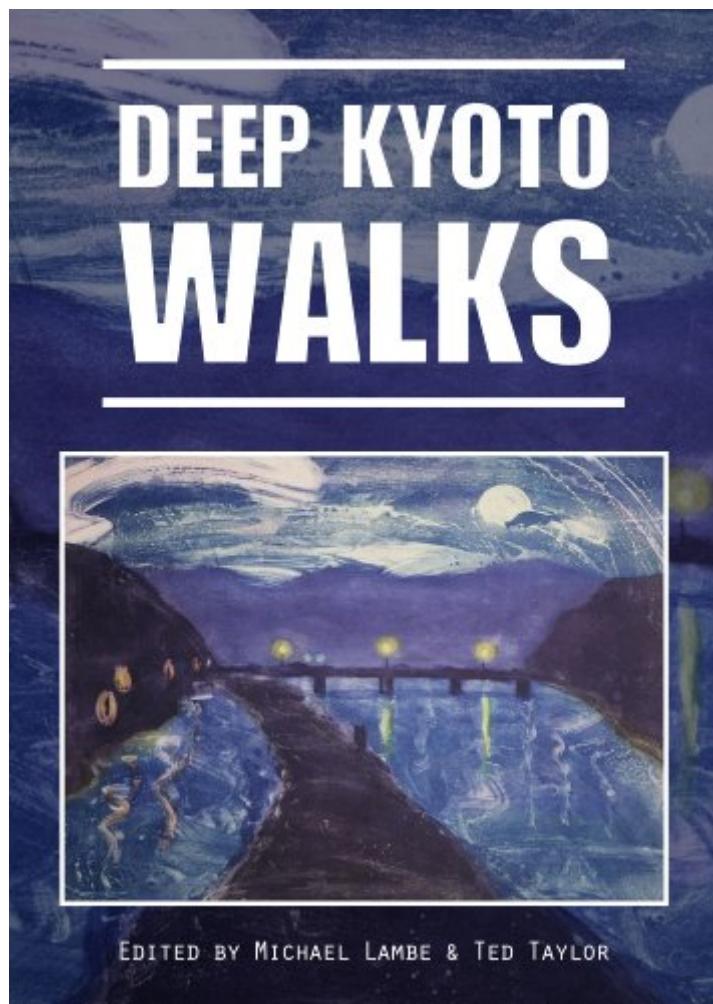


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Deep Kyoto: Walks



Synopsis

Deep Kyoto: Walks is a new anthology of 18 meditative strolls in Japan's ancient cultural capital. Independently produced by 16 writers who have made their home in Kyoto, this book is both a tribute to life in the city of "Purple Hills and Crystal Streams", and a testament to the art of contemplative city walking. In a series of rambles that express each writer's intimate relationship with the city, they take you not only to the most famous shrines and temples, but also to those backstreets of memory where personal history and the greater story of the city intersect. Join Pico Iyer, Judith Clancy, Chris Rowthorn, John Dougill, Robert Yellin, John Ashburne and more as they explore markets and mountains, bars and gardens, palaces and pagodas and show us Kyoto afresh through the eyes of those who call it "home". Included are: 18 walks, 16 photographic illustrations, a specially commissioned woodblock print by Richard Steiner, 12 detailed maps, links to all locations on Google Maps, cover art by internationally acclaimed artist Sarah Brayer.

Book Information

File Size: 6650 KB

Print Length: 224 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Deep Kyoto; 1 edition (May 18, 2014)

Publication Date: May 18, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00KFM2J0C

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #295,099 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #20 in Books > Travel > Asia > Japan > Kyoto #69 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Asia > Japan #145 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Specialty Travel > Hikes & Walks

Customer Reviews

After my first two trips to Kyoto, which were essentially identical since I had visitors with me the second time and felt the need to take them to the most well known sites like Kinkakuji, Kiyomizudera, Ginkakuji, etc. It was on the most recent trip two years ago when I realized that I would need to visit many time to see all that is worth seeing there. So Deep Kyoto Walks (2014) edited by Michael Lambe and Ted Taylor is the perfect guide for someone like me who wants to know about things off the beaten track, since it gives personalized views of what to see and do in Kyoto by people who have lived there for extended periods of time. In a sense, it offers a personalized curated guide to one of the most beautiful and fascinating cities in the world. Full disclosure, I am friends with the editors, but the contributions in this books come from a variety of informed viewpoints and expertise. As pointed out in the forward by Lambe, the size and layout of Kyoto make it perfect for walking and exploring and as Taylor mentions in the introduction most of Asian life is lived out of doors, so there is much to take in while out exploring in the city. There are useful interactive end notes throughout to explain aspects of Japanese culture or history and other digressions, links to places mentioned, as well as 12 maps with links to Google maps. Thus, it is very user friendly guide. "Time Travelling on Gojo" by Jennifer Louise Teether is unique in her exploration of her neighborhood through a Gojo Pottery festival co-mingled with musings on Japanese aesthetics in general and pottery in particular. Lambe contributed two essays in the collection and the first, "Red Brick & Sakura: A Walk in Modern Kyoto" was of particular interest to me since I also enjoy seeking out notable architecture. Lambe is particularly interested in the Meiji (1868-1912) era architecture. But he also discusses some of the more controversial buildings in the city, like the Kyoto Tower (1964), which Alex Kerr describes as a "symbolic stake through the heart of the city," but contrarily, Lambe accepts it as a Kyoto landmark. However, he agrees with Kerr, unlike me, with the assessment of Kyoto Station as being out of place and garish. Lambe's second essay, "Up and Down the Ki," is a meditation on the drinking culture of Kyoto. He recounts a 10 bar crawl with a local musician duo playing for an hour at each location that he took on November 30th in 2103, the 9th such event. Bridget Scott contributed to the collection with "Ghosts, Monkeys, & Other Neighbors" and brings thoughts on her expertise in butoh to light in her essay about her neighborhood. A more personal account of a place is found in Miki Matusmoto's musings on her many memories related to "Climbing Mount Daimonji." Cultural and historical references abound in Robert Yellin's essay "Not Sure Which Way To Go" on the Philosophy Path route. Perhaps, the best known writer in this collection is Pico Iyer, author of several books on travel and other subjects, who praises the melding of the new and old in Kyoto in his essay "Into the Tumult." Chris Rowthorn's

essay, "Old School Giaji Kyoto" is personal look at old Kyoto haunts on a return to a city he had lived as a young man arriving in 1992. It seems that not all of his remembrances are happy ones, but it also seems that he has since come to terms with these demons. History and poetry are at the forefront of John Doughill's "Kamogawa Musing." John Ashburne's (a noted food writer) essay "Gods, Monks, Secrets, Fish" is notable for a focus on the food based culture of Kyoto including a detailed look at Nishikikoji Market, and a map of some of the noteworthy stalls discussed in the essay is provided in the maps appendix. Co-editor Taylor's first of two essay is "Across Purple Fields" which is a personalized account of typical walk he takes with his young daughter in his neighborhood and includes musing about zen philosophy. His second essay, "A Long March" broaches the political with the personal as he recollects a protest march he participated in after the 3.11 tsunami caused the nuclear accident in Tohoku. Stephen Henry Gill also brings an unusual perspective to his essay, "Blue Sky" seeing that he is a conservationist and poet-so both of those aspect get their due in the account of his walk near Mt. Ogawa and the splendid Arashiyama area. An event is at the heart of Sandborn Borwn's essay, "Hiking Mount Atago," a group event that takes place every summer. This essay was informative in that I learned about the Giant Salamander and 10 cm poisonous centipedes that inhabit those parts. I am now interested in visiting both Koto-in and Shodenji after reading Joel Stewart's descriptions of them in his essay on his walk in North Kyoto, "In Praise of Uro Uro." Izumi Texidor Hirai has also piqued my interest in her subject with her lively descriptions in "The Botanical Gardens." Perrin Lindelauf's final essay, "Rounding Off: The Kyoto Trail" is fitting since this 75 km trail encompasses most of Kyoto. According to the essay there are four sections: Higashiyama (25km), Kitayama East (18km) and Kitayama West (19km) in the north and Nishiyama (12km) in the western Arashiyama district. I found her four day-69 km walk inspiring. "The Epilogue: On Foot in the Ancient Capital" is provided by 40 year resident Judith Clancy, author of several books on Kyoto, in which she discusses the small changes and details she has observed over the years in the ancient capital.I think this volume is indispensable for short term, long term, and repeat visits. There is wealth of suggestions for a prolonged visit. And it can also provide assistance for a short time visit; in that it provides local knowledge for that day or afternoon when you want to get off the tourist trail. The amount of incidental information about Japanese history, culture, and society collected in these essays is invaluable in itself . For people like me who live in Japan and have the opportunity for repeat visits it provides inspiration and a variety of courses for exploration deep in the heart of Kyoto.

"They say Kyoto is ancient and elegant. And this is true. Sort of. But Kyoto is also a mishmash of

architectural madness, from post-war era concrete buildings on up to recent prefabricated monstrosities made of plastic. It's all over the place aesthetically and I love it. Eventually the whole chaotic collage of the city seeped into my life and work, so I gave up lamenting "progress." I am comforted by knowing the city well enough to know where my own private "old" Japan still exists, and also I must say that I have a fondness for urban grunge and the detritus of modern city life. I love the forgotten corners, the less trod paths, unknown buildings stained with the patinas of age and all of the head-turning eclecticism. For me, a lot of the magic lies in the nameless details here that change day to day, and the light as it shifts from season to season. To see all of this stuff for what it is, see what the city continues to become, and accept it all, right alongside the cultural icons here is what makes things all the more interesting. It's connecting the dots; seeing the continuum between present-day Kyoto, as a functioning, transforming city and its romantic past." —Joel Stuart, "In Praise of Uro Uro" "I had to acknowledge that I had to come to Japan in order to see that a 7-Eleven here was just as Japanese as any meditation-hall, and no less full of wonder (or even kindness and attention). Sanctity lies not in any object but in the spirit you bring to it."

—Pico Iyer, "Into the Tumult" These two quotes perfectly encapsulate the spirit of the city I call home, and this collection of eighteen essays from long-time residents are as diverse as Kyoto herself. This book should not be considered a guidebook. While it is true that there are directions, here and there, on how to find the intimate locations mentioned in Deep Kyoto Walks. These pages, the true heart of the collection is in the people, and their experiences, both as Outsider Looking In, and Already Through the Looking Glass. A memoir of multiple consciousnesses, readers can expect to be taken into the lifeblood of Kyoto's real culture, not just the stereotype emblazoned by so many years of postcards painting geisha crossing red-lacquered bridges. Step into the tsukemono (pickle) shops of Nishiki Market, the mish-mash architectural landscape of Kyoto's ever-changing streets, ancient forests and mountain trails, shrines with less than peaceful origins, and the many smiles (or scowls) of Kyoto natives. While there were some essays that didn't really speak to me on a personal level, there were many that built up in syllable the virtues I know to be true of the great city of Kyoto. A wide variety of narrative styles also fill the pages of this book, ranging from the poetic and eclectic, to the more intimate and accessible. Nearly all of them offer unique historical

insights about some information of which even most Kyoto-born residents are not aware. Be prepared for not every moment to be a glowing recollection. Many of the authors share a disappointment in the decline of the traditional structures and culture within the old capital, and the general attitude of "urban progress" arriving in its wake. My personal favorites from the collection include: "Ghosts, Monkeys & Other Neighbors" by Bridgett Scott, mainly because this is my neighborhood, and Scott characterized it perfectly.

"Into the Tumult" by Pico Iyer, for Iyer's wonderful considerations and easy-flowing prose. "Old School Gaijin Kyoto" by Chris Rowthorn, for his delightful descriptions of food and the life of an English teacher in Japan that I could relate to. "Kamogawa Musing" by John Dougill, for he wrote of my own favorite place in Kyoto, the great Kamo River.

"Gods, Monks, Secrets, Fish" by John Ashburne, for the zen and food mixture by one of the coolest Japanese Buddhists in my memory, Dogen.

"Across Purple Fields" by Ted Taylor, for an intimate glimpse into the heart of Kyoto, its quiet, interconnected neighborhoods. "Hiking Mt. Atago" by Sanborn Brown, because I have never explored this part of Kyoto, and Brown's essay made me excited to break out the hiking boots.

"In Praise of Uro Uro" by Joel Stewart, arguably one of the strongest essays in this collection, for his beautiful prose and turns of phrase, as well as the light, unassuming delight he took in his "walk" through Kyoto. It is a

"Rounding Off: The Kyoto Trail" by Perrin Lindelauf is possibly the only true guidebook style essay in the collection, but it is a wonderful introduction to one of the most gorgeous walks in Kyoto (one I have yet to complete). Included in the ebook are appendixes with some definitions of the rarer Japanese terms in the essays, as well as maps showing the locations of the walks in the essays. I can easily recommend this book to anyone with a passable knowledge of either Japanese culture or history. An intent to travel to Kyoto is not required in order to enjoy its interior. Perhaps the most important thing that Deep Kyoto Walks accomplishes is, like the morning ritual of a zen temple, a fresh raking of the sands of impression the mind holds for places in time. I leave my own "walk" through these pages with a new perspective on this city that has so captured my heart, as if I am just arrived, all over again. And

there really is no greater delight than the knowledge that there is a bunch of new to be learned, and your own feet can take you there. As Michael Lambe states in his foreword: "Let's go for a walk."

As the title suggests, this book is not really a tourist/travel guide in the ordinary sense--it's a collection of longer essays written by people who have made Kyoto their adopted home for lengthy periods, and it really does give you the flavor of the place in a deeper, slower, more nuanced way as compared with a more typical travel guide. It does provide itineraries/directions for walking through each district featured in an essay, but they feel a bit perfunctory. Overall, I'd highly recommend this book to anyone who has spent some time in Kyoto already, has already seen all the major tourist sites, and wants to gain a deeper understanding of the place. I was fortunate enough to spend a few weeks in Kyoto recently, and although I'm not sure this book would have resonated with me before, I really enjoyed reading it during/after my most recent trip.

In general I like this book, and I look forward to using the tours as a guide to my visit to Kyoto. I would have liked to see more pictures as the narrative description of the places visited leave one wishing for some visual representation. The inclusion of the Google Maps link is very innovative, though it doesn't always work consistently, and I notice that the actual route is not included on the map. That would have been very helpful. Since it is a collection of essays by different authors the tone of the book varies greatly. Some essays convey a sense of place that is accessible to the reader, and others are just too idiosyncratic.

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