

## Japan Odyssey – Small Group Tours for Mature Travellers

### Reading List

#### **A Geek in Japan: Discovering the Land of Manga, Anime, Zen, and the Tea Ceremony**

by Hector Garcia

For every fan of manga, anime, J-pop, or Zen, A Geek in Japan is a hip, smart and concise guide to the land that is their source.

Comprehensive and well informed, it covers a wide array of topics in short articles accompanied by sidebars and numerous photographs, providing a lively digest of the society and culture of Japan. Designed to appeal to the generations of Westerners who grew up on Pokemon, manga and video games, A Geek in Japan reinvents the culture guide for readers in the Internet age.

Spotlighting the originality and creativity of the Japanese, debunking myths about them, and answering nagging questions like why they're so fond of robots, author Hector Garcia has created the perfect book for the growing ranks of Japanophiles in this inspired, insightful and highly informative guide.

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#### **Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)**

by Christopher Goto-Jones

Japan is arguably today's most successful industrial economy, combining almost unprecedented affluence with social stability and apparent harmony. Japanese goods and cultural products are consumed all over the world, ranging from animated movies and computer games all the way through to cars, semiconductors, and management techniques. In many ways, Japan is an icon of the modern world, and yet it remains something of an enigma to many, who see it as a confusing montage of the alien and the familiar, the ancient and modern. The aim of this Very Short Introduction is to explode the myths and explore the reality of modern Japan - by taking a concise look at its history, economy, politics, and culture.

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#### **Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival**

by David Pilling

A pacy, fresh and surprising portrait of Japan and the Japanese - from David Pilling, award-winning writer and Asia Editor of the Financial Times

Despite years of stagnation, Japan remains one of the world's largest economies and a country which exerts a remarkable cultural fascination. David Pilling's new book is an entertaining, deeply knowledgeable and surprising analysis of a group of islands which have shown great resilience, both in the face of financial distress and when confronted with the overwhelming disaster of the 2011 earthquake.

The resulting tsunami, which killed some 19,000 people, and nuclear catastrophe highlighted both the deeply impressive practical resilience of ordinary Japanese and a political culture of extraordinary carelessness and arrogance. Pilling describes the emergency and its aftermath, but then writes far more broadly about many aspects of Japan which are little known to outsiders and which do so much to explain these contradictory responses to the earthquake. *Bending Adversity* is a superb work of reportage and the essential book even for those who already feel they know the country well.

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### **For Fukui's Sake: Two years in rural Japan**

by Sam Baldwin

Far from the high-tech, high-rise of the super-cities, there lies another Japan.

A Japan where snakes slither down school corridors, where bears prowl dark forests and where Westerners are still regarded as curious creatures. Welcome to the world of the inaka – the Japanese countryside.

Unhappily employed in the UK, Sam Baldwin decides to make a big change. Saying sayonara to laboratory life, he takes a job as an English teacher in a small, rural Japanese town that no one – the Japanese included – has ever heard of.

Arriving in Fukui, where there's 'little reason to linger' according to the guidebook, at first he wonders why he left England. But as he slowly settles in to his unfamiliar new home, Sam befriends a colourful cast of locals and begins to discover the secrets of this little known region.

Helped by headmasters, housewives and Himalayan mountain climbers, he immerses himself in a Japan still clutching its pastoral past and uncovers a landscape of lonely lakes, rice fields and lush mountain forests. Joining a master drummer's taiko class, skiing over paddies and learning how to sharpen samurai swords, along the way Sam encounters farmers, fishermen and foreigners behaving badly.

Exploring Japan's culture and cuisine, as well as its wild places and wildlife, *For Fukui's Sake* is an adventurous, humorous and sometimes poignant insight into the frustrations and fascinations that face an outsider living in small town, backcountry Japan.

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## **A Concise History of Japan (Cambridge Concise Histories)**

by Brett L. Walker

To this day, Japan's modern ascendancy challenges many assumptions about world history, particularly theories regarding the rise of the west and why the modern world looks the way it does. In this engaging new history, Brett L. Walker tackles key themes regarding Japan's relationships with its minorities, state and economic development, and the uses of science and medicine. The book begins by tracing the country's early history through archaeological remains, before proceeding to explore life in the imperial court, the rise of the samurai, civil conflict, encounters with Europe, and the advent of modernity and empire. Integrating the pageantry of a unique nation's history with today's environmental concerns, Walker's vibrant and accessible new narrative then follows Japan's ascension from the ashes of World War II into the thriving nation of today. It is a history for our times, posing important questions regarding how we should situate a nation's history in an age of environmental and climatological uncertainties.

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## **An Introduction to Japanese Society**

by Yoshio Sugimoto

Now in its fourth edition, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* remains essential reading for students of Japanese society. Internationally renowned scholar Yoshio Sugimoto uses both English and Japanese sources to update and expand upon his original narrative in this sophisticated yet highly readable text. This book explores the breadth and diversity of Japanese society, with chapters covering class, geographical and generational variation, work, education, gender, minorities, popular culture and the establishment. Updates include an exploration of the 'Cool Japan' phenomenon and the explosion of Japanese culture overseas. This edition also features the latest research into Japanese society, updated statistical data, and coverage of recent events including the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and the change in government. Written in a clear and engaging style, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* provides an insight into all aspects of a diverse and ever-evolving contemporary Japan.

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## **Lost Japan**

by Alex Kerr

An enchanting and fascinating insight into Japanese landscape, culture, history and future.

Originally written in Japanese, this passionate, vividly personal book draws on the author's experiences in Japan over thirty years. Alex Kerr brings to life the ritualized world of Kabuki, retraces his initiation into Tokyo's boardrooms during the heady Bubble Years, and tells the story of the hidden valley that became his home.

But the book is not just a love letter. Haunted throughout by nostalgia for the Japan of old, Kerr's book is part paean to that great country and culture, part epitaph in the face of contemporary Japan's environmental and cultural destruction.

Winner of Japan's 1994 Shincho Gakugei Literature Prize.

Alex Kerr is an American writer, antiques collector and Japanologist. *Lost Japan* is his most famous work. He was the first foreigner to be awarded the Shincho Gakugei Literature Prize for the best work of non-fiction published in Japan.

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## **Japan: The Story of a Nation**

by Reischauer, Edwin

One of two texts which introduce East Asian history, both have been rewritten to take account of the changes in China since Mao's death, of Japan's economic success, and of the emergence of Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore as important political and economic powers. They aim to combine authoritative scholarship with comprehensive coverage and a succinct, readable style and are aimed at undergraduate students and the general reader. Japan is a land of modest geographic size, but it is one of the larger countries of the world by population and today is the world's economic powerhouse. Though in culture it is a daughter of ancient China, Japan has developed one of the most distinctive cultures in the world. This makes Japan a subject of great interest, but the unique course of Japanese history has made it of even greater significance. Despite its East Asian cultural origins, Japan evolved along a very different course to its neighbours; subsequently it became the only non-Western land to respond successfully to the challenge of superior Western technology in the nineteenth century and today it has become a leading nation of the so-called First World. As the only non-Western member of this grouping of nations, Japan stands in a very special relationship to the other industrialised lands. Its success in negotiating this vast change and the great economic power this has produced are matters of importance to both groups of nations. Even more significant is the fact that Japan, in industrialising and in "modernising" its institutions, has preserved a sharp self-identity and a considerable part of its traditional, pre-modern culture, despite the tidal wave of Western influences that has inundated it in modern times. These survivals from its past civilization give Japan an unusual cultural richness and seem to contribute special strengths as well as difficulties to its handling of the problems of modern urban society. This revised edition gives special attention to Japan's economic success and the problems resulting from that success. "The authors have worked together on the study of East Asia for many years as part of a remarkable team at

Harvard University. Edwin O. Reischauer was US Ambassador to Japan and is a leading western authority on Japan, while Albert M. Craig is Professor of History at Harvard."

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### **Memoirs of a Geisha**

by Arthur Golden

A literary sensation and runaway bestseller, this brilliant debut novel tells with seamless authenticity and exquisite lyricism the true confessions of one of Japan's most celebrated geisha. Speaking to us with the wisdom of age and in a voice at once haunting and startlingly immediate, Nitta Sayuri tells the story of her life as a geisha. It begins in a poor fishing village in 1929, when, as a nine-year-old girl with unusual blue-gray eyes, she is taken from her home and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house. We witness her transformation as she learns the rigorous arts of the geisha: dance and music; wearing kimono, elaborate makeup, and hair; pouring sake to reveal just a touch of inner wrist; competing with a jealous rival for men's solicitude and the money that goes with it. In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, we enter a world where appearances are paramount; where a girl's virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder; where women are trained to beguile the most powerful men; and where love is scorned as illusion. It is a unique and triumphant work of fiction—at once romantic, erotic, suspenseful—and completely unforgettable.

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### **The Tale of Genji**

by Murasaki Shikibu

Written in the eleventh century, this exquisite portrait of courtly life in medieval Japan is widely celebrated as the world's first novel. But *The Tale of Genji* is no mere artifact. It is, rather, a lively and astonishingly nuanced portrait of a refined society where every dalliance is an act of political consequence, a play of characters whose inner lives are as rich and changeable as those imagined by Proust. Chief of these is "the shining Genji," the son of the emperor and a man whose passionate impulses create great turmoil in his world and very nearly destroy him. His tempestuous nature, family circumstances, love affairs, alliances, and shifting political fortunes form the core of this magnificent epic.

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