

Bolivia Independence Day Special

UNESCO wonders and history aplenty

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PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA



On the 193rd Anniversary of our Independence and on behalf of the government of President Evo Morales, I would like to extend my warm greetings to Their Majesties

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly and generous people of Japan. I also wish to congratulate all Bolivian citizens living and working in Japan.

Growth and resources

Bolivia lies at the heart of South America, surrounded by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Paraguay, with a population of roughly 11 million people. The country covers an area of 1,098,581 square kilometers and is about three times larger than Japan.

Today, Bolivia is a dignified and sovereign nation that continues its successful political, economic and social process, leading to an annual economic growth of nearly 5 percent for the last 12 years.

With more than a decade of services to our people, the Morales government has given our country its greatest stability, decreasing the poverty rate by around half.

Bolivia is rich in natural resources, with its main industries being in agriculture, forestry, petroleum and refined metals, along with mining, which contin-

ues to be vital to our economy.

In fact, the most relevant Japanese investment is the San Cristobal mine in the Potosi department, making Bolivia the second-largest exporter of zinc to Japan.

Additionally, Bolivia prioritizes the interconnectivity across its vast territory, and is improving the infrastructure of roads, bridges, railways and airports. This improvement of connectivity promotes both business and tourism.

Salar de Uyuni salt flats

Bolivia is a very beautiful country featuring incredible landscapes, wonderful mountain towns and the Salar de Uyuni, the most-visited site that boasts almost 17,000 Japanese visitors per year.

The Salar de Uyuni spreads over 10,500 square kilometers and is the largest area of salt flats on the earth. In the rainy season, a layer of rainwater creates a mirror-like surface as smooth as glass.

During the dry season, its geometric salt patterns are imprinted in the earth, seemingly stretching beyond the horizon, making the place look like it's a different planet.

It is important to note that Bolivia offers many other places to visit, where visitors can discover the mysteries of ancient cultures, UNESCO's World Heritage sites, architectonic colonial legacy, traditional dances and culinary experiences.

We have seven properties — cultural and natural — included on the UNESCO World Heritage list. One of the most emblematic sites recognized as a world heritage site is Tiwanaku, located near the southern shores of Lake Titicaca at an altitude of 3,850 meters in the department of La Paz.

The city of Tiwanaku, the capital of a powerful pre-Hispanic empire that dominated a large area of the southern Andes

and beyond, reached its peak between 500 and 900 A.D.

Its monumental remains testify to the cultural and political significance of this civilization that is distinct from any other pre-Hispanic empires of the Americas and was the site of the second ministerial conference of Ancient Civilizations Forum in July.

Last October, the exhibition "Ancient Civilization of the Andes" opened in Tokyo and is scheduled to run until September 2019 in eight cities across Japan. Its success has aroused the interest of many people to learn more about the Andean civilizations.

Likewise, Bolivia is a country rich in cultural traditions. Recently, UNESCO included the ritual journeys in La Paz during Alasita on the Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. Every year on Jan. 24, people procure lucky miniature items associated with Ekeko, the beneficent god of fertility.

The miniature items acquire new meaning after being consecrated with blessings, allowing their owners' wishes to come true.

Last January, this Bolivian tradition was celebrated for the first time in Tokyo where guests enjoyed the experience.

Using this opportunity, I am glad to invite you to visit Bolivia, where tourists find hospitable people who always receive visitors with open arms.

Finally, the Embassy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Tokyo is committed to continued collaboration toward an enhancement of the strong bilateral ties that Bolivia and Japan hold.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Left: The remains of Tiwanaku, a pre-Columbian archaeological site located in western Bolivia. Right: During ritual journeys in La Paz for the Alasita festival in January, participants purchase lucky miniature items associated with Ekeko, an ancient god of fertility. The journeys were added to UNESCO's Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list last year. EMBASSY OF THE PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA



Congratulations
to the People of
the Plurinational State of Bolivia
on the 193rd Anniversary of
Their Independence

 Mitsubishi Corporation

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