

Independence Day in the US

今回は、アメリカの独立記念日に関する話題です。7月4日は、アメリカがイギリスの植民地から独立した日で、歴史的にも特別な意味を持つ祝日です。都市によってはパレードや音楽イベントが開かれ、夜には花火がテレビで中継されることもあります。independence は「他に頼らず、自分で決められる状態」を表す言葉で、国や個人の自由を語る場面でよく使われます。あなたの国には、どんな祝日があり、どのように過ごしていますか？



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4.

John Adams, who later became America's second president, wrote to his wife in 1776 that the day would be remembered with fireworks and celebrations "from one End of this Continent to the other."

But the day he was talking about was July 2, 1776, not July 4. July 2 is the day the Continental Congress of the original 13 colonies voted for independence from Britain. Congress did not officially sign the Declaration of Independence, mainly written by Thomas Jefferson, until two days later.

First July 4 celebration

Pauline Maier was a historian who wrote the 1997 book *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. She wrote that in early July of 1777, members of the Continental Congress nearly forgot that it had been a year since they declared their freedom from the British.

They remembered on July 3. It was too late to celebrate on July 2. So, they decided to mark the country's independence with a celebration the following day: July 4.

The Pennsylvania Evening Post of Philadelphia reported, "Yesterday the 4th of July, being the anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America, was celebrated in this city with demonstrations of joy and festivity."

At night, the Post said, "There was a grand exhibition of fireworks...and the city was beautifully illuminated."

Becoming official holiday

The tradition of celebrating Independence Day started to expand after the War of 1812 against Britain. Such celebrations were mostly held on July 4.

John Adams, however, still believed that Americans should celebrate their independence on July 2. Historians say Adams reportedly turned down invitations to take part in July 4 events until the day he died. Adams died on July 4, 1826.

That same day, Thomas Jefferson also died. The two men and former presidents were friends as well as rivals. They both died on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

In 1870, the U.S. Congress made July 4th an official holiday.

In July 1776, the U.S. was a country of 2.5 million people. It is now a country of 336 million, the U.S. Census reports. These days, Americans celebrate Independence Day with fireworks and other festivities.

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, organizers are holding a 16-day festival of fireworks, music, and food to celebrate "America's birthday in America's birthplace!"

But the biggest Fourth of July fireworks show is in New York City. It can be seen in the neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut. It is also broadcast nationwide on television.

The small village of Lewes, Delaware celebrates the holiday and its coastal history with the Independence Day Boat Parade.

In Los Angeles, California, movie lovers can choose to celebrate the holiday by watching old Hollywood films from the grassy area of the historic Hollywood Forever cemetery.

And far north in Anchorage, Alaska, Independence Day traditions include food, games and late-night fireworks. With 19 hours of daylight this time of year, the fireworks show does not start until midnight.

I'm Jill Robbins.

Hai Do wrote this report for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. independence (n.) the freedom to decide for yourself.

After years of studying, she finally gained financial independence from her parents.

2. continent (n.) one of the large land areas on Earth, like Asia or Africa.

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world.

3. grand (adj.) very large, special, or impressive.

They held a grand ceremony to celebrate the school's anniversary.

4. festivities (n.) fun events and activities, usually for a holiday or special time.

The festivities included fireworks, music, and food stalls.

5. broadcast (v.) to send out programs by TV, radio, or internet.

The final match was broadcast live around the world.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. On what date is Independence Day celebrated in the United States?
2. Who was America's second president?
3. What city is known as America's birthplace?
4. In your country, on what occasions do people usually watch fireworks?
5. What is your favorite national holiday in your country, and why?