

Japanese Language

Beginner's Japanese: An Easy Introduction (Teach Yourself Books)
Helen Gilhooly (November 1996)
Highly recommended beginner course in Japanese.

Berlitz Japanese Phrase Book (Berlitz Phrase Books)
(September 1998) Berlitz Travel Guide
All the phrases you'll ever need.

Read Japanese Today
Len Walsh, Tut Books
Simple and entertaining background for understanding 300 common, written Japanese "Kanji" characters.

Guidebooks

Old Kyoto: A Guide To Traditional Shops, Restaurants and Inns
Diane Durston, Kodansha International
A wonderful guide to unique traditional shops.

Exploring Kyoto : On Foot Through the Ancient Capital
Judith Clancy, (October 1997)
A source for lesser known, fascinating corners of Kyoto.

Fodor's Pocket Tokyo
Stephanie Adler, (Editor)
Comprehensive, portable guide to Tokyo

Japanese Arts

Japanese Garden Design
Marc P. Keane, Charles C. Tuttle Company
A beautifully written and illustrated book to help one prepare for understanding Japanese gardens, history and aesthetics.

Japan Crafts Sourcebook : A Guide to Today's Traditional Handmade Objects
Diane Durston (Introduction)
A comprehensive overview of Japanese crafts throughout Japan.

The Unknown Craftsman : A Japanese Insight into Beauty
Soetsu Yanagi
The philosophical foundations of the Mingei (Folkcraft) Movement, by its founder. Fascinating study of beauty through the eyes of one of the great thinkers of the early 20th century.

How to Look at Japanese Art
Stephen Addiss
If you want to read only one book on Japanese art, this is the recommended one.

Recommended Reading List

Tokyo Contemporary Art Guide

edited by Sabrina Karnstra, compiled by the Japan-Netherlands Institute,
This is the only English guide to Japan's contemporary art scene.

The Book of Tea by Kakuzo Okakura

Liza Dalby (Introduction), Daniel Proctor (Photographer), Okakura Kakuzo
A beautifully illustrated introduction to the art of the Japanese Tea Ceremony

Contemporary Japanese Bamboo Arts

Robert T. Coffland, Pat Pollard and Art Streiber
Biographies of important contemporary Bamboo artists with beautiful photos of their works.

In Search of the Spirit : The Living National Treasures of Japan

Sheila Hamanaka(Photographer), Ayano Ohmi
A rare glimpse of 6 master craftsmen of Japan, designated after World War II as "Living National Treasures." in order to preserve traditional art forms.

Inside Japanese Ceramics : A Primer of Materials, Techniques, and Traditions

Richard L. Wilson
A well illustrated, hands-on introduction to Japanese ceramics traditions and production, including the basics, from setting up a workshop and forming pots to understanding both the techniques of and philosophy behind modern Japanese ceramics approaches.

Japan : The Art of Living : A Sourcebook of Japanese Style for the Western Home

by Amy Sylvester Kato, Shin Kimura(Illustrator)
Ways in which the westerner can use Japanese design in interior decoration.

Japanese Detail: Architecture

Sadao Hibi
A beautifully illustrated source for Japanese such design elements as stone walkways, thatch roofs, garden fences and lattice windows.

Katachi-The Essence of Japanese Design

Takeji Iwamiya, Kazuya Takaoka
A photo essay celebrating the essence of Japanese design, and the fine workmanship of traditional Japanese crafts.

Bamboo in Japan

Nancy Moore Bess and Bibi Wein
A beautifully photographed comprehensive look at bamboo and its place in Japanese culture

Non Fiction

36 Views of Mount Fuji

Cathy N Davidson
English professor Davidson recounts her travels in Japan in the 1980s

The Inland Sea

Donald Richie
In this classic travel memoir, Donald Richie embarks on a quest to find Japan's timeless heart among its mysterious waters and forgotten islands.

Recommended Reading List

In Praise of Shadows

Junichiro Tanizaki

A simple and insightful introduction to the Japanese sense of beauty, written by one of the greatest Japanese authors of the 20th century.

A Brief History of Japanese Civilization

Conrad Schirokauer

A scholarly text on Japanese history and culture.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches

Matsuo Basho

Matsuo Basho (1644-94) was the greatest of the Japanese haiku poets. The vitality and flexibility of his genius given to the strict 17-syllable form brought haiku to a level of immaculate perfection. In later life, Basho turned to Zen Buddhism, and the travel sketches in this volume reflect his attempts to cast off earthly attachments and reach out to spiritual fulfillment. We will visit sites described in this book on the Rural Northern Tour.

Fiction

Memoirs of a Geisha

Arthur Golden

A fascinating and accurate fictional account of the life of an early to mid-20th century Geisha.

Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto

Pico Iyer

Iyer's part fiction, part autobiographical description of a year he spent in Kyoto. Good insights into Japanese culture, both traditional and modern.

The Makioka Sisters

Junichiro Tanizaki

A delightful account of family life in pre-war Japan.