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Dear readers of IAC Newsletter,

My name is Nenad Glišić and I am the Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in Japan.

Representing Serbia in Japan is a great privilege that brings great responsibility and yet strong motivation to deepen bilateral relations and friendship between our two nations.

Although there are no written records about the first contacts between Japanese and Serbian people, there are many stories that tell us how our nations started to build friendly exchanges already during the Byzantine Empire. At the time, Serbia was a highly developed medieval state, ruled by the Nemanjić Dynasty since XII to XV century, prior to the Ottoman Empire invasion and rule.

Serbian King Milan Obrenović the First, following Berlin Congress in 1878, which recognized Serbia as an independent state, wrote, after his coronation in March 1882, a personal letter to Japanese Emperor Meiji. This was the first diplomatic correspondence between sovereigns of Serbia and Japan.

Milan the First informed Emperor Meiji that, on July 13, 1878, "the great European powers, gathered at the Berlin Congress, officially recognized the independence of Serbia" while he became the first King of Serbia upon independence had been won back from the Ottoman Empire.

Basic facts:

Name of state: Republic of Serbia

Capital city: Belgrade, population more than 1.600.000

Area: 88,509 km²

Climate: moderate continental

Official currency: the dinar (RSD)

Population (excluding Kosovo and Metohija): more than 7.000.000, 83% Serbs

Official language: Serbian

Official script: Cyrillic

Faiths: 85% Eastern Orthodox Christian, 5.5% Roman Catholic Christian, 3.2% Muslim

About Serbia

Serbia has connected West with East for centuries – a land in which civilisations, cultures, faiths, climates and landscapes meet and mingle. It is located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula, in southeastern Europe.

The cultural and historical heritage of Serbia begins with prehistoric archaeological sites and its legacy from classical antiquity. Perhaps its greatest riches, though, are in the many mediaeval Serbian churches and monasteries, some of which are included on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Today, Serbia is a modern, democratic European country, on the path to membership of the European Union, which a diverse range of visitors – from young backpackers to participants in congresses and fairs – visit every day.

Visit Serbia!

Village Tourism

The natural, spontaneous and never phony hospitality and warmth of the hosts are the key elements of the atmosphere experienced when staying in a Serbian village. A traditional welcome to a Serbian village house involves the serving of bite-sized pieces of warm pogača (home-made bread) dipped in salt. Next up is slatko (a sweet preserve) made from local fruit or a helping of honey with a glass of chilled, spring water, while a drink to your health is done with local rakija (Serbian brandy) or wine.

Spas and health resorts

In Serbia there are over 1.000 cold and warm mineral water springs, and a great wealth of natural mineral gases and medicinal mud. In over 53 thermal resorts, the benefits of which even the ancient Romans enjoyed, spa therapies have been adapted to treat a wide range of health ailments and diseases and involve drinking medicinal water or taking medicinal baths.

Serbian wine routes

Serbia is the capital of untouched nature, healthy food – fruit and vegetables, but also the cradle of wine, grape growing and winemaking. Quality of the wines of Serbia rests, among other things, on a large number of small producers. Understandably, their wine production is not so large and the sales are done in a limited number of places, but the emphasis is on quality. Each wine region has at least one wine route, which follows local roads to the place where wine can be tasted and bought.

Medieval Monasteries

The architecture of mediaeval Serbian monasteries is particularly varied. During the 13th and into the 14th century some of the most striking churches were built, whose proportions and decorative façade and sculptural work suggest Romanesque influence (Studenica, Banjska, Dečani, Gradac, Arilje, Mileševa, Sopoćani and others).

Mediaeval monasteries and churches are not just features on the landscape of Serbia, they are features of the soul of Serbia, as well as being art galleries in a very real sense. The frescoes and icons in Serbia's churches are a significant part of Serbia's cultural, historical and national wealth.

Serbian cuisine

Serbian cuisine is a heterogeneous cuisine, sharing characteristics of the Balkans (especially former Yugoslavia), the Mediterranean (especially Greek), Turkish, and Central European (especially Austrian and Hungarian) cuisines. The national dishes include pljeskavica (a ground beef patty), ćevapi (grilled minced meat), and sarma.

(Nenad Glišić, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia)



The Design Festa Gallery is the only unregulated, uncensored, admission-free melting pot of self-expression in Tokyo. The exhibitions of the two gallery buildings rotate on an almost daily basis, while an outdoor cafe and bar provides a relaxing, artistic and overall unique atmosphere in the heart of Harajuku. Arrange a collaborative event with the okonomiyaki restaurant located on-site, receive a tour in four different languages or just enjoy a family-friendly experience unlike anywhere else in Japan.



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Hello, dear embassy #17 "Azerbaijan"**Azerbaijan means "the land of fire"****Its economy has long been based on oil but it aims to grow out of an oil-dependent economy****Launched the first telecommunications satellite****Established the first democratic parliament in the Islamic world in the early 20th century****The Ambassador is a master of Japanese language.****His father studied Takuboku Ishikawa****Sorge and Rostropovich were born in Baku****"Sorge Street" still exists in Azerbaijan****Dreaming of an Azerbaijani Yokozuna**

The Republic of Azerbaijan is located in the southern part of the Caucasus, along the Caspian Sea. It is relatively a small country with land area of 87,000 square km, one forth the size of Japan, and population of 9 million 380 thousand (2013). The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan is located in the affluent residential area in Meguro-ku.

Ambassador Gursel Ismayilzada has a very good command of the Japanese language in every area; pronunciation, vocabulary, expression and grammar. I'm sure he is one of the best Japanese speakers in more than 100 ambassadors in Tokyo. His fluency in the Japanese language must be the result of his studying at Universities in Japan (Tsukuba University and Sophia University) for total of more than 10 years and his working experience as a diplomat in Japan. He is the first student of the "Japan School" of Azerbaijani ministry of foreign affairs. He became interested in Japan because his father, who was an archaeologist, liked the Japanese poet, Takuboku Ishikawa.

Q: When the Japanese people think of Azerbaijan, the first thing that comes to their mind is oil.

Ambassador: "Azerbaijan started to develop oilfields in the middle of 19th century and has been one of the significant oil producing countries in the world. Azerbaijan means "the land of fire". Zoroastrianism (fire worship) arose in this region. Nobel brothers invested in the oilfield development in Azerbaijan. At one time, 95% of its GDP was oil related, but in 2013 the rate was 50%. Oil is a limited resource, so we are trying to grow out of an oil-dependent economy. We are putting emphasis on agriculture, IT, renewable energy, and manufacturing industries. In 2013, we launched our first telecommunications satellite with an American company."

Q. I heard that Azerbaijan has a long history of democracy.

Ambassador: "We were a part of the Russian Empire, but became independent when the Russian Revolution broke out. From 1918 to 1920, we were a democratic country that had established a parliament for the first time inside the Islamic world. However, it was dissolved when the Red army of Russia occupied our territory. We have a long history of democracy. In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we gained independence again."

Q. After oil, the spy, Sorge and the cellist, Rostropovich come to our mind when we think about Azerbaijan.

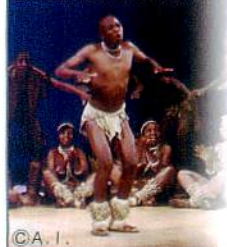
Ambassador: "Sorge was not an Azerbaijani, but he was born in Baku in 1895, the son of a German father who was an oil development engineer and a Russian mother. The Azerbaijani people still admire him. There are Sorge museum and Sorge Street in Azerbaijan. Rostropovich was Russian but he was also born in Baku in 1927. He was a Japanophile. Baku became an international city in the late 19th century due to its oil development. Jazz and other western music were popular."

"In 2015, the first European Olympics will take place in Azerbaijan. Forty countries are scheduled to attend. Azerbaijan has a strong wrestling team and a strong Judo team. Someday, we would like to send a champion from those teams to the Japanese sumo world and let him aim to become Yokozuna. If that happens, I'm sure Azerbaijan will be a very popular country in Japan."

Ambassador's dream is getting bigger.

(Yasunori Yamashita, IAC)
(translated by Keiko Hori, IAC)
(photo by A. M. Fujikura)

Dancers from Botswana

**Join the IAC!**

International Artists Center (IAC) is a non-profit organization. It was established in 1960 and has been doing its activities in the aim to contribute to the international understanding and the world peace through cultural exchanges programs.



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International Artists Center

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