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independence days

The months of July and August see an uncanny number of independence day celebrations around the world. The pride and joy that permeate these revelries make them the perfect occasion to experience a country in a uniquely jubilant mood. By **LUCIANO DI GREGORIO**

Is it a coincidence that so many countries celebrate their independence at this time of the year? Not really.

Warmth is our comfort zone. It exhilarates and motivates us, and we're in our element. It must be because the human species first came to life in the warmest corners of the African continent.

The warm season is also when it is most comfortable – and practical – to engage in outdoor activities such as skirmishes and protests, and the resulting victory festivities. As far back as the Middle Ages, opposing sides often called truces during the cold months, only to resume their bickering at the first sign of a flowering bud.

What all this means is that the late summer months are replete with independence day celebrations, the style and scale of which can vary widely. In the US, the day on which the country achieved independence from Britain is marked by great fanfare across the nation, from remote towns to major metropolises. Of course, its cultural capital, New York, and national capital, Washington D.C., take their celebrations to levels that have achieved international fame.

In Singapore, National Day features a massive land-sea-air parade – complete with a spectacular fireworks display (opposite page) – that is televised live and the Prime Minister's Rally speech several days later. In Pakistan, Yom-e-Istiqal marks the end of British sovereignty, and the day is celebrated with flag raising ceremonies, fireworks and televised speeches by government officials.

The poetically named Gwangbokjeol (Restoration of Light Day) is the South Korean national holiday which commemorates victory over the Japanese. An official ceremony in the Independence Hall of Korea kicks things off as locals celebrate with flag ceremonies and singing. In Malaysia, Merdeka Day celebrations are framed by a theme, such as 1999's Together Towards the New Millennium, and 1984's Honesty Brings Success.

However they are celebrated, at the heart of these independence days lies the human instinct for self-determination and the freedom it brings. Witnessing this as an outsider gives a glimpse of what patriotism means to different people. ☒



JULY	AUGUST
1  Canada (1867)	1  Switzerland (1891)
3  Belarus (1944)	6  Bolivia (1825)
4  US (1776)	9  Singapore (1965)
 Philippines (1946)	14  Pakistan (1947)
5  Algeria (1962)	15  South Korea (1945)
 Venezuela (1811)	 India (1947)
9  Argentina (1816)	17  Indonesia (1945)
10  The Bahamas (1973)	31  Malaysia (1957)
14  France (1789)	
20  Colombia (1810)	
21  Belgium (1831)	
28  Peru (1821)	