

CONSULATE-GENERAL OF JAPAN

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CONSUL GENERAL

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Barbara Hancock
Chair, Charity Ball Committee
American Chamber of Commerce in Japan
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2-4-5 Azabudai, Minato-ku
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Dear Ms. Hancock,

Ho ho ho! Greetings from tropical Miami. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about links between Japan and the City of Miami as well as the Great State of Florida.

Miami is known as the "capital of Latin America" and from here Japan seems very far away. But despite the distance and lack of historical connections, links with Japan are increasing and more people are taking an interest in Japan. On many occasions, people have approached me to say how fascinated they are with Japan.

The links with Japan starts upon arrival at the Miami International Airport where you will ride the automated people mover (APM) supplied and operated by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. From the airport, you can take Metrorail to the center of Miami. The first of the new Metrorail trains supplied by Hitachi Rail started running on November 30. In the near future, Brightline, now under a holding company acquired by Softbank Group, will start passenger rail service from Miami to West Palm Beach. The local people have confidence in the reliability of Japanese train service. I am supporting the Japanese companies to participate in future rail projects.

The presence of Japanese companies in Miami and in Florida is not as conspicuous as in other Southeastern States which have Japanese automobile-related factories, but they are the second largest investor in the Sunshine State. About 193 Japanese companies account for about 24,200 jobs. Japanese companies are scattered around the State and are in diverse range of businesses in such areas as retail, logistics, telecommunication, pharmaceuticals and power. In Miami, the Japan Business Association of Miami, has a total of 35 corporate members. They contribute to the local communities not only through employment but also through CSR activities.

Japanese company colleagues generally find Florida to be a good place to live and to do business. This is not a surprise because many of them have achieved growing revenues and expanded operations. I have to thank Governor Scott, Mayor Gimenez of Miami-Dade County and Mayor Suarez of Miami City and others for this.

One of my missions is to promote investments to Japan. For this purpose, I travel around the State to talk to the local chamber of commerce and the local elected officials. I have been approached by a number of companies interested in the Japanese market, especially in sectors undergoing de-regulation such as power, health and integrated resorts. Most recently, Hard Rock Cafe, owned by the Seminole tribe north of Miami, recently announced a plan to establish an integrated resort facility in Japan.

As you all know, Florida is famous for tourism. The State attracts 105 million visitors every year among whom more than a million were from Japan. Thus, Orlando and Miami offer huge opportunities for Japanese retail and restaurant businesses. For example, UNIQLO and MIKI House have had very good business since they set up shop in Orlando and Miami respectively. Right now JETRO is planning to organize a delegation of Japanese fashion and restaurant businesses to Orlando and Miami in 2018. This is truly a win-win opportunity for both sides as new shops and restaurants will lead to local jobs and more choice for consumers in Florida, and the Japanese investor can expand its business abroad.

Miami is the cruise ship capital of the world with 42 cruise ships based at Port Miami. Major cruise ship companies, such Royal Caribbean and Carnival, have headquarters in Miami and an international cruise show is organized in neighboring Fort Lauderdale. In an effort to invite cruise ships to stop at their local ports, Japanese port authorities

and local governments visit Miami every year to meet with the cruise ship companies. It seems their efforts are successful as they continue to attend the cruise show.

With its warm winters, excellent facilities and top instructors, Florida is a mecca for sports, attracting many athletes from around the world including from Japan. You may recall that Ichiro achieved 3,000 hits in major league baseball last year. Top Japanese athletes in tennis and golf often come to stay and train the State. As Tokyo 2020 approaches, several Japanese Olympic runners have started training at University of Florida in Gainesville. I sincerely wish their efforts will bear fruit.

Looking to the future, Japan Airlines is considering a direct flight service from Narita to Miami. This is an excellent choice as Miami is not only a very vibrant city in itself but also the main gateway from the United States to Latin America with direct flights to 75 cities in 30 countries. I very much look forward to the day when this is a reality, especially as I have met so many people who have said Japan was on their bucket list!

If you have a chance to visit Miami, please stop by to see me at the Consulate General of Japan. It is located on Kagoshima Boulevard, so named after Miami's sister-city in Japan.

Yours sincerely,

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Ken Okaniwa

Consul General of Japan in Miami