

Iceland National Day Special

Untold beauty in land of fire and ice

Iceland celebrated 74 years of independence yesterday. On June 17, 1944, Iceland declared itself a republic. In celebrating this anniversary, The Japan Times has selected some of the rich natural and cultural highlights of this country of ice and fire to showcase. Edited excerpts from the official tourism websites <https://www.iceland.is/>, <https://www.south.is/> and <https://visitreykjavik.is/> are included.



The Strokkur (churn) Geyser in southern Iceland, one of the many in Iceland, erupts about every 10 minutes. PROMOTE ICELAND

Located in the northern Atlantic Ocean close to the Arctic Circle, Iceland has a cool, temperate climate with refreshing summers and surprisingly mild temperatures in winter thanks to the Gulf Stream. Shaped by the forces of nature, the country's various landscapes are a dramatic demonstration of the powers of earth, air, fire and water. Active volcanoes, bright green valleys and glacier-cut fjords are among the most distinctive features of the Icelandic landscape.

Although many iconic spots are accessible from the capital, Reykjavik, they still remain virtually untouched by civilization. The Golden Circle, a perfect day trip destination from Reykjavik, is a popular route in southern Iceland, featuring Gullfoss Waterfall, the Great Geysir and Thingvellir National Park.

The Great Geysir continues to be an awe-inspiring landmark, with visitors marveling at the spectacular jets of superheated water and accompanying clouds of steam. The Great Geysir is one of Iceland's many geysers and the English word "geyser" is actually derived from the Icelandic word "geysir" that means "to gush."

Another must-see spot in the Golden Cir-

cle is Thingvellir National Park, known not only for its scenery, but also for its history. In 930, Althing, the world's oldest parliament, was formed in Thingvellir and held yearly meetings there.

Located at the juncture between the North American and Eurasian continental plates, Thingvellir boasts a unique tectonic and volcanic environment, with a clear view of the continental drift thanks to the fault lines stretched across the region.

Many tours to the Golden Circle and other areas of Iceland depart from Reykjavik, where overseas visitors arrive and seek out its numerous attractions. The world's northernmost capital is illuminated by unending daylight in summertime and the spectacular northern lights in winter, giving tourists the option of exploring the city for 24 hours. Walking around the capital is a delightful cultural experience; older wood-framed houses clad in colorful corrugated iron are mixed in with a collection of modern architecture, including Hallgrímskirkja Church, the city's main landmark.

As a volcanically active capital, Reykjavik has many thermal pools and spas. It is a



refreshing experience to take a dip in one of these or the Blue Lagoon. This breathtaking destination is around a 40-minute drive from Reykjavik and is believed to be the biggest outdoor heated spa in the world. As the spa is close to Keflavik International Airport, many visitors stop to rejuvenate themselves on arrival at the airport, or just before departure.

In addition to Iceland's natural beauty, the country's national soccer team is in the global spotlight after qualifying for this year's World Cup for the first time in history. As the smallest nation to ever compete for the title, Our Boys neutralized the superstars of Argentina 1-1 in their opening match on Saturday.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy.

The Blue Lagoon, located a few minutes from Keflavik International Airport, is believed to be the biggest outdoor heated spa in the world and one of the most popular destinations for visitors to Iceland.

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Congratulations
on the Occasion of
the 74th Icelandic National Day

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