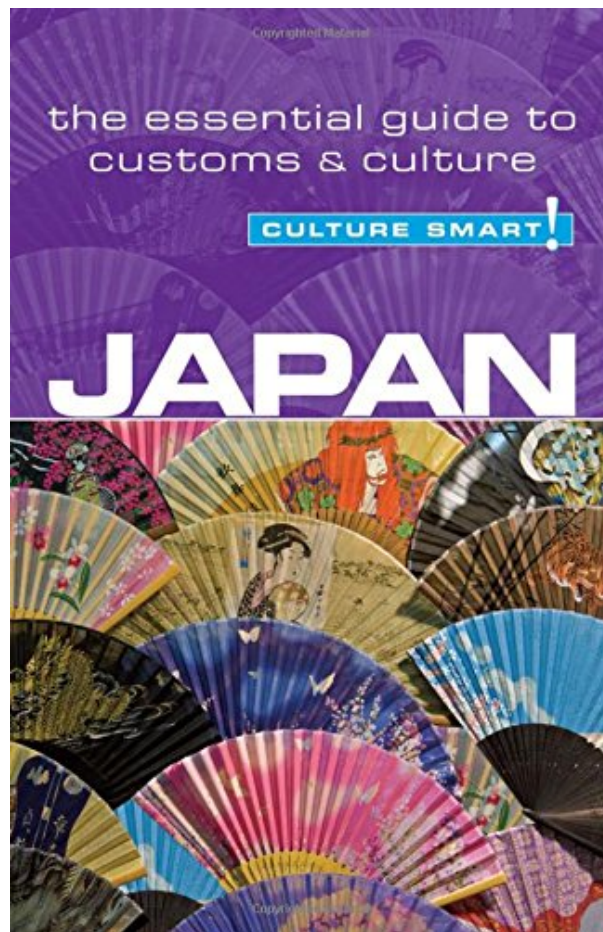
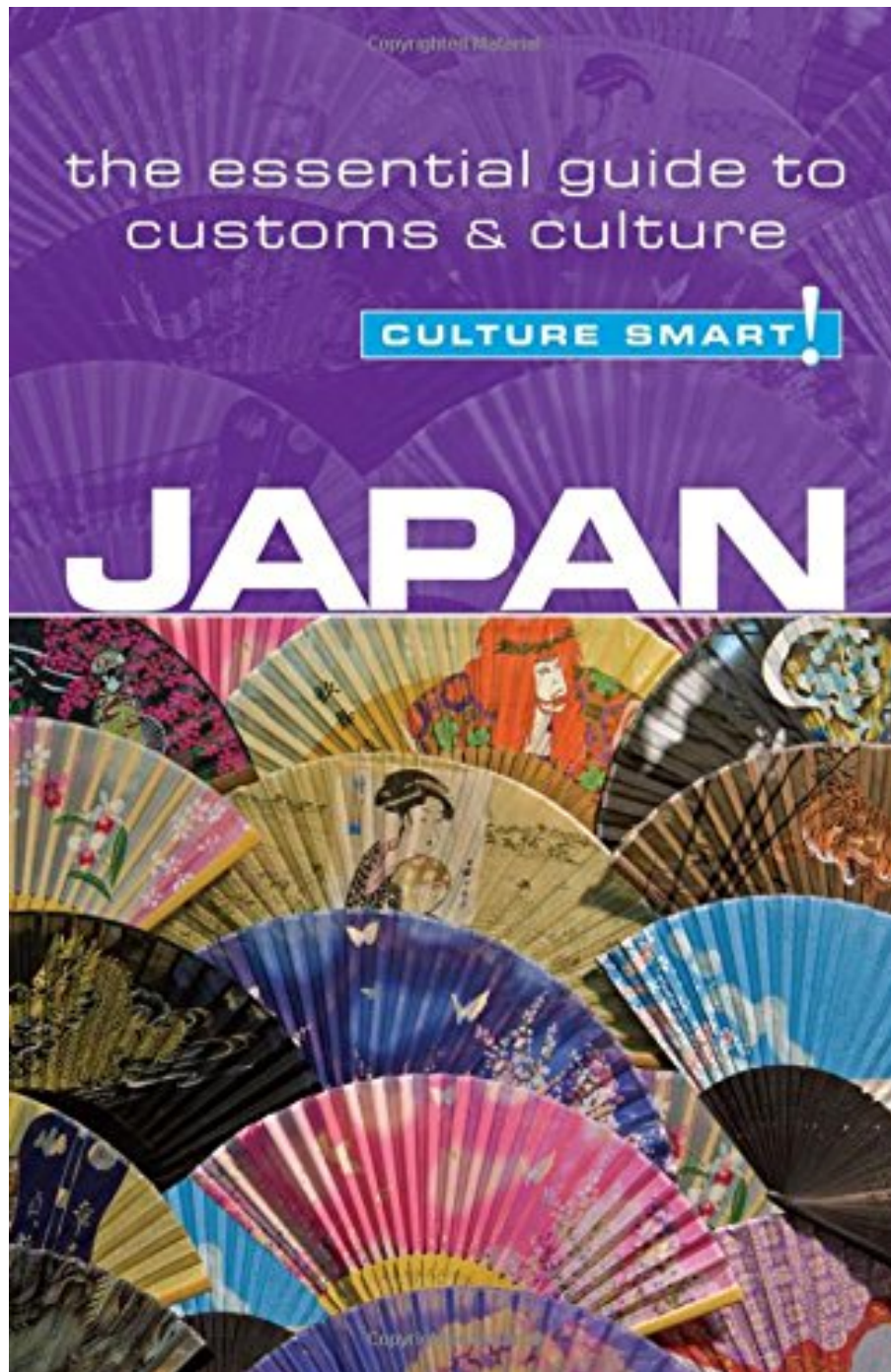


# **JAPAN - CULTURE SMART!: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CUSTOMS & CULTURE BY PAUL NORBURY**



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*Culture Smart!* has come to the rescue of hapless travellers, *Sunday Times Travel* - ...the perfect introduction to the weird, wonderful and downright odd quirks and customs of various countries, *Global Travel* - ...full of fascinating, as well as common sense,

## **About the Author**

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Japan is at a crossroads. The postwar economic miracle that brought it unprecedented development and prosperity is over. Since the publication of the first Culture Smart! guide, it has been overtaken by China as the world's second-largest economy. The balance of power in Asia has shifted and new players are entering the field. Loss of influence abroad, economic pressure at home, and the problems posed by a rapidly aging population present a real challenge to Japan's orderly and harmonious way of life, and to the very sense the Japanese have of themselves as a nation "apart." Traditional Japanese culture—based on a consensus-driven philosophy and underpinned by many protocols—is threatened by job insecurity, a growing class divide, and disillusionment with political leaders. But all is not lost. Japan is still a major economic power and cultural trendsetter, and the Japanese have a genius for innovation. The younger generation is open to change, women have a new confidence, and the country's technical and scientific research capability is as good as it gets. There is a growing ecological awareness that may well translate into new forms of eco-friendly industries. No one can predict how Japan will rise to the challenge, or what effect the changes will have on how people live, think, and behave. Paul Norbury's revised and updated edition of Culture Smart! Japan will guide you through a shifting cultural maze, and help you make your visit to this important, dynamic, and creative society a rich and mutually rewarding experience.

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Most helpful customer reviews

33 of 33 people found the following review helpful.

Very good

By MASAHIRO YOSHIKAWA

Although I'm a Japanese, I bought this book out of curiosity because I wanted to know how our country was described in English. I looked through this book and I think this book is correct, except for some some trivial matters.

For example, in page 10, a list says Japanese paper currencies are only 10000, 5000 and 1000, but in fact, there is a 2000 yen note. In page 121, this book says "When the meal arrives at your table, say "go-chiso-sama"", But I have hardly heard this phrase in this situation.

Having said that, I recommend that you read this book if you want to learn Japan from a small and compact book. Most contents are basically correct.

44 of 46 people found the following review helpful.

A different approach to Japanese culture

By Sunshine S.

This book seemed a little more balanced than most in its approach to discussing and explaining the ins and outs of Japanese culture.

At first, I thought it seemed negative and even possibly sarcastic at times. I was annoyed and almost offended. I wasn't sure I wanted to keep reading. But I was finding things in it that I hadn't learned from discussions, animes, online information, or the other books I had read such as "The Japanese Way" and "Japanese Cultural Encounters."

It didn't include personal stories nor was it academic-style. It is easy to read and easy to find what you're looking for. It's worth reading, re-reading, and keeping as a reference. It contains some useful information, including dos and don'ts and some of the not so glamorous realities of Japanese life, culture, economy. I did find some typos, which was surprising, but not anything big. The writing style was less personal and has a "unique" style compared to other Japanese culture books.

I liked it a lot and found it a good addition to my collection of books to understand the Japanese mind and way of life.

I recommend adding it even if you have other culture books.

I will note that it seems aimed at probably Americans or Europeans who have not lived in Japan, who do not speak Japanese, and who have not traveled to Japan. It's not extremely in-depth, but more a small, compact guidebook to get out when you need it and a quick, handy read overall.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Real, Practical Knowledge

By Leotol Stoy

Most books on Japan are written by scholars. As such, they have little utility in our day-to-day lives, being written in the academically sterile style preferred by a large (but thankfully dwindling) portion of the professorial population. This book is not written in the style of practiced academics, and that difference is the foundation of its utility.

As an expat (soon to be recovered), I appreciate how this book is written. When you live, visit or otherwise interact in a meaningful way with a group of people who do not share your cultural norms it is of utmost

importance to understand exactly how they differ from you, and in what ways you will be able to bend the rules, and in what ways you must conform if you hope to expect a positive reception.

The best example of this cultural norms explanation can be found in the extended discussion the book gives over to gift-giving. In Japan, gift-giving is a reciprocal event that essentially begins and supports the maintenance of a relationship. As a Westerner, the expectations of gift-giving are different (one-sided gifts tied to specific events), and to take a Western view would damage, rather than strengthen, the relationship because your one-shot gift would convey a different message than what you intend to the recipient. This is, of course, just one example, and the book delves into many more areas that collectively comprise Japan's culture (food and eating habits, business expectations, role of women, etc.).

The strength of the author's voice is also what many might find to be his great weakness: the conversational tone carried throughout the book. When he conveys his message on gift-giving, and how as a Westerner you view gift-giving this way, and the Japanese another, it is as if the two of you are sitting in a coffee shop, discussing your upcoming trip and how you are planning to go about it. That is profoundly important, as it allows you to absorb the information naturally. His writing draws unforced attention to salient points that might otherwise be lost in a more rigid presentation.

As you may have guessed, both from the content of my review and other reviews written about the book, the book is primarily aimed at a Western (and especially an American) audience. There is further emphasis placed on the business angle, though that really only amounts to maybe 5-10% of the book's content. The vast majority will benefit any traveller to Japan, not just those who intend to strike business deals or work with an embassy. Highly recommended for those who would like real, practical knowledge for interacting with the most prosperous Eastern culture of the modern era.

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