

日本
静寂と喧騒

(Nihon shizukade sawagi)

Japan
Tranquility and tumult

Nicolas Wauters

Lannoo



Echizen-Ōno Castle in Ōno

	Foreword 前書き	5
	Mount Fuji 富士山	8
	Tokyo 東京	16
	Asakusa 浅草	44
	Shinjuku 新宿	54
	Shibuya 渋谷	64
	Akihabara 秋葉原	74
	Train 電車	82
	Kantō 関東	92
	Kyoto 京都	102
	Religion 宗教	120
	Rules 規則	128
	Osaka 大阪	134
	Gastronomy 食事	144
	Yokohama 横浜	152
	Kobe 神戸	158
	Earthquakes 地震	164
	Kōyasan 高野山	168
	Matsumoto 松本	176
	Kyūshū 九州	184
	Hokkaidō 北海道	194
	Acknowledgements あとがき	208



'From a childhood fascination...

Fascinated since my childhood by Japan and in particular by Tokyo, as much for its ultra-modern aspects as for its traditional side, I have been living there since 2013 with my Japanese wife, Midori. Having spent years wandering the streets of the capital, on foot, by train or subway, I discovered this magical and atypical city, its inhabitants, its crazy rhythm, its culture, and its paradoxes. I quickly realized that the immensity of this city makes it difficult to completely understand.

I then decided to create my own company to help tourists discover the city in the best way possible according to their availability and expectations. My greatest satisfaction today is witnessing the wonder of travelers when they walk through the city for the first time.

The growing interest that 5,000 or so travelers have shown for my work as a guide in Tokyo, but also throughout Japan, has allowed me to expand my activity to photography. That's why, since 2019, I combine my activities of guide and photographer to propose photo workshops on the archipelago.

... to a photobook

In this beautiful book of photos, I am happy to share with you my love and perception of Japan, far from the usual stereotypes. I wanted to show Tokyo and its impressive infrastructures, its ancient and modern architectures, all sublimated by an atypical calm and serenity that contrast with the image we have of Japan.

Conceived as a travel diary, it will help you discover the most interesting places of the archipelago and its grandiose natural sceneries, its traditional as well as contemporary culture, themes such as religion, trains, codes, Mount Fuji, the emblem of Japan...

A picture being worth a thousand words, I preferred to stick to short texts.

I wish you a nice discovery of Japan, with the hope to share with you my passion for this fascinating and wonderful country. And, maybe, to meet you there soon!

/

Nicolas Wauters

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富士山

(Fuji-san)

Mount Fuji



Who hasn't heard of Mount Fuji? A symbol of Japan as iconic as the national flag, the venerated Fuji-san, as it is called in Japanese, inspires as much as it impresses with its 3,776m height.

As the highest point of the archipelago, Mount Fuji is also visible from many places in Japan.

In Tokyo, climbing up one of the many panoramic skyscrapers is enough to discover Mount Fuji in the early morning, while having breakfast, or at the end of the day under a marvellous sunset, with a cup of tea.

With its perfectly conical shape, the volcano, whose summit is covered by snow for a good part of the year, continues to fascinate – starting with artists who have already dedicated an infinite number of prints, haikus and books to it.

Revered as a deity since ancient times, Fuji-san has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site since 2013 as a sacred place and a source of artistic inspiration.

Only recently accessible to women

From July to September, more than 250,000 people climb its slopes and, throughout the year, millions of tourists, mainly Japanese, crowd around the famous mountain.

However, throughout history and due to the prohibitions imposed by the Shinto and Buddhist religions, Mount Fuji was for a long time inaccessible to the profane.

Therefore, it is only very late in the history of Japan that men started to climb this sacred mountain.

For the record, it is also important to note that women were not allowed to climb the volcano until 1830, and even then, in successive stages. Indeed, in the Japanese religion, women were excluded from sacred places for a long time.

A wise man or... a fool

A Japanese proverb says that the one who climbs Fuji-san once is a wise man and the one who climbs it twice is a fool... For your information, the author of this book has already climbed Mount Fuji seven times and regularly organises five different types of trails.

If you go to Japan and don't have the opportunity to see or climb the mountain, you should at least keep as a souvenir a ¥1,000 bill with the famous Mount Fuji on it.





Mount Fuji



Permanent snow on Mount Fuji



Mount Fuji from the entrance of Arakurayama Sengen Park

The local Fujikyuko Line connecting the stations of Ōtsuki and Kawaguchiko







東京

(Tōkyō)

Tokyo



Previously known as the bustling harbour town of Edo, Tokyo is a city built on water. As the city changed, Edo became Tokyo, or the 'capital city of the east', but its multiple charms remained. Old canals still surround the Imperial Palace, running through the gardens of this landmark architectural complex. And despite the horrors of the Second World War, the latter has retained an energy that gives unprecedented modernity to the capital today.

Nowadays, Tokyo extends its boundaries from the eastern coast of Honshu Island to the slopes of Mount Fuji in 23 special wards, each with its own strong identity.

The megalopolis is home to many currents of sensitivities and fashions: from the luxury boutiques of Ginza and the bustling Shibuya, via Shinjuku and its train station visited by 3.5 million daily travellers, to Harajuku, the epicentre of manga culture.

In addition to its backbone of efficient and punctual subway and train lines, Japan's capital city has built its reputation on countless skyscrapers and towers, such as the Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Skytree, which dominate the city despite the significant risk of earthquakes.

To understand the city, you should climb its towers to admire from afar the luxuriant gardens of the Imperial Palace and Togu Park, the residence of the heir to the throne, or discover, in the distance, the majestic Mount Fuji and its snowy peak. However, some attractions are better explored closer up, particularly the many temples and parks, such as Shinjuku Gyoen, a perfect illustration of a Japanese tradition that is still very much alive.

The capital's numerous inextricable footbridges, bridges, and crosswalks with insane geometric shapes bring a dizzying sense of possibility while at the same time forcing admiration, just as commuters feel when they take the automatic aerial metro on the city's Rainbow Bridge to the futuristic district of Odaiba.



The changing colors of the Rainbow Bridge, over Tokyo Bay





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Now more than ever, the secret to success is to keep learning forever. My family has always believed in me, and I would like to thank my mother who was certainly my first fan. Her unwavering support constantly pushes me to give my best, even though I know she is (obviously) not always very critical of my work – she marvels at all my shots, including those of my dogs...

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