THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA

This is the black sand beach the US Marines stormed on February 19, 1945, beginning the legendary Battle of Iwo Jima. Overlooking the beach is Mount Suribachi, where four days later Joe Rosenthal took his iconic photo of six Marines planting the US flag on its summit.

You can come here once a year at a commemoration jointly held by the US and Japanese militaries. Guests of honor are the few Marine veterans of the battle still alive. I attended on the 70th Anniversary of the battle in 2015. To be here on these sands and on the summit of Suribachi, where the memorial lauds them – “On Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue” – with these heroic men is an indescribable privilege. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #23,* photo ©Jack Wheeler)