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## **St. Paul mayor to embark on Japan-China sister city tour**

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St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman will be packing his bags and leaving Monday for Nagasaki, Japan and Changsha, China, for a weeklong visit to St. Paul's sister cities.

The trip's main focus is the celebration of the 60th anniversary of St. Paul-Nagasaki relations as well as the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Organizers say China was added to the itinerary because the costs were negligible and may lead to business opportunities between St. Paul and its sibling cities.

Coleman will be accompanied by the city's director of Arts and Culture Joe Spencer, Finance Director Todd Hurley and Parks Landscape Designer Alice Messer.

St. Paul City Council approved the trip last week. The trip is funded by donations from regional nonprofit organizations.

Coleman led a similar delegation to Nagasaki and Changsha in 2008 that was publicly funded.

Members of other organizations, including Greater MSP and Metropolitan State University, will travel with the mayor on part of the trip and will cover their own expenses.

In Nagasaki, Coleman will attend Kunchi, a 400-year-old autumn festival that incorporates the city's Dutch and Chinese influences and is one of the city's largest celebrations.

"The circumstances are extremely powerful," Spencer said, adding that these missions are an important step for global peace efforts. "Their view of St. Paul extending an open hand of friendship is important to them."

This summer, Coleman met with the visiting Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue who was touring St. Paul to celebrate the 60 years of relations between the two cities.

The group will spend two days in Japan before traveling to China.

"Learning from and connecting with other cultures is deeply rooted in St. Paul's history," Coleman said in a statement. "This trip honors and builds on the relationships we have formed with our sister cities."

China and Japan are the third- and fourth-largest importers of Minnesota goods, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and some say sister city exchanges help create avenues for international trade.

Adam Kaplan, vice president of Sister Cities International in Washington, D.C., said in an email that some cities incorporate trade programs in their sister city programs, adding that trade deals are not uncommon, but they are not always led by a city's mayor.

"Oftentimes, traditional sister city delegation visits become de facto trade missions," Kaplan wrote.

Kaplan pointed to Chicago, which cut a trade partnership agreement with its Mexico City in 2013.

"Chinese business is built on relationships first," said Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society founder Linda Mealey-Lohmann. "One of our hopes is that there will be some Chinese businesses who will want to do business in Minnesota."

Mealey-Lohmann added that she plans on traveling to China with Coleman to meet with the architects who are designing the proposed Chinese garden in Phalen Park.

Spencer said the delegation isn't taking language lessons, but Mealey-Lohmann offered to give the mayor Chinese lessons.

"No one travels with me without learning a bit of Chinese," she said.

Coleman will head home from Changsha on Oct. 12.

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