



Nasushiobara & Linz

10 Years of Sister City Relations

On June 13, 2026, we proudly celebrated a decade of sister city ties between Nasushiobara and Linz. Thanks to all of your continued interest in Linz, Austria, and the activities of Nasushiobara's CIR, we were able to realize numerous exchange projects over these ten years. I am grateful for your support of this newsletter and I hope you continue to enjoy reading it!

Japanese Culture Workshop & Welcome Reception



Following our annual middle school homestay program, 29 students and three teachers from Europagymnasium Auhof in Linz arrived in Nasushiobara on May 13th. To introduce them to some Japanese traditions before meeting their host families, the Nasushiobara International Association hosted a cultural workshop. Though tired at first, the students lit up the moment they tried on the traditional Japanese dress and energetically practiced a traditional dance. They mastered the folding fans in no time, delivering a splendid performance of “Sakura” and “Tsurukame.”

That same evening, a welcome reception was held for the delegation. In attendance were not only the host families, but Mr. Arno Mitterdorfer from the Austrian Embassy in Tokyo, as well as Mr. Salm-Reifferscheidt, a descendant of Aoki Shuzo and the founder of the student exchange programme. It was a joyful night as the Linz students reunited with their Japanese friends, raising a toast to their cross-cultural bonds with milk from Nasushiobara. Complete with a performance of Japanese and Austrian songs by the city's youth choir, all the guests including Mayor Watanabe enjoyed connecting in such a festive atmosphere.





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Concert by an Austrian Duo



On May 22nd, the talented Austrian sisters known as “Duo Sonoma” performed at Mishima Hall in Nasushiobara. Having written a lot of their music in Linz, the duo captivated the audience with a stunning harmony of violin and guitar. Regardless of the cold and rainy weather, a lot of people came to experience the wonderful performance and left glowing reviews.

Furthermore, following the recent reception, we were honored to welcome Mr. Arno Mitterdorfer from the Austrian Embassy back to Nasushiobara, along with Ambassador Sigrid Berka. Their presence made the evening even more special, ensuring the concert was a resounding success and a perfect tribute to the 10-year milestone.



Report on CIR Activities

I am very happy to report, that as Nasushiobara’s “Coordinator for International Relations (CIR)” I was given some more opportunities to have meaningful exchanges about Austria with students and community members these past few months.

On June 18th, I visited Kyoei Elementary School for their “Mini Global Communication Day” together with five of the city's ALTs. All of us gave short presentations about our home countries, and I had a fun time answering questions from the kids like, “What foods do people usually eat in Austria?” or “What surprised you about Japan?”.



Moreover, on June 20th, I was invited to join an international exchange event organized by the Nasushiobara International Association, where I hosted a quiz about Austria. It was very interesting to talk about the unique aspects of Austria with people from Japan and other countries. Everyone was surprised to learn that Austrians love hiking so much they will go out even if it is raining, and that it is actually forbidden to mow the lawn on public holidays!

Scan this QR code to find out more about CIR activities.





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Lively Sister City Exchange

For a few years now, Nasushiobara's "Nishinasuno Kids' House" and Linz's "Kreuzschwestern" kindergarten have regularly been exchanging photo albums to get to know each other's countries and cultures. This time a new album arrived in Austria from Japan. The children loved exploring the pictures with their teachers, taking a special interest in the colorful carp decorations for Children's Day. One of the Austrian teachers even shared that she thought "Tanabata" was a wonderful tradition, and that she wanted to celebrate it with her class next year.



Summer in Austria: Open-Air Concerts

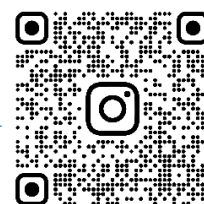
Open-air concerts are an integral part of Austrian summer. Austria does not have the same level of humidity as Japan, making it easy to spend time outside in the summer. Therefore, along with spending time in parks and cafés with outside seating areas, attending an open-air concert is a popular pastime. The term "open-air concert" may evoke thoughts of rock festivals, and while these do also exist in Austria, a lot of the performances are classical in nature.

However, it is easy to enjoy an Austrian open-air concert even if you are not particularly well-versed in classical music or opera. First and foremost, even just the setting of the stages – for example, on top of a lake or inside a quarry – is something you have probably never experienced before. Furthermore, using stage mechanics and special effects, the performers are made to fly or even go up in flames. Together with stage props and extravagant costumes, it becomes a spectacle rather than just a performance. Especially famous is the "Bregenz Festival," held in July and August each year. It is known for its huge stage on top of Lake Constance, attracting no less than 200,000 visitors from various parts of the world each year. Last year, I went to see the open-air installation of Richard Wagner's opera "The Flying Dutchman" in the quarry of St. Margarethen. Not only was the performance as impressive as imagined, but the story was also easy to follow, as there were subtitles in German and English projected onto big screens.



Stage of the 2019 Bregenz Festival

©Bregenzer Festspiele/Karl Forster



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Stage of the 2022 Bregenz Festival

One other open-air concert that must not be forgotten is the Vienna Philharmonic's "Summer Night Concert" in front of the famous Schönbrunn Palace. This is one of the highlights of the classical world in Europe, and because entry is free of charge, around 100,000 people make their way to this concert each summer. Who may enter is decided on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you are ever planning a trip to Vienna and want to attend this show, make sure to arrive early!

Things CIR Rena finds curious about Japan



Suikawari

From fireworks to summer festivals, there are many wonderful summer traditions in Japan. The first time I saw people wearing the traditional Japanese dress, playing games, and eating delicious food at a summer festival, I realized that Japanese summer was truly special.



However, a few years ago on a hot summer day, one of the teachers at the Japanese language school I was attending suddenly told us all to gather outside because we were going to do Suikawari. At the time, I did not speak Japanese well enough to know the word for "watermelon," so when I walked outside and saw a huge fruit lying on the ground in front of the school, I was certainly surprised. I did not quite understand the aim of the game at first, even though the teacher had explained the rules, but once everyone started working together to break the watermelon, it was a lot of fun. Getting to eat the delicious fruit at the end was the cherry on top.

In August of that same year, I got to play the game one more time with the children of my Japanese host family, and by then, I had already been completely charmed by this fun Japanese tradition.

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