-integrity solution provider, which advises organisations on natural resource extraction, engineering design and major construction projects. In addition to assisting the construction, mining, as well as oil and gas industries with onshore and offshore surveying, its Tokyo office gives Japanese firms advice on earthquake-related management and engineering.

The exchange and development of mechanical technology also continues. Nipparts, a company based in Amsterdam, contributes to Japan’s large automotive industry by selling its own aftermarket car parts, including for engines, brakes and transmissions, as well as electronics. It has partnered with some of the biggest car businesses in Japan, including Toyota and Nissan.

Perhaps hewing closest to the legacy of *rangaku*’s dissemination of knowledge, Elsevier is an analytics and information business that publishes papers and journals for fields such as medicine, science and technology. With offices in Tokyo and Osaka, the firm continues its long history of distributing information, but today makes research from across the globe acces-

“We see accelerating collaboration”

sible to anyone with an internet connection.

The dawn of the information age means that people, businesses and countries are more connected than ever. But more important than just connection is cooperation to put the innumerable advances and improvements into practice and solve shared problems together.

“Innovate together to tackle common social challenges,” Jacobi says. “This is what should drive international collaboration.” ●



Trade with Japan

Exports to Japan: **¥352.6 billion**

Imports from Japan: **¥1.4 billion**

SOURCE:
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS JAPAN (2018)



Population

17,151,228 (July 2018 estimate)

Urban population: 91.5%

39.18% are 25–54 years of age (2018)

Main exports

Optical, photo, technical and medical apparatus; machinery; pharmaceutical products; non-railway vehicles.

Did you know...?

- In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to legalise same-sex marriage.
- The Netherlands has over 18 million bicycles — more than one for every resident.





BUSINESSES FROM ...

THE NETHERLANDS

A look at some companies from the region



HEINEKEN KIRIN K.K.

Heineken Kirin K.K. was initially established in 1983 by Heineken, with a licensee agreement awarded to Kirin Brewery Company Ltd. for local brewing of Heineken beer in Japan. A joint venture was established in 1989, offering Japanese consumers quality Heineken in bottle, can and draught.

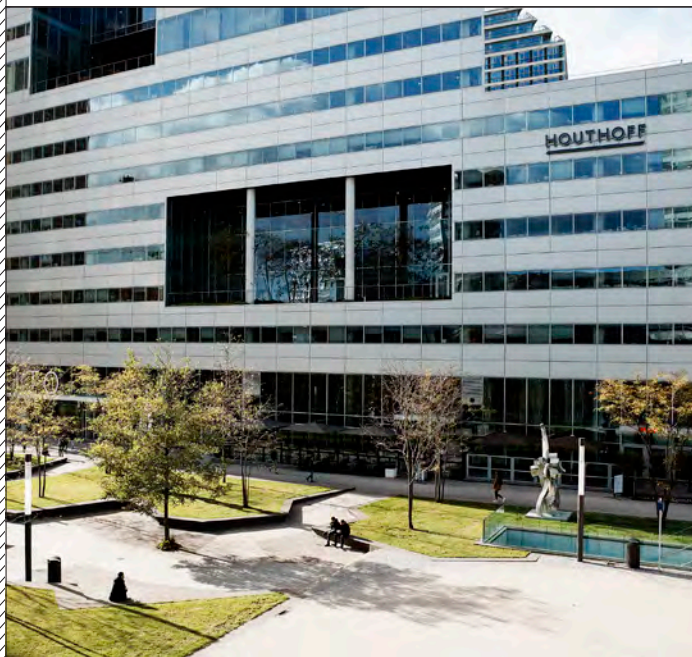
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Information

Size Range of Units

Standard Studios (20–22m²), Large Studios (25m²)
1 Bedroom Suites (33–52m²), 2 Bedroom Suites (71m²)

Bedrooms: 60 Units

Parking Facilities: 2 Spaces

Room Rates

Daily	JPY7,800	to	JPY28,000	per night
Weekly	JPY6,500	to	JPY23,800	per night
Monthly	JPY5,500	to	JPY19,100	per night
Fitness tickets	JPY1,400	per time		

Overview

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Our services include concierge, general information, mail/courier, free broadband internet access, and 24-hour building security. We have a nighttime superintendent who assists during the evenings.

We are members of the Fitness Club Hiroo for exercise and fitness studio programs, and tickets are for sale at the reception for JPY1,400/one-time.

Inquiries

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Richard van Schie

What's more serious than football?

"Some people think football is a matter of life and death," legendary Scottish footballer Bill Shankly once remarked. "I can assure you it is much more serious than that."

While Richard van Schie, general manager of global supply chain and logistics firm Schenker-Seino, may not share exactly the same level of passion for the sport, he has been football-mad for as long as he can remember.

Perhaps it was inevitable. Van Schie grew up in Haarlem, near Amsterdam, just 500 metres from the stadium of Haarlem FC, the second-oldest football club in the Netherlands. He spent many afternoons in his youth watching the team play with family or friends, but occasionally he would go so far as to climb over the stadium's fence to watch a game.

"Sometimes you got caught," he says, "but that was a little bit of sport as well."

He began following AFC Ajax, the most successful team in the country, and has been a die-hard fan for decades — even hanging on to his season ticket while not living in the Netherlands.

At the heart of van Schie's love of sport is its power to bring people together and the spirit of community that can develop, whether you're enjoying a drink before the game, playing a friendly match or — especially, he believes — when you're cheering opposing sides.

Van Schie presents his own family as evidence. Having spent

a few years living in Germany, his eldest son became a supporter of Borussia Dortmund FC. Today, they regularly discuss matches, trades, statistics and strategies, and van Schie himself now also supports Dortmund — unless they are playing against Ajax.

"When Ajax played Dortmund in the Champion's League, there was no doubt about who I supported — my blood is red and white," van Schie says, referencing the colours of the team's crest and uniform.

His wife — who is half Swedish and half German — also joins in, and during the World Cup and the European Football Championship, each member of the family roots against the others' teams. Van Schie has seen how this light-hearted rivalry has brought them closer.

"Now we watch the Bundesliga highlights every Sunday morning; it's a kind of ritual," he says. "It's all just fun; sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. But you want to win more often than you lose — just like in business."

Van Schie's firm, Schenker, has been winning in Japan for more than 50 years and has a joint venture with Seino, one of Japan's largest transport companies. Currently, much of their business is focused on freight out of Japan, particularly to Europe and the US.

"Right now, we have many growth projects in the pipeline, which makes Japan such an interesting place to work," van Schie notes. "We're opening a new logistics site near Narita airport later this year. We're also expanding our aerospace business and have started a 24/7 service with our aircraft on ground business for the Japanese market."

Do you like natto?

Time spent working in

Japan:

Three-and-a-half years.

Career regret:

You can't regret things that you have done; you can only regret things you haven't done.

Favourite saying:

Be curious. It's sometimes hard in Japan to ask "why?," but I try to question things.

Favourite book:

Band of Brothers by Stephen E. Ambrose.

Cannot live without:

My family, including my parents and my brothers.

Lesson learned in

Japan:

Be patient, especially in Japan, with so many meetings and pre-meetings.

Secret of success in business:

Be honest, be straightforward and don't mess around.

Favourite place to dine:

Tiger Gyoza in Hiroo, where the soup, noodles, gyoza and dim sum they serve is simply brilliant. It's a good family outing.

Do you like natto?:

I know what it is, but I haven't come across it. I will try it. Maybe now is the time.

"my blood is red and white"



Working for Schenker, van Schie and his family have been all over the world. Before coming to Japan, they lived in Egypt, Germany and Singapore. He has played football on the Great Wall of China, seen the bunkers in Normandy, and can compare Lenin's Mausoleum and Tutankhamun's tomb.

But one indelible experience took place during his time in Egypt: the start of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

All at once, Cairo completely changed, with helicopters patrolling the sky and tanks on the roads. After two and a half weeks, the revolution had ended, but the uncertainty and tension persisted.

"Before the revolution, our children had counted donkeys on the way to school; afterwards, they were counting tanks," van Schie notes. "Looking back, it was an interesting experience in many ways. But we decided we had to get away during that period. My son was only four years old at the time."

No disrespect to Bill Shankly, but some things are more serious than football. ●

Richard van Schie is general manager of Schenker-Seino and is chairperson of the EBC Logistic Committee.



Asset Management

Really ready for retirement?

Last month, the government set off a public firestorm when it issued a report on pension coverage. The Financial Services Agency paper claimed that retired couples in Japan will require an average of ¥20 million of their own savings, on top of their state pension benefits, to fund their twilight years.

But the paper's conclusion wouldn't have surprised asset managers. They have long stressed that in a rapidly ageing society like Japan's, individuals will need to do some smart financial planning to ensure a comfortable retirement.

Japanese households' financial assets are near a record high. But more than half are in the form of cash deposits with much of the remainder in life insurance. In other words, their savings are not designed for growth.

"Such a structure of saving cannot bear fruit," says Nicolas Sauvage, representative director at Amundi Japan and chairman of the EBC Asset Management Committee. "Cash doesn't work when you live 100 years."

New investment schemes and products have been rolled out recently. But Japanese individuals — notoriously risk-adverse — continue to cling to cash.

"The shift from deposits to financial

products is not really happening," Sauvage says.

Net flows into publicly offered retail funds have been flat for the past couple of years, and this year has been particularly disappointing for Japan's asset-management industry. Flows were negative from February to April for most asset classes, one reason being the choppy performance of the financial markets.

The committee also blames stingy tax incentives. For example, contributions to the tax-free retirement savings accounts known as NISA are limited to ¥1 million a year, for a maximum total of ¥5 million over five years.

"Most people in the industry think the government should be doing more," says Laurent Renaud, president of Lyxor Asset Management Japan. "They've been relatively shy about it despite all the talk about promoting the switch from savings to investments."

Another of the committee's advocacy areas involves net asset value (NAV). This shows how much a single share or unit of a fund is worth, and it needs to be calculated at the end of every trading day. In Japan, the NAV is calculated twice by two different

entities: the asset manager and the trustee. The practice is not a global standard.

"It's labour-intensive and time-consuming, and it also takes a lot of additional cost," explains committee vice chairman Shinsuke Suzuki, COO at HSBC Global Asset Management (Japan) K.K.

The EBC submitted a public comment last year to the Investment Trusts Association, Japan (JITA), recommend-

ing a shift to a single calculation process. JITA has since set up a working group.

According to Suzuki, adoption of the process will most likely be up to the individual industry players, rather than being enforced through government regulation.

Another issue, highlighted by the EBC committee and some distributors, has seen progress following pressure from regulators. Japanese securities companies used to be known for their "churning" of customers' portfolios, meaning the repeated buying and selling of securities (including funds) in a bid to drive up branch sales — while regularly hitting clients with commission fees.

"Typically, they are old people with a lot of money to invest who just follow the advice of their broker," Renaud says.

But this spring, the major banks pledged to take a new approach: focusing on asset accumulation through the long term.

"That was a very visible announcement from the banks," Sauvage says.

People saving for their retirement can expect to be better off as a result. Research shows that individual investors get higher returns the longer they hold on to their securities. Should such practices become firmly entrenched, eventually, the public won't be so shocked by the prospect of meager state pensions. ●

Nicolas Sauvage is representative director at Amundi Japan and chairman of the EBC Asset Management Committee.

Advocacy issues

➔ Operational platform

Japan's authorities and industry groups should encourage working groups to draw up proposals to reform certain limitations to the operational platform.

➔ Household investment

The maximum tax-free amounts in savings accounts should be raised.

Defined contribution schemes should be reformed to encourage long-term investment.



Ensuring everyone benefits

The EPA Helpdesk

The entry into force of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) on 1 February marked the start of a new era for the European Union and Japan. The EPA has created the largest open-trade zone in the world, covering 600 million people. Under the agreement, tariffs have been reduced or removed; sectors such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and motor vehicles have opened up; intellectual property rights have been strengthened; and obstacles to procurement have been lowered.

The priority for us at the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation is ensuring that the EPA is implemented effectively. We need to ensure that all businesses — and especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) — reap the maximum benefits from the agreement.

Today, there are 64,000 EU exporters sending goods to Japan from all over Europe. More than 88% of them are SMEs. But there are certainly many more European SMEs that are potential beneficiaries of the EPA. To see more of them taking advantage of the agreement, we need to raise awareness by making information accessible, providing guidance and reaching out to SMEs throughout Europe.

This is why the centre has set up the EPA Helpdesk. In addition to responding to EPA-related queries, we are creating concise factsheets and practical guides on key aspects of the EPA. These include topics such as rules of origin, public procurement and geographical indication, as well as on various sectors including dairy, liquor, meat, and processed

agricultural products. Other factsheets will be produced in the coming months addressing areas including tariff rate quotas; textiles and clothing products; and the services sector.

The objective of the helpdesk is to “translate” the hundreds of pages of the EPA’s legal text into more accessible and easy-to-understand information, while ensuring it remains thorough and reliable. The factsheets, checked and validated by the European Commission, have been well received by SMEs, which often lack the time and resources to devote to understanding complex and lengthy trade documents.

Webinars on the same topics as the factsheets have also been created by the helpdesk to facilitate dialogue with businesses. They can be viewed by anyone online. Feedback from businesses on our webinars, as well as through direct enquiries, help us further improve the

there are certainly many more European SMEs that are potential beneficiaries of the EPA

guidance the helpdesk provides.

To date, roughly 80% of the enquiries the helpdesk has received have come from businesses in EU member states and the remaining 20% from Japan. About the same proportion of enquiries are related to exports



from the EU to Japan (39%) and imports from Japan to the EU (38%), while the most common questions we receive concern tariffs and the rules of origin — each representing 27% of total enquiries.

The EPA Helpdesk does not stand in isolation. It is closely connected to the other support services of the centre, such as the Public Procurement Helpdesk, the Tech Transfer Helpdesk and the Enterprise Europe Network, a comprehensive offering to help promote EU-Japan cooperation in industry, trade, investment and innovation. Together these services form a coherent package of support for businesses.

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation and its EPA Helpdesk also work with the European Trade Promotion Organisations, the EU-Japan Business Round Table and Japanese stakeholders such as JETRO. Together, we can better help SMEs to take advantage of the EPA and make the agreement a success. ●

Philippe de Taxis du Poët is EU-side general manager of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation and minister counsellor at the Delegation of the EU to Japan.





The tech boom for baby boomers

The SilverEco Ageing Well International Awards

Reaching retirement today doesn't have to mean being resigned to gradually losing touch with the world. On the contrary, it means being at the centre of a boom in new technologies designed specifically for baby boomers.

Some of the latest innovations were exhibited in Tokyo on 13 June when French organisation SilverEco hosted its second annual SilverEco and Ageing Well International Awards ceremony.

SilverEco connects service providers and manufacturers working in the silver economy that are striving to meet the needs of a greying population. The ceremony took place as part of a week-long tour for businesses active in this sector, giving them the chance to meet with Japanese companies and see how some of the problems of an ageing populace are being tackled in Japan.

"The world is getting older," said Jérôme Pigniez, president of SilverEco, in his opening remarks. "This creates

great chances, but it's also a big challenge."

Before the awards were presented, there was a roundtable discussion where representatives from various businesses and public organisations discussed how they are navigating the emergence of the silver economy.

One representative from the Nomura Research Institute noted the benefits that technology can have on the lives of the elderly. For example, it can enable them to effectively run businesses from anywhere, even remote locations, and it can allow them to take part in e-sports. Ultimately, such solutions are helping the greying demographic to continue earning money or keep active physically and socially throughout old age.

Marzena Rudnicka, president of Poland's National Institute for the Silver Economy, emphasised the need for society not to think of an ageing population as a problem, but rather to do more to accommodate older people.

"We live longer and longer as societies," she said. "Let's change our public and commercial services and goods to be friendly for all ages, not just young people."

Rudnicka was also one of the judges of this year's awards and presented trophies to three winners, selected from the 45 companies that had been nominated. They were:

the Swiss firm Rent a Rentner, which matches pensioners willing to work with employers; Norwegian Assitech, which produces innovative stair aids to keep the elderly and disabled active; and Entertainment Robotics, from Denmark, which creates Moto Tiles to make physical rehabilitation more enjoyable.

On receiving the award, president of Entertainment

"The world is getting older ... This creates great chances"

Robotics Henrik Hautop Lund noted that ceremonies such as these can be important for the development of the sector.

"The boom in the number of seniors came before this industry," he said. "So, it's important to have these types of events to show the way forward."

He also noted that, for many companies, this reshaping of the economy can lead to significant opportunities for revenue growth.

"If you're selling, say, sports goods, your typical customer is of a younger age; your mass market is between 15 and 35 years of age," he explained. "If that proportion of the population is shrinking, and there's another that's growing, it's in your interest to think about how to approach that market."

The world is getting older, but thanks to organisations like SilverEco and the companies it promotes, it's also getting better at keeping the elderly active and involved. ●



HENRIK HAUTOP LUND



MARZENA RUDNICKA AND JÉRÔME PIGNIEZ



The Agenda

JULY
24BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
IN JAPAN

Great British Summer Bash

TIME: 18:30 to 20:30**VENUE:** Lumiveil Tokyo (Shiodome City Centre)**FEE:** ¥6,000 (for members), ¥8,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** info@bccjapan.comJULY
31SPANISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
IN JAPAN

Joint Chamber Young Professionals Networking Event

TIME: 19:00 to 21:00**VENUE:** Longrain Ebisu**FEE:** ¥5,500 (for members), ¥7,500 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** info@spanishchamber.or.jpAUG.
1

NORDIC CHAMBERS

Scandinavian Craft Beer Evening 2019

TIME: 19:00 to 21:00**VENUE:** Coaster Craft Beer & Kitchen, Shimokitazawa**FEE:** ¥5,000 (for members), ¥6,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** office@fcc.or.jpAUG.
30FINNISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
IN JAPAN

10th FCCJ Yakatabune Cruise

TIME: 18:30 to 21:00**VENUE:** Embarkation at Funayado Miuraya, Asakusabashi**FEE:** ¥9,000 (for members), ¥12,000 (for non-members)**CONTACT:** office@fcc.or.jpSEPT.
6BELGIAN-LUXEMBOURG CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE IN JAPAN

BeLux Business Talk on Real Estate in Japan

TIME: 12:00 to 14:00**VENUE:** Champ de Soleil restaurant, Kanda**FEE:** Pay for lunch**CONTACT:** info@blccj.or.jpSEPT.
8IRELAND JAPAN CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

The Irish Run the World

TIME: 11:00**VENUE:** Tamagawa Green Space**FEE:** ¥4,000 + ¥500 park entrance fee (early-bird registration fee ends 8 August); ¥4,500 + ¥500 park entrance fee (regular fee)**CONTACT:** japan-events@irelandfunds.orgSEPT.
10GERMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY IN JAPAN

Geopolitical Changes and Populism in Germany and Europe

TIME: 15:00 to 17:00**VENUE:** AHK Japan office, 5F**FEE:** ¥2,000**CONTACT:** events@dihkj.or.jp*Please note that this event will be held in Japanese.*

EXACTLY THE WAY YOU WANT IT

European and Japanese
firms to help you improve
your home

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

There are as many needs — and wants — for interior design and home renovation goods and services as there are people under the sun. Everyone's requirements are different, and businesses across Japan are dedicated to fulfilling the desires of even the most exacting of clients.

Roche Bobois (www.roche-bobois.com) is a world leader in furniture design and distribution. Working closely with renowned designers such as Marcel Wanders and Kenzo Takada — as well as with haute couture fashion houses including Missoni Home, Jean Paul Gaultier and Christian Lacroix Maison — Roche Bobois offers a broad range of exclusive made-to-order designs, manufactured in small European workshops. Visit its showrooms in Tokyo and feel the French 'Art de Vivre' through its two collections: Contemporains (modern and creative) and Nouveaux Classiques (traditional knowhow, natural materials).

Honka (honka.co.jp) creates high-quality log homes, perfect for organic, healthy and ecological living. Its Scandinavian-style log homes are crafted from the finest Finnish wood, built with the benefit of 60 years of knowledge and experience. Whether you dream of

a classic log home, a contemporary wooden house, or a luxurious villa, Honka can help you create your perfect home, using 100% natural and renewable Nordic wood.

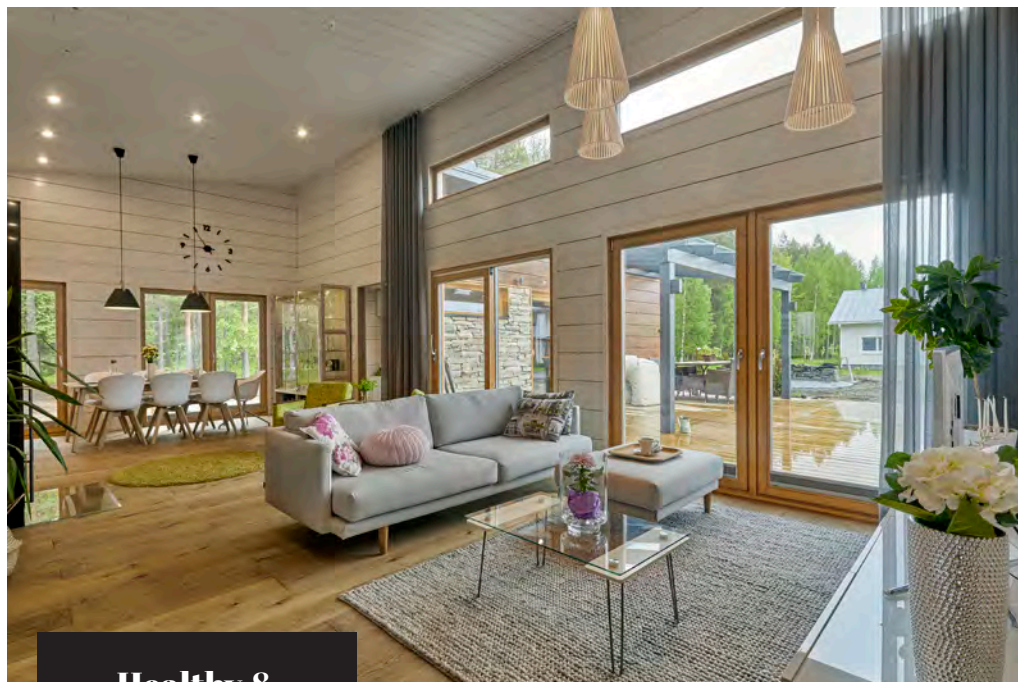
PS Company has a proud history of specialising in hydronic heating and cooling going back six decades.

**"businesses
across Japan
are dedicated
to fulfilling
the desires of
even the most
exacting of
clients"**

PS has launched a collaboration with **Norsk** (norsk.jp), an interior design and renovation team, to create high-quality, unique indoor climate solutions. It will be exhibiting its specially designed radiators — that both heat and cool — at Norsk's studio in Omotesando until mid-October, 2019. Visitors can experience the comfort of their cooling solutions first-hand during the Tokyo summer.

Founded in 1892, **Poggenpohl** is the world's oldest manufacturer of luxury kitchens. It has been present in the Japanese market for nearly five decades and has extensive experience completing high-end projects for international clients in Japan. Its bespoke design services are offered in English, and free design consultations can be arranged by contacting Miki Nakamura (miki.nakamura@poggenpohl.co.jp). The 265-square-metre Poggenpohl showroom is just a two-minute walk from Hiroo station.

It's your home. Have it the way you want it.



Healthy & organic living

IN A HECTIC WORLD,
MORE AND MORE PEOPLE
WANT TO INVEST IN
HIGH-QUALITY LIVING.

family-living-room-harmonia.jpg



HEALTHY HOMES INSPIRED BY NORDIC NATURE

Home is the most important place in a person's life. At its best a home can improve the wellbeing of the people who live in it. It's our passion to build healthy and sustainable homes from the best natural materials. Our log homes combine the benefits of Finnish wood, beautiful design and innovative technology to guarantee good living in a safe and healthy home.



HONKA Official Facebook
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contact : info@area-japan.co.jp



Block-chain reaction

Distributed ledger technologies enhance transparency, accountability and privacy

Bitcoin has been featuring more in the news again lately as prices recover some of the ground lost in a disastrous 2018. While the digital currency will continue to draw speculators, organisations around the world are steadily adopting the technologies underpinning bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies to radically change the networks underpinning economies.



Last December, ministers from Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain issued a declaration outlining their belief that “distributed ledger technologies [DLT] can result in further democratisation of the European economic model” because they can result in “enhanced transparency, accountability and privacy for the end-users”. Following this, in April, the European Union launched the International Association of Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA), a group of public- and private-sector entities dedicated to hastening the adoption of distributed ledger technology.

So, what is DLT? For starters, it’s not the same as blockchain, and it predates bitcoin by 17 years. Unsung physicists W. Scott Stornetta and Stuart Haber conceived the idea in 1991 in their paper “How to Time-Stamp a Digital Document”. DLT is a decentralised database of records, but it’s one in which the entity implementing the DLT has some form of control over its purpose or over certain features. A blockchain — an immutable database where information is

recorded chronologically in blocks of data — can be thought of as a type of distributed ledger. The difference between the two is that with DLT, users are putting their trust in a central authority.

It’s no wonder, then, that distributed ledger technology is a term favoured by institutions such as governments and banks. Last year, when the Bank of England (BoE) announced it was planning to make its payments settlement system compatible with DLT, Mark Carney, governor of the BoE, avoided using the word “blockchain” entirely, saying: “Our new, hard infrastructure will be future-proofed to your imaginations, opening up a range of potential innovations in wholesale markets, and corporate banking and retail services.”

Over 90 central banks are looking at distributed ledger

technology and blockchain for processing payments, but that’s just the tip of the iceberg. It’s predicted that, by 2027, 10% of global GDP will be stored on blockchain technology, according to a World Economic Forum survey from 2015 — a time when only 0.025% was on blockchain. The survey also notes that the technology allows just about anything to become a tradeable asset, while increasing transparency since all transactions can be independently verified.

The possible applications for DLT are myriad. It can be used to send money overseas for much less than what most financial institutions currently charge. Shareholders can register their holdings with companies via DLT instead of brokers. Votes in an election can be more accurately recorded through DLT. Smart contracts operating on top of a distributed ledger can automatically execute an outcome when preset conditions are met.

Many European companies are developing DLT businesses, often in surprising fields. Bitcliq is a Portuguese startup that operates what it calls the world’s first blockchain market for seafood trading, allowing traceability of catches. London-based Fieldcoin is a decentralised land management market that enables quicker, cheaper title transfers. Describing itself as an Airbnb for money, Oslo-based Lendonomy runs a peer-to-peer lending platform for young people around the world, encouraging them to learn money management before they get credit cards or bank loans.

The hype surrounding bitcoin may boil or fizzle, but distributed ledgers are already changing the world. Stornetta and Haber’s digital time-stamps may soon define an era. ●



All aboard the 5G bullet train

Next-generation telecommunications a boost for businesses

Limited service of Japan's 5G, or fifth generation, telecommunications network begins in September at select World Cup Rugby venues, before a grand launch ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. NTT DoCoMo will preview its 5G capabilities at rugby stadiums in Tokyo and Yokohama before the other telecom firms begin service next year.

Similar to the introduction of the *shinkansen* for Tokyo's 1964 Summer Olympics, 5G will help the nation strengthen its connections and move faster — this time, digitally. DoCoMo, KDDI, Softbank and a new player, Rakuten, will upgrade their existing 4G services to a higher-frequency band on the wave spectrum, expecting to achieve up to 100 times quicker delivery, with better coverage and ultra-low latency, and allowing for one million devices per square kilometre.

Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Masatoshi Ishida granted spectrum rights in April, calling 5G as important as the bullet train to infrastructure and regional development. The ministry divided

Japan into 4,500 sections and instructed firms to build base stations in 50% of these within five years.

Japan aims to be a global model for regional 5G adoption, requiring coverage of at least one city in each prefecture within two years. This would be quite the feat, as overseas telcos such as Verizon and T-Mobile remain dubious about 5G's "coverage spectrum" potential beyond large cities.

Data transfer speed theoretically will increase from about 70Mbps to more than 5Gbps. But adoption will depend on more 5G devices coming to market (5G products from Apple and Sharp come out in 2020), rollout of base stations and, ultimately, demand.

Finland's Nokia and Sweden's Ericsson have begun 5G sales amid fierce competition with Chinese rival Huawei. Nokia CEO Rajeev Suri says new services will give industries left behind by digitalisation, such as agriculture, a chance to catch up.

In rural Japan, trial 5G networks have allowed oyster farms to use cutting-edge tech to monitor water temperature and salinity. In the UK, some cows wear collars dependent on the network; the collars are connected to a robotic milk-

ing system, and they also check the cows' health. Augmented and virtual reality services are expected to flourish, adding capabilities to manufacturing, medicine and mobility. Examples include tele-surgery for patients in rural areas without specialists and co-pilot avatars giving road traffic advice — or even checking on driver alertness.

The major assumption behind Japan's investment of some ¥1.7 trillion in 5G over the next five years is that consumers will want, or need, to migrate. Services won't launch overnight, but consultancy McKinsey says Japan could regain leadership in the telecom space through 5G.

Globally, 5G has debuted with limited access in the US, South Korea and China, while Japanese carriers are planning between 56% and 97% national coverage within five years. To expedite deployment, 5G base station trials are using existing infrastructure, such as utility poles, while telcos are recruiting firms for joint ventures and collaborative programmes to brainstorm new businesses.

For sheer futurism, Softbank, in partnership with Alphabet's Loon LLC, is working on potential aerial base station deployment to offer coverage where locating ground-based towers is difficult. Using large balloons or drones, the high-altitude network platform would hover high above Japan.

"We can accelerate the path toward the realisation of utilising the stratosphere for global networks," said Softbank Chief Technology Officer Junichi Miyakawa in a statement.

And, no sooner will we become accustomed to 5G, than European and Japanese corporates such as Deutsche Telecom and NEC, as well as universities in Stuttgart and Tokyo, will begin to prep a next-next-generation network, to arrive in the 2030s, featuring all-wireless delivery.

So, if 5G is the next *shinkansen*, expect 6G to be the maglev. ●



SERVICE WITH STYLE

Hospitality as consummate as it is cool

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

From Harajuku to Mt. Fuji, Japan is famous worldwide for its unique aesthetics and styles. This sensibility extends well beyond clothes and vistas to the excellent hospitality and service provided by hotels, restaurants and others in this sector in Japan. The combination of a strong brand and attention to detail is fundamental to these businesses.

“People today are looking for more than just a place to sleep when they stay at a hotel”

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

At the **Tokyo American Club**, visitors can get a sense of its quality by sight alone.

“Guests never fail to be impressed by the Club’s stylish façade,” says General Manager Tony Cala.

“World-famous architecture firm Pelli Clarke Pelli blended a contemporary American style with subtle Japanese aesthetics in its design. This fusion of cultures informs everything at the Club, where we combine a can-do attitude with attention to detail.”

There are other havens of relaxation to be found right here in Tokyo.

“Since its re-branded opening in 2016, **Grand Nikko Tokyo Daiba** — under the concept of ‘Another Dimension, Another Tokyo’ — has been the flagship hotel of Nikko Hotels International,” says Kaori Kobayashi, the hotel’s chief marketing manager. “Its ambience perfectly reflects the character of Odaiba, and our guests receive resort-like service and find calm in the heart of the bustling city of Tokyo.”

Outside of the capital, possibilities abound, with **Relais & Châteaux**’s network notably offering exceptional choice.

“Established in France in 1954, we are an association of 580 unique hotels and restaurants throughout the world — including 19 Japanese hotels, *ryokan*-inns

and restaurants — owned and operated by independent entrepreneurs who are passionate about their craft,” says Yukiko Kamiya, the company’s director for Japan and Korea. “Each property is the living expression of a place — its history, culture and cuisine.”

Keren Miers, the general manager of **Noku Kyoto**, emphasises the combination of relaxation and courtesy that his hotel offers.

“We’ve created upscale, boutique, home-comfort style accommodation with high-quality guest services,” he explains. “Our name, Noku, was carefully selected to reflect this.”

Global Agents’ THE LIVELY hotel brand seeks to satisfy the modern needs and desires of their clientele.

“People today are looking for more than just a place to sleep when they stay at



a hotel; they want a place where they can work, socialise, and enjoy a meal or a drink, a place where people from across the world can connect," says CEO Takeshi Yamasaki. "THE LIVELY redefines what a hotel can be and provides guests with environments that facilitate interaction and creativity."

For those needing a true escape, **YTL Hotels'** Niseko Village in Hokkaido offers a getaway for all tastes in the mountainous north.

"Niseko Village was conceptualised as a fully integrated resort experience, where our customers have total access to the ultimate in mountain, golf and summer recreation," says Luke Hurford, YTL Hotels' senior vice president of strategy. "Our facilities are designed in close partnership with the very best local professionals, be it in food and beverage, adventure activities or services."

TOP OF THE WORLD

These enterprises consistently go above and beyond in terms of service. But they also aim for the top with regard to the experiences they provide their guests.

The Grand Nikko Hotel Daiba offers up gorgeous vistas, whether resting or dining.

"In addition to our Executive Floor, this year we launched a new guest floor

called the Bay View Floor, which guarantees guests impressive views of Tokyo's dazzling skyline and iconic Rainbow Bridge," Kobayashi says. "Furthermore, our top floor is home to gourmet restaurants that afford guests picturesque views of Tokyo Bay to enjoy from morning to night."

While most Hokkaido resorts focus on winter activities, Niseko Village sets itself apart by its ambition to be the best resort in Asia year-round.

"We aspire to make Niseko Village an all-season alpine destination," says Hurford. "We operate our facilities and activities 365 days a year, always mindful of our goal to be Asia's premier mountain resort."

The individuality of the establishments in Relais & Châteaux's network is the key to their success, according to Kamiya.

"Our guests appreciate the valuable 'art de vivre' moments of each of our locations," she explains. "For example, ASABA Ryokan in Shizuoka has been run by the Asaba family for over 530 years, meaning your stay is steeped in history. We want our guests to have experiences just as fulfilling as our properties' delicious cuisine."

ONE OF A KIND

No two people are the same, and neither should their experiences in hospitality be.

The Tokyo American Club distinguishes itself by its ability to make your event the way you want it.

"Whether we're organising a large gala event, a rooftop barbecue, a multiday conference or an intimate wedding party, we apply our flexibility and determination to exceed the expectations of members and guests alike," Cala says. "We stand apart in Tokyo with our ability to fully personalise and customise experiences to the needs of our clients."

And THE LIVELY is always ready for a party.

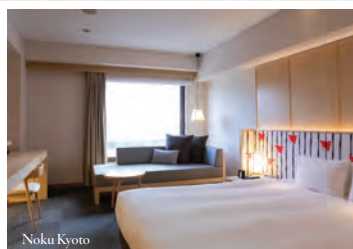
"THE LIVELY offers guests the unique blend of a high-tech smart-hotel experience with urban street-art aesthetics," says Yamasaki. "Music is an essential part of THE LIVELY experience, and guests can enjoy unique beats from professional DJs, as well as from a specially curated soundtrack for their stay."

Noku Kyoto's Miers notes that, if you know where to look, you can find experiences in the ancient capital not shared by the average tourist.

"The core of what we offer our guests is personalised service and curated experiences, such as our neighbourhood walking tours, organised in conjunction with Kyoto Tourism, to showcase local businesses and traditional handicraft workshops," he explains. "We also have specially created a walking map, available in all our guest rooms, that highlights local points of interest and restaurants around the neighbourhood."

This summer, experience service as unique as you are.





Noku Kyoto



Noku Kyoto



Noku Osaka



Noku Osaka

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EUROPEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL IN JAPAN
THE EUROPEAN (EU) CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN



Golf at the end of Japan

Two stunning courses in Kagoshima

Residents of Tokyo looking for a good weekend of golf typically stay close to home, given the surrounding prefectures' abundance of great courses and places to stay. But in this era of low-cost air carriers (LCCs), it's both easy and cheap to look further afield. Okinawa aside, there's not much further afield than Kagoshima — which can cost as little as ¥15,000 round-trip on an LCC. Hiding here, at the end of Japan, you will find two stunning courses.

IBUSUKI GOLF CLUB KAIMON COURSE

Ibusuki Golf Club is, in fact, hiding in plain sight as it's played host to a number of Japanese professional tournaments and was the venue for the 2019 Japan PGA Championship. Further boosting its credentials is the fact that it was designed by Seiichi Inoue (1908–1981), Japan's most famous golf course designer. The course is on the lower slopes of Mt. Kaimon, a 1,000-metre volcano, and is a classic Inoue design: rich in contours, bunkers you can get lost in, and a feeling that each of its 18 holes are at one with nature. Inoue was famous for designing courses without upsetting their

natural surroundings and Ibusuki reflects that, skirting around the foothills of the mountain towards the sea.

While fairly long (6,545 yards off the regular tees), it's not a punishing course. The trees aren't thick, there's almost no water and there are no ridiculous out-of-bounds areas, but the bunkers are imposing. Its signature 17th hole, a par 3, will test many golfers' skills with its lakeside green and challenging 184-yard tee shot, which is followed by a steep uphill par 5 to finish in front of the somewhat modest clubhouse.

This is a feelgood course.

TANEGASHIMA GOLF CLUB

Tanegashima Island is famous as the site of Japan's rocket launches (which is why there's a space museum) and it's also where guns first came to Japan (which is why there's a gun museum). It also has one of Japan's most under-used golf courses — a sad fact, because Tanegashima Golf Club is an absolute gem and a must-play course in Japan.

Ibusuki's sister course is less accessible, but more than worth the trip. To reach Tanegashima, you have to take a 90-minute jetfoil ride or a 40-minute plane ride from Kagoshima. The golf course is about 35 minutes from the port and 10 minutes from the airport.

The course opened in 1991 and was designed by peripatetic American architect Carl Litton, who presents the golfer



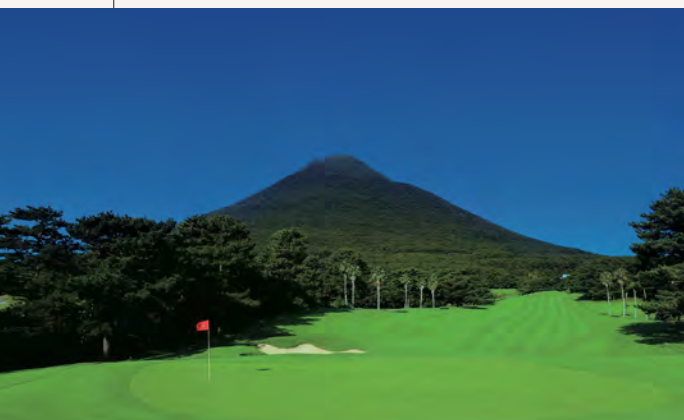
TANEGASHIMA GOLF CLUB

Most golfers won't even think about their score until they finish; they'll be having too much fun

with a sweeping vista of palm trees, lakes and the ocean from the hillside clubhouse. Like Ibusuki, the course is relatively long from the regular tees (6,551 yards) and isn't designed to torture the average golfer. It rolls up and down gentle slopes, over water, around corners, through trees and past the sea.

Most golfers won't even think about their score until they finish; they'll be having too much fun absorbing the golf course and the novelty of playing a fabulous venue on an obscure island at the junction of the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The course even offers accommodation in the form of its on-site lodge or the distinctive pink Iwasaki Hotel, perched on a white-sand beach around the corner from the rocket launch pad.

Kagoshima may seem like the end of Japan, but it's the beginning of a beautiful golf experience. ●





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HOTEL INFO

<THE LIVELY BAR>

The Stylish Bar acts as a giant open space that spreads throughout the entire hotel.

<THE LIVELY KITCHEN>

Guests can also spoil themselves with an incredible meal at the 100-seat in-house restaurant.

<BANQUET HALLS>

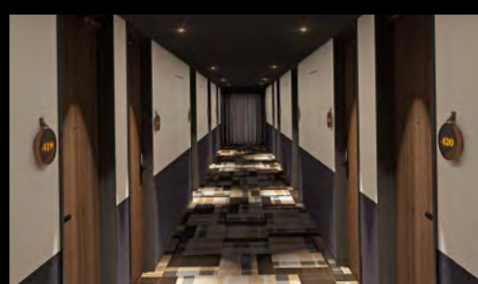
There are also two banquet halls available that are set up to cater to important events such as birthday parties, high profile business meetings, international parties, weddings and more.

<GUEST ROOMS>

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www.the-lively.com



Japanese ~~rice~~ grape wine

Another beverage the Japanese are working to perfect

Since the EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) came into force on 1 February, not only are European wine exports to Japan increasing — with the 15% tariff abolished — but Japanese wine exports to the EU are on the rise, as well.

Japan is a non-traditional wine-producing nation whose wines are surprising established markets. Though the country was introduced to wine centuries ago by Jesuit missionaries, it's been less than 150 years since winemaking began here. In the 1870s, a young Japanese man from Katsunuma in Yamanashi Prefecture was sent to France to study winemaking. After bringing his skills back to his homeland, Japanese winemaking proliferated and, today, Japanese wines are gaining popularity and prestige.

Yamanashi, the first established wine-making region in Japan, gained its own geographical indication in 2013. Located on the main island of Honshu and famed for being home to the revered Mount Fuji, Yamanashi has had grapes growing on its land for over 1,000 years. With 670 hectares of vines, the region produces 40% of Japan's wine.

Koshu is its star grape, a white hybrid — beloved for its delicate pink skin — that was brought to Japan from the Caucasus via the

Silk Road. Koshu wine is light, crisp and fruity, a perfect pairing for classic Japanese dishes such as sushi and *tempura*.

Also grown in Yamanashi is Muscat Bailey A, a red hybrid that has, until recently, only been used to produce a sticky, sweet dessert wine. While Koshu has always been more revered by Western wine-drinkers, Japanese beverage giant Suntory has been experimenting with Muscat Bailey A by blending it with Western grapes and through barrel ageing to create a more refined wine con-

it's been less
than 150
years since
winemaking
began on the
island

sidered to be of the “Bordeaux style”.

Other wine-producing prefectures in Japan include Nagano and Hokkaido. Nagano is the nation's second-most productive wine region, and its cooler climate, low rainfall and high elevation make it an exciting up-and-coming region that focuses predominantly on Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido, has a shorter growing season, but provides ideal conditions for ripening Müller Thurgau, Pinot Noir and Austrian Zweigelt grapes.

In March, Kirin, another major Japanese beverage firm, began exporting to the UK its own wine made with Koshu grapes, branded Chateau Mercian. Only 300 cases were sent to London, but Kirin is hoping that the reception will be as good there as it has been in places such as the US, Singapore and Hong Kong. Japanese wine exports to the UK have quadrupled over the past decade, and Japanese winemakers — and, indeed, lovers of Japan's wine scene — hope to see that trend persist as EU–Japan relations continue to blossom under the EPA.

For those interested in trying Japanese wine, any Koshu wine from Grace Winery is the place to start. Its 2016 Private Reserve Koshu from Yamanashi received 95 out of 100 points at the Decanter World Wine Awards. Also, its Hishiyama Vineyard Private Reserve Koshu and Kayagatake Vineyard Koshu have both been given an impressive 89-point average on wine-searcher.com. ●





THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF
 Niseko Village


Hilton
 NISEKO VILLAGE

KASARA
 NISEKO VILLAGE
 TOWNHOUSE



THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE IS NISEKO VILLAGE'S main pulse where paved intimate walkways are flanked by CONTEMPORARY SHOPPING AND DINING OPTIONS. JUST MOMENTS FROM NISEKO VILLAGE'S AWARD-WINNING HOTELS, RESIDENCES AND LIFTS, ITS SLOPESIDE LOCATION ALLOWS FOR SEAMLESS SKI-IN, SKI-OUT ACCESS BETWEEN MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES AND INDOOR DIVERSIONS. BOTH MODERN AND TRADITIONAL INTERWEAVE, EVOKING A GENTEEL LIFESTYLE AT THE VILLAGE WITH AUTHENTIC JAPANESE MACHIYA ARCHITECTURAL SETTING. APRÈS-SKI IS EXCITINGLY REDEFINED AT NISEKO VILLAGE.

WWW.NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM



DOWN TIME

TEXT BY ANDREW HOWITT



Silvan Rügsegger

Company: Ernst & Young ShinNihon LLC

Title: Manager

Originally from: Zurich, Switzerland

Time in Japan: About a year

Hungry? Where do you like to go for a bite?

The Araki-cho neighbourhood in Yotsuya.

What do you do to stay in shape?

The occasional gym visit.

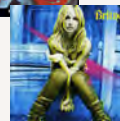
Name a favourite movie: *The Great Beauty* directed by Paolo Sorrentino.

Favourite band: Talking Heads by day, Britney Spears by night.

Favourite album: Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, but Lady Gaga's *The Fame* *Monster* is a guilty pleasure.

Favourite TV show: I'm really enjoying *Schitt's Creek* right now.

Favourite book: *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen, and I love every book by Thomas Mann.



What's something a lot of people don't know about you?

I was a truck driver in the Swiss Army and, with the type of driver's license I have, I could still drive them. But it might be better for everybody's safety for me to abstain.

Cats or dogs?

Dogs. They aren't complicated.

Summer or winter?

Summer *aperitivo* evenings are unbeatable.

What's your ideal weekend?

Making some new discoveries around Tokyo on Sunday after surviving the drilling at my Saturday Japanese lesson.

Where do you go for a drink after a busy week?

Shinjuku! Shinjuku!

"Cats or dogs? Dogs. They aren't complicated."



Laurent Dubois

Company: TMI Associates

Title: Partner

Originally from: Paris, France

Time in Japan: 40 years

Hungry? Where do you like to go for a bite?

Café Dubois in Shibuya ward (and not only because it shares my name). Their *fondant au chocolat* is the best in Tokyo.

What do you do to stay in shape?

Cycling, and a once-a-week session at Dr. Stretch.

Name a favourite movie: *Zatoichi* (2003) directed by Takeshi Kitano.

Favourite musician: Ryuichi Sakamoto.

Favourite album: Pink Floyd's *The Wall*.

Favourite TV show: *Inside the Actors Studio*.

Favourite book: *The Abyss* by Marguerite Yourcenar.

What's something a lot of people don't know about you?

I like to write stories whenever I have some spare time.

Cats or dogs?

Dogs.

Summer or winter?

Summer in France.

What's your ideal weekend?

Reading in a park.

Where do you go for a drink after a busy week?

Philippe Batton's bistro Petit Tonneau.

"I like to write stories whenever I have some spare time."





WORK PLACE

TEXT BY TOBY WATERS

PHOTO BY KAGEAKI SMITH

**NOBUHARU SUZUKI,
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

SGS Japan

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