# Japanese ambassador praises classic Irn Bru during Scotland visit amid whisky trade talks



During a recent visit to Scotland, His Excellency Hiroshi Suzuki, the Japanese ambassador to the UK, expressed his endorsement of Irn Bru, the iconic Scottish soft drink, while touring the Auchentoshan Distillery near Glasgow. Joined by First Minister John Swinney, the ambassador's visit highlighted the importance of trade discussions between Japan and Scotland. Prior to this, he had sampled Irn Bru and was encouraged by locals to taste the original 1901 recipe, which was once popular but discontinued following the implementation of a sugar tax. After a sip of this classic version, Ambassador Suzuki praised it enthusiastically, declaring, “It is just great,” and approvingly gestured with a thumbs up.

This visit is a testament to the strong cultural and economic ties that bind Japan and Scotland, particularly in the area of whisky production. Japan's interest in Scottish whisky has deep roots; it was influenced significantly by figures like Masataka Taketsuru, who journeyed to Scotland in 1918 to master the craft of whisky-making. His studies culminated in the establishment of the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company, marking the beginning of a flourishing relationship that sees Japanese companies owning several prominent Scottish distilleries today, including Auchentoshan itself.

Local sentiment towards Irn Bru and its historical variants reflects a broader narrative of Scotland's unique beverage culture, which has, over the years, garnered interest beyond its borders. Indeed, the ambassador’s endorsement came against a backdrop of an evolving whisky and beverage landscape where collaborations and exchanges have only increased. The Scottish whisky industry, buoyed by substantial foreign investment, particularly from Japan, serves as a critical nexus for both countries, amplifying mutual interests in trade and tourism.

Ambassador Suzuki’s visit coincided with various cultural initiatives aimed at strengthening Japan-Scotland relations, notably the upcoming 'Scotland at Expo 2025 Osaka'. This initiative is designed to showcase Scottish innovations and foster deeper bilateral ties, particularly in sectors like renewable energy and the culinary arts. His active participation underscores a commitment to not only maintaining but enhancing these connections, as well as promoting engagement between both nations.

The story of whisky has become a focal point for the cultural exchange between the two; the longstanding admiration for Scottish craftsmanship has translated into a significant presence of Japanese distilleries within the Scottish landscape. Suntory, for instance, is not just a distributor but a curator of heritage, having invested in well-respected brands like Bowmore, Laphroaig, and Glen Garioch. This investment cycle has further intertwined both regions economically and culturally, laying a robust foundation for future exchanges.

As His Excellency leaves Scotland, the rapport built over discussions of whisky and its cultural significance reflects a shared appreciation and understanding that transcends geographical boundaries. The journey from the distilleries of Scotland to the bars of Japan illustrates a continuous dialogue, celebrating not just whisky but the stories, traditions, and innovations that both nations bring to the global stage.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/irn-bru-hiroshi-suzuki-japan-ambassador-scotland-whisky-b2760971.html), [[4]](https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/food-and-drink/how-scotland-has-inspired-japanese-whisky-100-years-of-the-suntory-drinks-empire-4179877)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/ambassador.html), [[3]](https://www.edinburgh.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/ukjapan_relations.htm), [[5]](https://www.edinburgh.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/00_000216.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.whiskymag.com/articles/a-special-relationship/), [[7]](https://www.whiskyshop.com/blog/celebration-time)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/ambassador.html), [[3]](https://www.edinburgh.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/ukjapan_relations.htm)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/food-and-drink/how-scotland-has-inspired-japanese-whisky-100-years-of-the-suntory-drinks-empire-4179877), [[6]](https://www.whiskymag.com/articles/a-special-relationship/), [[7]](https://www.whiskyshop.com/blog/celebration-time)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/irn-bru-hiroshi-suzuki-japan-ambassador-scotland-whisky-b2760971.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/ambassador.html> - This page details the activities of Ambassador Hiroshi Suzuki, including his visit to Scotland in February 2025. During this visit, he met with First Minister John Swinney and attended a reception marking the launch of 'Scotland at Expo 2025 Osaka'. The event aimed to strengthen Japan-Scotland relations, with discussions focusing on trade and cultural exchange. Ambassador Suzuki's participation underscores the importance of bilateral ties and the promotion of Scottish industries in Japan. The page provides insights into the ambassador's engagements and the broader diplomatic efforts between the two nations.
3. <https://www.edinburgh.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/ukjapan_relations.htm> - This resource offers an overview of Japan-Scotland relations, highlighting historical and contemporary connections. It discusses the significant Japanese investment in Scotland's whisky industry, notably the ownership of distilleries like Auchentoshan by Suntory. The page also touches upon the influence of Japanese companies in Scotland's renewable energy sector and the broader economic integration between the two countries. It provides context for understanding the depth of bilateral ties and the mutual benefits derived from these partnerships.
4. <https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/food-and-drink/how-scotland-has-inspired-japanese-whisky-100-years-of-the-suntory-drinks-empire-4179877> - This article explores the centenary of the Suntory drinks empire and its deep-rooted connections with Scotland. It delves into the history of Japanese whisky, emphasizing the pivotal role Scotland played in its development. The piece highlights the journey of Masataka Taketsuru, who studied whisky-making techniques in Scotland and later established the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company in Japan. The article also discusses the influence of Scottish distilleries on Japanese whisky production and the ongoing cultural exchange between the two nations.
5. <https://www.edinburgh.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/00_000216.html> - This page provides insights into the historical relationship between Japan and Scotland, focusing on notable figures like Masataka Taketsuru. It details Taketsuru's journey to Scotland in the early 20th century to study whisky-making, his marriage to Rita Cowan, and the establishment of the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company in Japan. The page also mentions other historical connections, such as Watanabe Kaichi's work on the Forth Rail Bridge and Yamao Yōzō's studies in Glasgow, highlighting the multifaceted ties between the two countries.
6. <https://www.whiskymag.com/articles/a-special-relationship/> - This article delves into the unique relationship between Japan and Scotland, particularly in the whisky industry. It narrates the story of Masataka Taketsuru, who traveled to Scotland in 1918 to learn authentic whisky-making techniques. The piece highlights his experiences in Scotland, including his studies at the University of Glasgow and his work at various distilleries. It also discusses the establishment of Suntory's first whisky distillery at Yamazaki and the subsequent creation of the Nikka distillery, emphasizing the enduring bond between the two nations in the realm of whisky production.
7. <https://www.whiskyshop.com/blog/celebration-time> - This blog post celebrates the enduring relationship between Japan and Scotland, particularly in the whisky industry. It highlights the significant Japanese investment in Scottish distilleries, including Suntory's ownership of Bowmore, Laphroaig, Glen Garioch, Auchentoshan, and Ardmore. The article discusses the historical context of these acquisitions and the influence of Japanese companies on the Scottish whisky landscape. It also touches upon the broader cultural and economic ties between the two nations, underscoring the mutual appreciation and collaboration in the whisky sector.