
GROUP OF JAPANESE CITIZENS TO VISIT FAMILY GRAVES ON KURIL ISLANDS

-

17.07.2018

Russian News Agency (17 July 2018)

A group of Japanese citizens, the first this year, has set off to Russias Kuril Islands to visit their family graves in accordance with a program for visa-free exchanges, Japans Kyodo news agency reported.

The group consists of 40 former residents of the islands. They departed from the Nemuro port, Hokkaido, and are expected to return on July 19. According to the agency, this is the first trip to the islands that Japanese citizens are making this year.

In May and June, several Japanese groups visited the islands of Iturup and Kunashir. A total of nine Japanese delegations are expected to make trips to the islands before the end of October. In addition, a charter flight may be arranged for the former residents of the islands in July, like it was done in 2017.

South Kuril Islands issue and visa-free travels

Since the mid-20th century, Russia and Japan have been holding consultations in order to clinch a peace treaty as a follow-up to World War II. The Kuril Islands issue remains the sticking point since after WWII the islands were handed over to the Soviet Union while Japan has laid claims to the four southern islands. In 1956, the two countries signed a common declaration on ending the state of war and restoring diplomatic and all other relations, however, a peace treaty has still not been reached. Moscow has stated many times that Russias sovereignty over the islands could not be questioned.

Visa-free travels between Russias South Kuril Islands and Japan began in 1992 in accordance with an intergovernmental agreement aimed to improve mutual understanding between the two countries people. Japanese citizens qualifying for visa-free trips include former residents of the Kuril Islands, their family members, researchers, members of public organizations and reporters.

<http://tass.com/world/1013608>

Kaynak/Source: