

Old Kyoto: A Guide To Traditional Shops, Restaurants, And Inns



Synopsis

This guidebook introduces the distinctive character of the old neighbourhoods of Japan's ancient capital, and pinpoints the best shops, restaurants, walks and inns.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Kodansha America; 1st edition (October 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0870117572

ISBN-13: 978-0870117572

Product Dimensions: 7.2 x 5.1 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 48 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,839,888 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #87 in [Books > Travel > Asia > Japan > Kyoto](#) #1176 in [Books > Travel > Asia > Japan > General](#) #15641 in [Books > Travel > Reference](#)

Customer Reviews

"The recommended establishments in Old Kyoto are so consistently good...and Diane Durston has woven history and legend into her descriptions of Kyoto's finest and oldest establishments."

•The New York Times"Diane Durston ... leads us into the secrets and hidden beauties of the city with a grace and warmth that are themselves reflective of the vanishing traditions they celebrate. Whenever anyone says he or she wants to see the 'true soul of Kyoto,' I say, 'Buy this book!'"

•Pico Iyer"The wonder is that no one has done what Diane Durston has done, and the delight is that Diane Durston has done it so well."

•The Japan Times"Durston's book is an eloquent look at seven neighborhoods where everyday life in Japan continues despite the crush of modernity...."

•Seattle Post-Intelligencer"This lovingly written travelogue-cumguidebook has become de rigueur for knowledgeable travelers seeking to find 'the real Kyoto'."

•Rafu Shimpo --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

DIANE DURSTON is a writer, lecturer, and consultant on Japan and Asian cultures. She has written three books on Kyoto, where she lived for eighteen years, KYOTO: SEVEN PATHS TO THE HEART OF THE CITY and THE LIVING TRADITIONS OF OLD KYOTO are her two other publications. Durston now lives in Portland, Oregon. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback

edition.

Kyoto is Japan's capital for traditional culture and Durston's book is the map to get you through the hundreds of shops, inns, and restaurants in the city. Although a "new" addition, this 2013 update is merely an identical reprint of the 2005 edition. I travelled Kyoto last year with the 2005 edition from a library. I then bought the 2013 edition when I returned. I compared the two page-for-page, and they're identical except for the publisher changing names. Which is a shame, considering that the only major issue with the 2005 and 2013 edition is that some shops just don't exist. In the past 10 years, it would also have been helpful to think about including the Websites of these destinations. They do exist, as I cross-checked information online when finding places. Keep in mind the first edition was published in 1986, then revised in 2005 and "2013." The format of the book is split into Central, Eastern, Northern, Western, and Southern Kyoto. It also includes the usual appendices and small chapters on etiquette, vocabulary, and the character of Kyoto. Central and Eastern Kyoto compromise the bulk of the book and are where most of the interesting shops exist. Each chapter starts with featured businesses: Durston includes black-and-white photographs and a literary description of the location: who the owners are (or were), the state of the business, what they make, it's connection to Japanese culture and craft, and so on. The featured writings are themselves interesting enough even if you weren't to go to Kyoto as they mix nostalgia and travelogue together in marvelous entries. You can almost imagine Durston's book acting like a stone wall protecting these shops from the wrecking ball of modernization. At the end of the main sections are smaller single-paragraph descriptions of businesses. Don't gloss over these; they often contain fascinating shops, even if they lack the photographs and maps of the featured businesses. I went through the entire book and marked off all the businesses I wished to visit. When I was in Kyoto, I used this book, online research, and a hand-drawn map to find them. Overall, I was able to find 80% of the shops including the oldest broom maker in the city. Though, it is certainly frustrating to be looking for a shop with a map in hand and it simply doesn't exist. You look left and right, up and down, and it's not there. Japanese addresses are notoriously difficult to parse anyways, and the specialty nature of these shops means that most Japanese I asked for help had no clue either where (or what) these shops were. If you were to ask for help, find someone with a little age (and a little English). Hey, but that's travel right? You can't stuff your head in a book and just follow it page-for-page. Bottom line is get this book if you're serious about seeing more about Kyoto than the usual stuff. In a time where most cities now boast lively craft and artisan shops for all sorts of esoteric sundries, it is refreshing to know that in Kyoto, Durston has found businesses

specializing in this artistry for hundreds of years.

Updated edition of an old standby. Ms. Durston shows you the secrets that make Kyoto such a magic place, the tiny shops, craftspeople, restaurants and inns that have been in business sometimes for centuries. Even if not going to Kyoto, Ms. Durston's writing style makes the book a great read for anyone interested in Japanese culture.

Dealing primarily with food, lodging, and traditional shops, Diane Durston's guidebook is a good starting place when planning a trip to "the Old Capitol" of Kyoto. Maps divide the city into sections, which overlap and can be difficult to follow. Still, the restaurants and shops listed were some of the best I have visited in Japan. Used in conjunction with the "The Lonely Planet Travel Guides," containing information about temples, shrines and palaces, Diane Durston's book, "Old Kyoto," helps round out the Kyoto experience.

Diane's writing is wonderful! Warm, loving insight into what remains of the old parts of the city. Written a while ago, Most of these folks have been in business for a very long time, so the few that no longer exist is not really a problem for me.

This was my favorite book for learning about Kyoto before going there. Even though I didn't have time to see many of the places and shops, it gave me a feeling of the true heart of the people who live and work there. Craftsmen are valued in Japan and there is a sense of the time required to perfect a craft. After the trip, this book is fun to review.

"Old Kyoto" is not a guidebook, but rather an insider's guide on interesting attractions and mom-and-pop shops you should visit if you are in Kyoto for a while. I read the book cover to cover on the bullet train from Tokyo (it's a short read) and enjoyed it very much. Even though the book focuses on specific attractions with no pretention of tying them all into a coherent story, it effectively gives you a sampling of the history of Kyoto, its industries, and their sensibilities. At the very end of the book the author dedicates a couple of paragraphs to actually planning your trip to Kyoto - wish there was more information there. A chapter on suggested routes through the city, or even a map to place all of the mentioned attractions would have been a great addition to the book.

This is an interesting book that provides good information on traditional crafts and foods. I found

some of the places described and had varied experiences -- the salesperson in the paper shop seemed to barely tolerate foreign visitors, and in another shop, the elderly owner was delighted to show her brooms. Bought some incredibly expensive chopsticks in another. One of the shops we tracked down had already shuttered its doors. Overall, I think this is a useful book and I found some great souvenirs as a result.

Amazing book, well written, I feel like I'm right there with her. I lived in Kyoto, Japan so I know that her descriptions are spot on. Whether you buy it for arm chair traveling or as a road map while you are there, you won't regret your purchase.

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