

## JAPAN CELEBRATES ITS FIRST MOUNTAIN DAY HOLIDAY



1) August 11 marks Japan's inaugural Mountain Day. Mountain Day was officially established as law back in 2014 and as a result, Japan now has more national holidays than any other Group of Eight (G8) nation, with a total of 16.

2) Other national holidays also pay homage to very specific things, these include Coming of Age Day in January, Greenery Day in May, Marine Day in July and Respect for the Aged Day in September.

3) Japanese lawmakers picked the date for Mountain Day because the kanji for the numbers eight and 11 resemble a mountain and two standing trees respectively. So on August 11, a Japanese worker can look at their calendar from this year on and get a visual idea of what their day will entail.

4) The Japanese Alpine Club and other related groups lobbied the Japanese National Diet for a holiday that celebrates one of the many heights of Japanese culture: its peaks. In the newly amended Public Holiday Law, Mountain Day will provide the public with "opportunities to become familiar with mountains and be thankful for blessings from mountains."

5) According to a recent survey from the Japan Weather Association, 10 per cent of Japanese people had planned to take a trip to the mountains on their day off. This new holiday will celebrate Japan's natural geography and give the famously hardworking Japanese people a much-needed break.

6) Japanese workers are entitled to 18.5 paid vacation days, as well as the 16 national holidays, however, a 2013 survey by Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare found that the average Japanese worker took off only nine days annually. Despite having the most national holidays, Japanese workers are less likely to take advantage of their time off, unlike other G8 countries like Canada. Recently, the word "karoshi" has entered the Japanese lexicon, meaning "death by overwork." As a result, Japan has one of the highest suicide rates of any developed country.

7) The Japanese Diet established in 2014 that the new holiday would be added this year, in an effort to ease the often-peak stress levels of Japanese workers.

8) Despite the high-altitude of the new holiday, a survey from the Japan Weather Association found that Mountain Day does not yet have a high-profile in Japan. Nearly one-third of Japanese people have never heard of the holiday and were unaware that they would have the day off.

9) Mountain Day will be celebrated every year August 11th from 2016.  
【Nikkei Voice/Aug 11, 2016/By LAUREN SCOTT】

inaugural 最初の

pay homage to ～に敬意を払う

resemble ～に似ている

entail 伴う、含意する

lobby ～に働きかける

the heights 絶頂、最高潮

peak 峰

amend 改訂する

blessing 祝福、恩恵

geography 地理

entitle 権利を与える

annually 毎年

take advantage of ～を利用する

lexicon 辞書、語彙集

suicide rate 自殺率

in an effort to ～しようと努力して

altitude 高度

high-profile 目立っている事

2014年に国民の祝日「山の日」が制定され、「山に親しむ機会を得て、山の恩恵に感謝する日」として今年から施行された。8月11日が選ばれたのは、漢字の「八」が山の形に似ているのと、「11」は木が2本林立しているように見えるからだという。1996年に海の日(Marine Day)が出来て以来、山岳関係者は「山の日」制定に向けてロビー活動を行ってきた。

★ Ice breaker for active discussion

1. Were you aware of the Mountain Day? What did you do on that day?

2. Have you ever tried mountain-climbing? If yes, which mountains have you climbed? If not, which peak would you like to conquer?

3. Japan has the largest number of holidays among the G8 countries. What can you say about it?

4. How can we maintain a good work-life balance?

5. Make sentences using the following words: inaugural, pay homage to, resemble, lobby, take advantage of and high-profile.