

Viktoria Li says her nation and Japan share ethos, can work together

Less is more in sustainability for Swedish ambassador

Title: Swedish Ambassador to Japan
URL: <https://www.swedenabroad.se/ja/embassies/japan-tokyo/>
Hometown: Stockholm, Sweden
Years in Japan: Less than 1

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"It really felt like we were at a turning point in history," explained Li, who was studying for a master's degree in law at the University of Stockholm at the time. "It's surprisingly similar to the feeling we have in the world today." Against the background of climate change, pollution and deforestation around the world, Li — now the Swedish ambassador to Japan — spoke about the issues that most concern her and about areas where Japan and Sweden can make meaningful change.

Li first arrived in Japan in August 2024 after serving as Sweden's ambassador in Czechia and the counsel general of Sweden in Shanghai. "Japan was really just as I had

Since the two countries are quite advanced both technologically and academically, she said, they can work more closely together on new technology that can help with the green transition, and she sees Osaka's Expo 2025 as a perfect opportunity to showcase some of the ideas and technology that can contribute. She also believes that Japan and Sweden have differing strengths when it comes to green initiatives: "For example, while I think Sweden is a little ahead when it comes to recycling plastic, Japan is very ahead when it comes to using water efficiently, so I think there are always areas where Japan and Sweden can work together."

Li is proud of Sweden's ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2045, as well as the generous contributions Sweden makes to other countries to help them achieve their own net-zero targets. "While there's no specific thing I can be proud of," she said of Sweden's green goals, "it's actually the

"Swedish companies are very aware when it comes to climate issues, and they are often in the forefront in both creating new technology as well as producing in a more climate-friendly way, so the cooperation between the government, enterprise and civil society stands as a triangle with issues such as climate and gender equality and other issues that need to be integrated into the whole economy. When you have these different actors working together, you can promote change in a more holistic way."

Li doesn't see any one sector of Swedish society to be the constant driver of change, but believes the division between business, government and civil society drives change to different degrees and at different times. "There's always one sector pushing for change at a different time, and that's what I think makes it come along so well, because there's always that cooperation, and right now I think it's the companies in Sweden who are in the driving seat, who are wanting to see action on climate change."

Li hasn't seen any of the cracks or types of pushback against green initiatives in Sweden that have started to emerge in other countries recently, but believes Swe-



den and the EU have been in the vanguard of championing the U.N.'s sustainable development goals. "I think we are still in the forefront, and I hope we will remain there," she said. "Most companies and governments understand that supporting SDG initiatives is important to all our long-term survival, and if we don't start now, we'll be paying an even greater price in the future."

Li believes there are a lot of similarities between Japan and Sweden, "There are

so many similarities, I don't know where to start," she joked. "We are both quite long countries from north to south, so we both have different climate zones, both our countries are almost 70% forest. And I think both Scandinavian people and Japanese are also a bit more quiet. And I think we also share aesthetics — we like the idea that less is more. In fact, we have a Swedish word for it, *lagom*, which means you should have not too much and not too little."

Li was born in Stockholm, Sweden, and did her high school studies in Italy before completing a master of law degree at Stockholm University and earning a master of arts degree at the Amsterdam School of International Relations. With a strong interest in human rights and social justice, Li initially intended to pursue a career in law but became interested in international relations while watching the devastation caused by the war in Yugoslavia and the upheaval surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall. Li joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she soon became the head of the political section in Beijing and later the general counsel of Sweden in Shanghai. After four years as the ambassador of Sweden to Czechia, Li began her current role in Japan in August 2024. Li likes to spend her free time skiing and walking in nature. Her motto is "Be kind."

Li gains a lot of inspiration from the many people she meets working across a multitude of sectors, and believes everyone has something to contribute. She also reads when she can, and enjoys novels. "I also like Japanese literature as well. I think it's a good way to get to know a country, because you get a little bit under the skin." She also likes to get out into nature, and enjoys skiing in Hakuba: "Being Scandinavian, skiing is something that we do."

For now, Li is very focused on the Nordic pavilion at the Osaka expo, especially Sweden's opportunity to showcase its many sustainable and green-tech initiatives, as well as focusing on the many areas of strategic partnership between Sweden and Japan: "I hope that we can make words form into action, and make something that was agreed on to really happen — I think that's an embassy's main occupation."

Brazilian Chief Justice Luis Roberto Barroso visits the Supreme Court of Japan to pay a courtesy call to Chief Justice Yukihiko Imasaki on April 14. EMBASSY OF BRAZIL



Ambassador Harold Burgos presents credentials to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., strengthening ties with the Philippines and expanding engagement across the Indo-Pacific region. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS



Cesar Montano, the ambassador of Ecuador to Japan, at the imperial garden party held on April 22. EMBASSY OF ECUADOR



At the Artizon Museum in Tokyo, Ambassador Ermal Muca and Kouichi Hazama, director of the Ishibashi Foundation, stand beside artworks by Inosuke Hazama, inspired by his visit to Albania.



From left: SCCIJ Executive Director Andrea Nava, Dominik Steiner (Oist Groups), SCCIJ President Michael Mroczek, Professor Christian Schwarzenegger and SCCIJ Business Coordinator Yasuko Taniguchi. SCCIJ



Panamanian Ambassador Walter Cohen visits the Arakawa Lower River Office and Museum of Aqua to lay flowers for Akira Aoyama, a Panama Canal engineer from Japan. EMBASSY OF PANAMA



Dancers of the Turkish State Folk Dance Ensemble perform a Turkish folk dance during the Turkiye National Day event at Expo 2025.
EMBASSY OF TURKEY



A performance using traditional Italian anthropological masks is held in Piazza Italia, in front of Italy Pavilion at Expo 2025, on May 4. GENERAL COMMISSIONERS OFFICE OF ITALY

Destination Restaurants

The image shows the front cover of a book titled 'the japan times Destination Restaurants'. The cover is dark grey or black. At the top, the text 'the japan times' is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the title 'Destination Restaurants' is written in a white, cursive script font. The central part of the cover features a square, stylized illustration of a Japanese restaurant interior. In the center of this illustration is a small, ornate, multi-tiered decorative object, possibly a lantern or a piece of furniture. The background of the illustration consists of radiating lines, suggesting a fan or a stylized light effect. At the bottom of the cover, the text 'AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION 2011-2014' is printed in a white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The book is shown at an angle, with its spine visible on the left side.

A list of the best restaurants in Japan, selected by Japanese experts with international diners in mind.

In 2021, The Japan Times created the Destination Restaurants list around the idea of Japanese experts uncovering top local restaurants for people around the world — hidden gems that not only offer unique culinary experiences but also contribute to community revitalization, sustainable food and the promotion of natural resources. We aim to differentiate ourselves from other selections by bringing countryside talent proper recognition.

This book, marking the fourth anniversary of the Destination Restaurants project, is a compilation of the finest restaurants we have selected so far.

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