



Excursion Guide

Japan

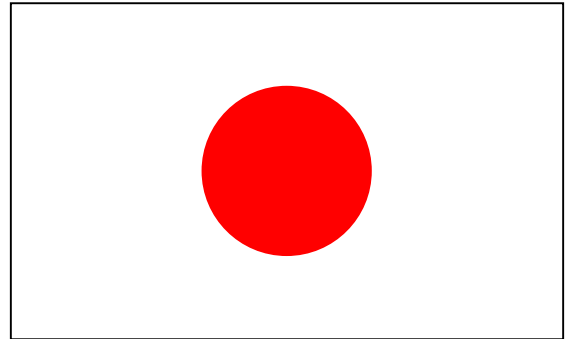
Table of contents:

Page 1: **Folktale, Legend or Myth**

Page 2: **Five Facts**

Page 3: **Bibliography**

Page 5: **Supplemental materials**



Read Aloud Folktale, Legend or Myth:

The Beckoning Cat: Based on a Japanese Folktale by Koko Nishizuka (Holiday House, 2009): This is a clear, concise telling of the origins of the familiar Lucky Cat or Beckoning Cat. The story does not depend on the illustrations, so can be read aloud without them. The action keeps the reader engaged, and there is some dialogue.

“Bunbuku Chagama/The Lucky Cauldron” from *A Treasury of Japanese Folktales* by Yuri Yasuda (Tuttle, 2010): This is a sweet story about a clever shape-changing badger and the humans he interacts with. It includes humor and dialogue, and teaches a lesson about kindness. It is shorter than *The Beckoning Cat*. Out of the entire *Treasury*, this story was the most appropriate length for inclusion in a Tales & Travel program, and the story moved more quickly than others in the collection.

Remember to:

- Greet each person individually
- Use a globe or large map to show each person the starting point and destination
- Engage people in informal conversation
- Include supplemental materials such as music, souvenirs, coloring pages, or food to enhance the program



Five Facts About Japan

1. Japan is over 1,800 miles long and is made up of a chain of nearly 4,000 islands.
2. The highest point in Japan is Mount Fuji, which is over 12,000 feet tall.
3. The first people arrived in Japan over 10,000 years ago. They lived in caves and underground homes.
4. Japan makes more vehicles than any other country: over 12 million every year!
5. The bullet trains in Japan travel over 180 miles per hour, and are the fastest trains in the world.



Annotated Bibliography

Unless otherwise specified, the non-fiction books listed here have many color photographs and images (but not cartoon-style illustrations); and they do not have an intimidating or distracting amount of text on the page. Although many of the selections are children's books, they are not obviously juvenile in their layout and illustrations.

Top Selections

Eyewitness Travel: Japan by John Hart Benson (Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2013): Although there is more text in this book than perhaps any other on the list, the quality of the photos is very good. There is a broad range of photos, including nature, people, and urban life; and there are also many maps of different cities and regions. There are enough images that, despite the text, it could be browsed and enjoyed for a long time.

Japan by Barbara Somervill (Children's Press, 2012): This book has more text than the other young adult selections listed here; but the book covers a broad range of topics, so there are a great deal of accompanying photographs, some on topics that aren't covered as well in other selections. Topics include: manga and art, nature, history, technology, religion, and more.

Japanese Prints by Gabriele Fahr-Becker (Taschen, 2007): Many people are familiar with Japanese prints; perhaps they are the best known Japanese "export" here in the United States, aside from cars and sushi, of course. This book contains a large variety of color plates, showcasing many artists. It is likely that some of our readers will see something familiar (Hiroshige's famous *Mount Fuji*, for example), and that many people will be introduced to something new and beautiful.

Life in Ancient Japan by Hazel Richardson (Crabtree Publishing Company, 2005): This book contains many small images well-balanced with text and



white space (somewhat reminiscent of the Eyewitness layout, but smaller). It is illustrated with photographs and Japanese art. Topics include: warriors, trade, art, language, religion, etc. No other book on this list covers ancient Japan.

National Geographic Countries of the World: Japan by Charles Phillips (National Geographic, 2007): This book includes multiple maps and many photographs. Since it is a National Geographic publication, all of the photos are beautiful! The familiar “yellow rectangle” of National Geographic shows up frequently, which might be a positive association for some readers. Topics include: geography, nature, history, people & culture, government.

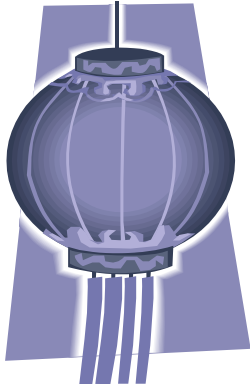
Alternate Selections

Celebrate! Japan by Robyn Hardyman (Chelsea Clubhouse, 2009): This book contains many color photographs and maps; images take up nearly as much space as the text. It also includes pronunciations of Japanese sayings, and some simple craft projects, which might provide a fun activity for the right group. It is the lowest reading level of any book listed here, and may feel juvenile to some readers. Topics include: geography, food, art, sports, festivals, and more.

Japan: The Land, Japan: The People, and Japan: The Culture, all by Bobbie Kalman (Crabtree Publishing Company, 2008, 2009): Other books in the *Land/People/Culture* series have large and colorful photographs, and the focused topics are a helpful complement to the broader coverage of the other books. Based on online reviews, this is true of the *Japan* collection of books as well, and so they are most likely an appropriate addition to this list. These are listed as alternate selections only because this review is not based on seeing the actual book.



Supplemental Materials



Souvenirs: small paper lanterns, Japanese flags, erasers or small toys shaped like sushi rolls, etc.



Food: hot tea, miso soup, Japanese rice cracker “party mix,” Botan rice candy

Music Suggestions (to search on <http://www.youtube.com> or in your own library’s collection): traditional Japanese music played on the biwa (four-stringed guitar), shamisen (three-stringed guitar), koto (Japanese zither), or shakuhachi (bamboo flute); Minyo style of Japanese folk songs

Free coloring pages are available on the Internet from helpful resources such as <http://www.coloring.ws> and <http://www.supercoloring.com>. All coloring pages are subject to their own terms of use, separate from the Tales & Travel Creative Commons License. The following links are suggested for this Excursion: Maneki Neko from Coloring Castle (<http://www.coloringcastle.com/pdfs/manekineko/manekineko03.pdf>)

