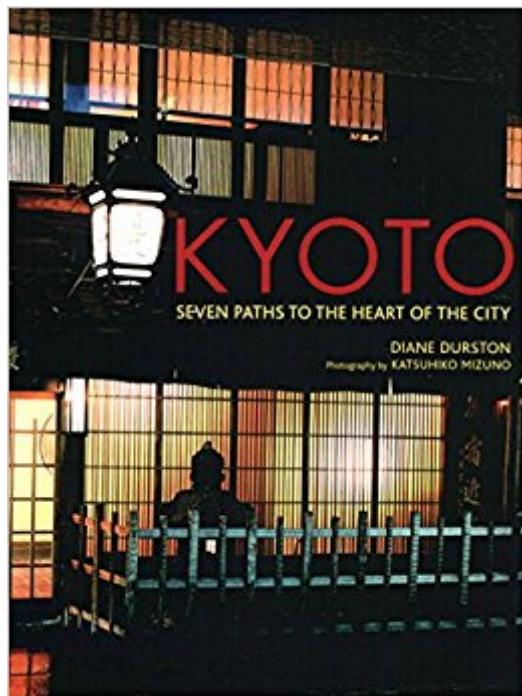


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# Kyoto: Seven Paths To The Heart Of The City



## Synopsis

What better way to see Kyoto than at dawn, when the back streets and alleys of this 1,200-year-old city are still under the spell of the past? Old folks fuss about with their bonsai and laundry poles, pausing to chat on their way to the neighborhood shrine with flowers and morning prayers. Knock-kneed white egrets stalk the stream beds for breakfast, and the giant bronze temple bells awaken the former capital of Japan every morning as they have done for centuries. Through wars, fires, famines, tyrants, and now rapid modernization, the old neighborhoods of Kyoto are the places where the customs and traditions of this fascinating city, with its confusing blend of old and new, have managed to survive. American writer and former Kyoto resident Diane Durston introduces seven must-see precincts of this ancient capital city, including four Historic Preservation Districts. Among them are the world-famous geisha quarter, the kimono textile neighborhoods, the sake-brewing area of Fushimi, and the tea-growing region of Uji. Durston weaves together local lore and historical sites to create a panoply of provocative walking tours that take the reader back in time to the elegance of earlier days. Accompanying each section is a full-color map and the fine photography of Katsuhiko Mizuno, a Kyoto native and one of the city's most famous photographers. Sections highlighting Kyoto crafts, cuisine, festivals, and tourist essentials round out this attractive volume, making it the perfect introduction -and guide- to one of the world's most evocative cities.

**FEATURES**

- \* Photographs by one of Kyoto's most renowned photographers
- \* Locations of the most important Historic Preservation Districts
- \* Detailed maps and suggested routes
- \* Scenic and little-known walking paths
- \* Completely revised and updated information

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Everyone that loves Kyoto knows that Diane Curston is its modern poet laureate." •Pico Iyer "Diane Durston's books are classics and have not been superseded by more recent publications." •The New York Times "... an eloquent look at seven neighborhoods where everyday life in Japan continues despite the crush of modernity." •Seattle Post-Intelligencer "Explore the hidden beauty of historic neighborhoods with seven walking tours that transport visitors back to more elegant times." •Endless Vacation

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, including *Old Kyoto: A Guide to Traditional Shops, Restaurants and Inns*, now in its fifteenth printing and considered by many a travel classic. Durston has worked extensively as a writer, consultant, and event coordinator on Japanese and Chinese culture for museums, universities, and corporations for the past fifteen years. In 1995, Durston moved to Portland, Oregon, where she is currently the Special Projects Director of the Portland Art Museum. KATSUHIKO MIZUNO is a professional photographer based in Kyoto. After graduating from Doshisha University and the Tokyo College of Photography, he forged a career shooting traditional scenes in and around Kyoto. He has over a hundred books to his name in English and Japanese, including *Landscapes for Small Spaces: Japanese Courtyard Gardens*. Mizuno lives in a renovated machiya house in Kyoto, and runs the Machiya Photo Museum.

Kyoto is a bit of a maddening city. Most famous cities dazzle you with their charm, overwhelm the senses, and create larger-than-life impressions: I think of the first time I wandered into New York's Times Square, emerged from a metro station to encounter the madness that occurs when the Champs Elysees and eleven other roads combine to circle the Arc de Triomphe, stood amazed by the enormity of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, or bathed in the sea of humanity and neon lights encountered at the Shibuya "scramble crossing" in Tokyo. Kyoto is much more demure and prefers to keep its secrets hidden away, out of view of the hoi polloi (or at least the camera toting tourist). I remember my first encounter with Kyoto more than a decade ago, stepping off the train with visions of what this ancient capital must look and be like, only to be confronted with a massive, modern, and somewhat generic and sterile train station. Exiting the station, one encounters a sea of nondescript concrete buildings and the orange and white monstrosity that is Kyoto Tower. I visited the main sights and was duly impressed by the wonders that are Kiyomizu-dera, Kinkaku-ji, Nijo-jo, etc. ... but even these were often "enjoyed" in the midst of a crush

of school children shouting "Haro!", tour groups with identically dressed (and sharp-elbowed) grannies, and clueless foreigners exposing much more skin than would be acceptable to Japanese sensibilities. I enjoyed Kyoto, but left a bit bewildered by this modern city that seemed to lock up its historical sites in crowded, closed off pockets, like animals in a zoo. Since then, I have been back to Kyoto at least a dozen times, and with each visit I appreciate more and more that the way to enjoy Kyoto (and see the REAL Kyoto) is to get off the beaten path and away from the tourist throngs. Even this is easier said than done, because the majority of the paths (beaten or otherwise) in Kyoto really are generic, uninteresting messes of concrete buildings and electrical wires. But when one \*does\* find that magical lane or alley with old Kyoto machiya townhouses, the small temple hidden away, quiet except for the chanting of a monk, and fragrant with a thousand years of burnt incense, or the tranquil bamboo forest half-hidden by pre-dawn mists, one finds the Kyoto he or she has been looking for, waiting to be found by the traveler experienced enough and patient enough to know where to look. This is where Diane Durston's book comes in. This book is far from comprehensive, and what it does cover is often not on the main "must see" checklist of Kyoto sights. But, I daresay that someone who walks these "paths to the heart of the city" will have a deeper, more meaningful and profound experience (and deeper understanding of Kyoto) than someone just riding the Raku Buses, nose firmly entrenched in Lonely Planet Japan and checking off the must see sights along with the rest of the crowd. Even for the first time visitor to Kyoto, many of these walks are easy to incorporate into even the shortest trip to the city. After visiting the famous Kiyomizu-dera, stroll down Sanneizaka and Ninenzaka, past the quaint shops and teahouses, and continue on through the easy-to-miss Ishibe-koji and down to Yasaka-jinja. Before or after a show at Gion Corner, stroll the streets around the theater and the willow-draped Shirakawa canal where one might catch sight of a geisha (or at least a maiko). Take the time to visit the Fushimi Inari shrine, perhaps on a trip to or from Nara. Make the effort to travel up to Arashiyama, even though it's a bit out of the way. Even better, use this book along with Durston's "Old Kyoto", full of excellent ideas for shopping, eating, and sleeping in Kyoto. I just wish I had come across Durston's books the first time I visited Kyoto ... then again, perhaps my struggles to find the "real" Kyoto made me appreciate it all the more once I did find it. Or at least, that's what I'll tell myself! Learn from my mistake--get this book and "Old Kyoto", sooner rather than later! You won't regret it.

Whether you are a world traveler or an armchair traveler, I highly recommend this book. This book is especially invaluable for anyone planning a trip to Kyoto, Japan. The photographs are superb and will help you decide which sites to see if your time is limited. The very best of Kyoto is included here

with excellent text, amazing photos, and easy-to-follow maps. I used this book to plan a week in Kyoto and found it so easy to locate all of the beautiful places that are illustrated in the book. (I was pleased to meet the photographer while in Kyoto. What great hospitality!) Whether you travel to Japan or not, you will surely enjoy this wonderful book. I bought more copies for my friends!

Excellent guide on Kyoto and its different neighborhoods. Includes information that you don't readily find in the mainstream guide books. Photos are of high quality as well! I bought this book to gather more information for a future trip to the beautiful city of Kyoto! I highly recommend it if you are traveling to Kyoto, and even if you've already been there (as I have) and you just want to learn more about the wonderful city!

Diane's writing is wonderful! Not if this is the best book for a first time Kyoto visitor, but for someone wanting to get deeper into the old Kyoto this is a good choice.

Good coffee table book. Looking forward to our trip to Kyoto

Excellent guide

What i was looking for

Beautifully photographed and considered essays on Kyoto. The author shares her knowledge of crafts, history, culture, religion, the arts in such a way as to draw the reader into the magical spell of old Kyoto. It is like a return visit.

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