

## Inside this issue

“Though still a niche product, sake’s recognition is steadily increasing” 1 + 2

Key Findings of JETRO’s 2024 Survey on Foreign-affiliated Companies in Japan 3

Watches and Wonders 2025 3

World Expo 2025 in Osaka Has Officially Started! 4

会見

INTERVIEW

## “Though still a niche product, sake’s recognition is steadily increasing”

Interview with Marc Nydegger, CEO of *shizuku*

Zurich-based company *shizuku* is passionate about introducing the rich world of Japanese sake to a wider audience. They offer personalized guidance and a range of services, including team events, sake subscriptions, and immersive cultural experiences. Whether you’re looking to deepen your understanding of sake or explore new flavors, *shizuku* provides a unique platform for discovering and enjoying Japanese sake in Switzerland.

In this edition of our newsletter, we had the opportunity to sit down with Marc Nydegger, the CEO of *shizuku*.



Marc Nydegger, CEO of *shizuku* ©*shizuku* (pic by Nadine Kägi)

### What sparked your interest in Japanese culture, particularly sake, and how did this lead to the establishment of *shizuku*?

My journey began at 17 during a high school exchange year in Japan, where I developed a deep love for Japanese cuisine. Living with host sisters who prepared amazing meals sparked my fascination. After returning home, I studied Japanese Studies and Economics in Zurich, then spent another year in Tokyo attending Waseda University’s intensive language course. Living with local friends, not just fellow exchange students, helped me truly immerse in Japanese culture and language. I first encountered sake at house gatherings, intrigued by its unique taste. Working as a waiter in a Japanese restaurant deepened my connection to Japanese cuisine

and sake, which became the focus of my thesis. After graduation, I managed a Japanese restaurant as deputy manager for three years but dreamed of starting my own business. While still working part-time, I researched logistics, customs, and brewery contacts to build my sake import business. My goal is not just to sell alcohol but to share Japanese culture—a “drop of Japan.” The name *shizuku* (meaning drop) stands for gradual, organic growth and the mission to spread Japanese culture in Switzerland drop by drop.

### Can you share your vision for *shizuku* and how you aim to promote Japanese sake culture in Switzerland?

I’ve pursued my passion for sake for 12 years, aiming to make it accessible beyond the cliché of hot sake at sushi restaurants. Especially in America and Europe, sake’s development is growing, and I want people with broad culinary interests to enjoy it with diverse cuisines like Italian and French. My goal is to

educate and open access to authentic Japanese culture in Switzerland. With Japanese cuisine gaining recognition and more authentic restaurants opening, I strive to share this authenticity daily through my knowledge, language skills, and collaborations. This vision still drives me as I continue to give lectures and engage people with sake and Japanese culture.

### What trends do you observe in the demand for Japanese beverages like sake and shochu in Switzerland?

About 12 years ago, sake awareness was limited, mostly known as a hot drink, unfortunately often of rather low-quality. Few knew more unless they had lived or worked in Japan. Since then, I’ve worked with quality-focused restaurants that include my premium sake—like chilled *Jummai Daiginjo* served in wine glasses, a novel experience for many. Connoisseurs like to treat themselves to a high-end

## “Though still a niche product, sake’s recognition is steadily increasing”

Interview with Marc Nydegger, CEO of *shizuku*

会見

INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

sake and are willing to pay a certain sum for these premium drops. Awareness and appreciation have grown significantly; today, sommeliers in fine dining, including *Michelin*-starred restaurants, are expected to know sake. Education continues, new sake labels are emerging, and some even produce sake themselves. Though still a niche product, sake’s recognition is steadily increasing.

**How do you select the sake you offer?**

I focus on premium sake from CHF 30 up. I work closely with a local partner based in Osaka, the son of an acquaintance, who manages logistics in Japan, especially crucial during the pandemic. He handles shipments to the port, after which my logistics team in Basel ships goods via Rotterdam in refrigerated containers to preserve quality. Over time, we’ve expanded contacts to breweries and distilleries all over Japan. My partner, originally in logistics, is now deeply passionate about sake, frequently traveling around Japan to promote it and to maintain strong brewery relationships.

**How important is cultural exchange between Switzerland and Japan for your business, and how do you facilitate this through *shizuku*?**

Maintaining constant contact with local people in Japan is essential to my business, enabling cultural exchange and mutual support. I deeply love Japanese culture, which feels like a piece of home to me. While good Japanese restaurants exist in Zurich, I prefer experiencing authentic Japanese



A selection of sake available at *shizuku* ©*shizuku* (pic by Nadine Kägi)

food culture directly in Japan. Most of my clientele, around 95%, are Swiss, and I help bridge cultures by organizing visits to family-run breweries in Japan, offering authentic, hands-on experiences. This cultural connection and relationship-building go beyond just selling products and are the core of my business.

**You’ve introduced innovative products like “Mame San Sake Flavored Vodka”. Can you discuss any future innovations or collaborations?**

I’m passionate about creating unique in-house products, like our *umeshu*-infused chocolate called “pralume”. Many people want to mix cocktails with sake but don’t know what pairs well. To create something special, I partnered with *Turicum Distillery* and developed “Mame San”, a sake-flavored vodka, using organic beans and Lake Zurich water. After extensive testing, we crafted a well-rounded flavor that stands out. I also created a popular sake fondue house mix with a local cheese shop. Cooking with sake inspires me to explore new flavors and make Japanese specialties more accessible.

**What are your plans for expanding *shizuku*’s reach and offerings?**

My future plans focus on growing the company in Switzerland. While outsourcing many processes, I prioritize personal customer service, often delivering myself in the Zurich area to maintain direct contact with customers and improve offerings. I aim to expand partnerships with more restaurants, including non-Japanese cuisines. Therefore, it is important to be flexible and innovative in order to meet changing customer needs. My goal is to establish *shizuku* as a respected, positive brand linked to Japanese culture and premium spirits, continuing to promote Japanese lifestyle through innovative projects with partners or independently.

*Thank you for the interview!*

## Key Findings of JETRO's 2024 Survey on Foreign-affiliated Companies in Japan

*Between October and November 2024, JETRO surveyed 7301 foreign-affiliated companies operating in Japan. The survey aimed to enhance foreign investment in Japan by examining business trends, the attractiveness and challenges of Japan's business environment, and the support needs of these companies. The valid response rate for the survey was 19.5%.*

Foreign-affiliated companies in Japan are experiencing generally favorable business conditions, with nearly 50% reporting revenue growth. However, in 2024, these companies faced a year-on-year (YoY) slowdown in revenue growth, mirroring trends seen among Japanese companies. Despite a 6.6% YoY revenue decrease, 48.7% of foreign-affiliated companies reported increased revenues—more than double the 24.0% that reported declines. In the service industry, approximately 50% of companies maintained revenue growth, with this percentage remaining stable.

Around 60% of foreign-affiliated companies reported improved business progress, driven by strong

customer and partner relationships. Companies engaged in collaborations with Japanese entities saw higher sales growth. Japan remains attractive for its market scale, growth potential, and socioeconomic stability, which ranked highly among global comparisons. Notably, while Japan's overall appeal declined slightly, its socioeconomic stability rose by 0.1%. Talent acquisition is a significant challenge for foreign-affiliated companies in Japan. Sales and marketing roles are the hardest to fill (about 60%), followed by IT and technical positions (around 40%).

In response to geopolitical risks, companies are diversifying their manufacturing sites. While Japan's importance remains unchanged overall, Asian companies view it as increasingly important, whereas North American and European companies see it as less significant. Many companies are restructuring supply chains by diversifying manufacturing bases. Some are relocating production from China to Southeast Asia.

Source: [JETRO](#)

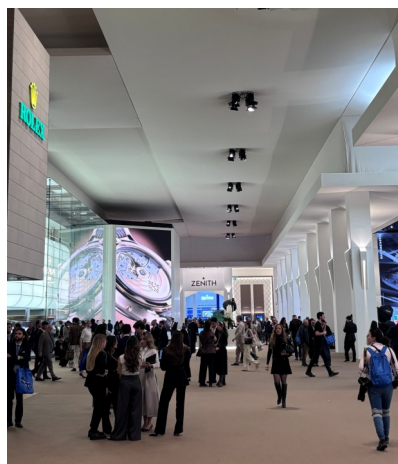
動向

TREND

## Watches and Wonders 2025

*The Watches and Wonders 2025 event took place in Geneva from 1 to 7 April 2025, marking a significant event in the global watchmaking industry. This year's edition took place amidst challenging economic conditions, which have impacted various sectors, including luxury goods. Despite these challenges, the event continued to attract significant attention, reflecting the enduring appeal of high-end horology.*

This year's edition has seen a record number of attendees, - more than 55'000 - underscoring the event's importance as a platform for showcasing innovation and craftsmanship in the watchmaking sector. The exhibition's success is also highlighted by its economic impact, with the event



This year's edition of *Watches and Wonders* saw a record number of attendees © JETRO Geneva

contributing to Geneva's reputation as a hub for luxury goods. Beyond the main exhibition at Palexpo, *Watches and Wonders* extended its reach across Geneva

through "In the City" events. These include guided tours, workshops, and in-store experiences. Additionally, parallel events like *Time to Watches* at Villa Sarasin offered a platform for smaller brands to showcase their creations.

Despite the success of *Watches and Wonders*, the watchmaking industry faces ongoing challenges, including changes in consumer behavior and economic uncertainties. These factors require innovation and adaptability from watchmakers to maintain their competitive edge, according to experts.

Sources: [RTS](#); [Le Temps](#); [Agefi](#)

行事

EVENT



## World Expo 2025 in Osaka Has Officially Started!

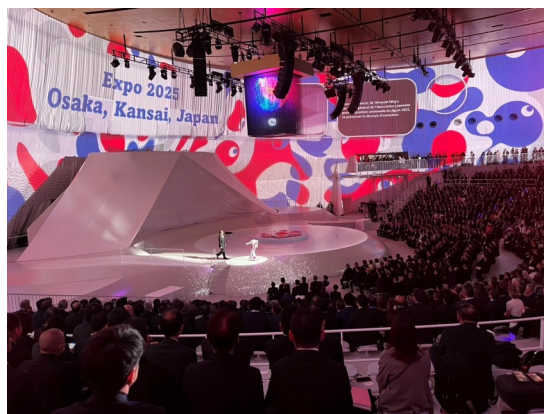
### 行事

EVENT

The World Expo 2025 in Osaka officially opened its doors on 13 April 2025, marking the beginning of a six-month celebration of innovation and global unity. This mega-event, themed "Designing the society of the future, imagining our life of tomorrow," is expected to attract 28.2 million visitors from around the world.

The Expo features a lineup of 158 countries and eight international organizations, each showcasing their unique contributions to the future of society. Among these, the [Swiss Pavilion](#) stands out with its immersive program "From Heidi to High-Tech", highlighting Switzerland's blend of traditional heritage and cutting-edge innovation. The Swiss Pavilion, designed by *Manuel Herz Architekten* in collaboration with *NUSSLI* and *Bellprat Partner*, focuses on three core themes: Augmented Human, Life, and Planet.

On the opening day, **Maja Riniker**, the President of the Swiss National Council, and FDFA General Secretary **Markus Seiler**, among others, attended the inauguration of the Swiss Pavilion, underscoring Switzerland's commitment to strengthening ties with Japan. The pavilion is designed to be environmentally



Impression from the Opening Ceremony © JETRO

exemplary, featuring fluid architecture and interactive experiences that have already garnered significant interest from the Japanese public.

Switzerland's National Day at the Expo took place on 22 April 2025, offering a special opportunity for visitors to delve deeper into Swiss culture and innovation. The event aimed to further enhance the historic friendship between Switzerland and Japan.

Sources: [swissinfo](#); [admin.ch](#); [The Japan Times](#)

## Agenda

### 日程

AGENDA

- ✓ World Expo 2025 in Osaka  
Dates: 13 April – 13 October 2025  
Theme: *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*  
Find more information [here](#)

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:  
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

# JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva  
80, Rue de Lausanne  
1202 Geneva  
Phone: 022 732 13 04  
E-mail: [SWG@jetro.go.jp](mailto:SWG@jetro.go.jp)



©Expo 2025