

Iwaki's Exchanges with Samoa in the Lead up to the 2019 Rugby World Cup and Tokyo 2020 Olympics

Iwaki has strengthened its ties with Pacific Island nations through events such as the Pacific Countries Dance Festival and hosting the 7th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM7) in 2015. Now, in further efforts to internationalise the city in the lead up to the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan and the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Iwaki will welcome rugby players from the Independent State of Samoa so they can hold training camps for these events. This is part of the Host Town Initiative set up by the national government to encourage municipalities across Japan to welcome and hold exchange activities with participating countries. Iwaki already shares some connection with Samoa through the fire dance performances at Spa Resort Hawaiians.



Samoa Info

Area: 2830km²

Population: 191,800 (as of 2014).

Expat populations include 67 Samoan nationals in Japan and 87 Japanese nationals in Samoa.

Languages: Samoan, English

Ethnicity: 90% Samoan (Polynesian); 10% other (Mixed-race European, Melanesian, Chinese, European etc.)

National Day (Independence Day): 1 June (commemorates independence from New Zealand in 1962).

Climate: Warm humid climate with a dry season (May-October) and wet season (November-April). Average yearly temperature of 29°C.

Main Industries: Agriculture, coastal fishing

Exports: Marine products, noni juice and related products, beer, coconut cream

Imports: Foodstuffs and meat, machinery and transportation equipment, manufactured goods

Main Trading Partners: (For exports) American Samoa, Australia, USA, Tonga; (for imports) New Zealand, Fiji, China, South Korea

Currency: Samoan Tala

Diplomatic relations with Japan began in 1980 with the establishment of an honorary consulate of Samoa (called Western Samoa at the time) in Tokyo. A consul-general from Japan was appointed to Samoa 17 years later in 1997. The Tokyo Honorary Consulate was closed in 2007 and replaced by the Embassy of Samoa in 2009. This was followed in Samoa by the opening of the Japanese Embassy in 2013. The most recent development was the opening of the Honorary Consulate of Samoa in Fukushima here at Iwaki's Spa Resort Hawaiians just last year on 26 March 2016.

Iwaki-Samoa Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony

On 26 January 2017, a memorandum of understanding regarding the training camps for the Rugby World Cup and Tokyo Olympics was signed between the Iwaki mayor, the honorary consul of Samoa in Fukushima (who is also the president of Spa Resort Hawaiians), the ambassador of Samoa and the chairman of Samoa Rugby Union (who also happens to be the prime minister of Samoa!).



The signing ceremony signals that Iwaki and Samoa are willing to advance international exchange in sports and culture. This will include high school students visiting both countries for cultural experience and exchange as well as cultural lessons for Iwaki primary and junior high schools held by the ambassador of Samoa. Iwaki residents will also have the opportunity to meet the Samoa Rugby Union team members and watch them training at various venues within the city. Currently, Samoa's famous noni juice is being exported to Iwaki and sold in three facilities (Iwaki La La Mew, Shinmaiko Heights and Iwaki Coal and Fossil Museum "Horuru") to help promote the Pacific Island nation.

PALM8 to Be Held in Iwaki!

Iwaki has been chosen to host the 8th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8) — making it the second time in a row that the city has hosted the summit of 17 nations including Japan.

Iwaki hosted the PALM7 Summit between 22 and 23 May in 2015, welcoming the leaders from 14 Pacific Island nations: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Ministers from Australia and New Zealand also took part as observer nations.

This is great news for the city, especially after the official MoU signing with Samoa (also a participating nation of the PALM Summit) for the Host Town Initiative. Thanks to the previous experience of holding the 7th summit, Iwaki should be able to make the PALM8 an even more meaningful event than before and help introduce this unique and vibrant city to other nations of the world.

