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## Switzerland and Japan - a trusted connection

Japan and Switzerland share a unique closeness despite their physical distance and cultural differences. Their value for respect and their trustworthiness as a community serve as a solid foundation for mutual economic progress.

Japan is highly industrialized and the Japanese frequently set new standards in terms of quality, technology and customer service. This is not much different from Switzerland, which also adheres to the same principles. It is no wonder then that Japan is one of the main partners of Swiss professionals in education, research and innovation.

Precision, punctuality, reliability and a penchant for good quality are just some similarities or common threads in terms of basic values that run strong within Japan and Switzerland.

### Values that bring the countries closer

Let's take a closer look at the concept of 'precision'.

Swiss skills that go into meticulous watch-making and the designing of precise weighing equipment; or the detailed approach to traditional Japanese Origami that has created its own place in modern-day engineering and robotics are both skills that need exactness and accuracy. Nothing short of 100% precision is considered perfect.

Similarly, the concept of 'handmade' is genuinely appreciated and valued both in Japan and Switzerland. Be the Japanese knives that are folded and battered multiple times - a skill that is passed from one generation to the next, resulting in perfect functionality and design; or the intricate Swiss lace, chocolate or machinery - if handmade, these products are sold at a premium. Quality is appreciated.

Check out the Swiss and the Japanese high-tech train systems: they are clean, punctual and reliable. And if you were to forget your bags or wallet on the train in either of the two countries, you will - more often than not - find your belongings intact at the lost property counter. Remarkably, the people of the two countries that are continents apart live and work in trust-based societies.

These similarities, despite cultural differences, are what makes the two geographies tick in tandem economically as well.

### **Taking a step back in time**

Economic ties between Switzerland and Japan date back to 1863, when the first Swiss delegation led by watch industry representative Aimé Humbert from the canton of Neuchâtel arrived at the port of Yokohama in Japan after a five-month sea voyage.

The intention was to establish trade relations between the two countries. A treaty of amity and commerce between Japan and Switzerland was signed in Edo on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864, marking the beginning of friendly relations. This was followed by close political and economic cooperation based on trust, transparency and mutual interests.

Much later in 1981, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (SCCIJ) was established to support Swiss companies in Japan as well as Japanese enterprises interested in businesses in Switzerland. With about 140 corporate and 60 individual members, the SCCJI is among the most active chambers in Japan today, organising events to facilitate business and actively contribute to bilateral relations between the countries.

Fast-forward to early 2009: the Japan-Switzerland Free Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (JSFTEPA) was signed in Tokyo. This comprehensive agreement further deepened the pre-existing bilateral ties.

The two nations celebrated 150 years of diplomatic relations in 2014. At the same time, Japan-Switzerland Economic Council (JSEC) was established. This Council focuses on information for, and contacts among, Japanese companies with direct investments in Switzerland.

### **And now...**

Presently, Japan is one of Switzerland's most important partner states in Asia. Trade between the two countries has always been notable. According to the Swiss Federal Customs Administration, as of 2017, Japan was Switzerland's sixth largest export market, accounting for 2.5% of overall Swiss exports to Asia (total exports to Asia: 22%). The main exports included: products from the chemical-pharmaceutical industry, precision instruments, watches and jewellery, and machines, apparatus & electronics. At the same time, the top merchandise imports from Japan to Switzerland included: precious metals, gems and semi-precious stones, vehicles and

products from the chemical-pharmaceutical industry.

Japan and Switzerland are among the world's 20 strongest economies with a high level of development and a strong capacity for innovation, and the former has traditionally been represented with a strong delegation at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos.

In addition, with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games being hosted in Japan this year, the Embassy of Switzerland in Japan is commemorating friendship between the two countries - in all their strength and diversity - with 'Doors to Switzerland - Japan 2020'. This is an 18-month-long events and communication program that will lead into the opening of the 'House of Switzerland - Japan 2020' - Switzerland's national pavilion during the competitions in Shibuya.

### **Flying towards stronger bonds**

Based on the past and on-going economic ties, along with the common values shared between the two nations, air cargo has come to the forefront as an important factor for cementing stronger economic relations.

Swiss WorldCargo will now build further into the dimension of reliability, punctuality and world-class quality by increasing the number of flights to Osaka using Airbus A340-300 to five times a week, starting March 2020. Swiss WorldCargo will also set new standards in travel experience for flights between Zurich and Tokyo with Boeing 777-300ER flights from February 2020, offering a significantly bigger cargo capacity and tonnage.

And as travellers, there is a degree of excitement in getting the complete experience of luxury among the clouds on the long haul between Zurich and Tokyo! So, get set for more from Swiss WorldCargo. Punctual. Reliable. Precise.



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