Ancient Japan Pathfinders

Art and Literature

Asian Art
A collection of statues, pottery, jewelry, clothing, metal artifacts, and textiles. Includes full descriptions of where each item is from, its age, and what it was used for.

Diaries of Court Ladies
A collection of first-hand accounts of noble women living in Ancient Japan. A fascinating view of their culture. Includes illustrations of dress and dwellings.

Japanese Poetry
A small collection of classic Japanese verse.

Shinto
A brief introduction about Shinto.

Shinto Creation Stories
Ancient Japanese stories on the creation of heaven and earth, the gods, and more.

Japanese Creation Myth
The story of the beginning of the world.

Kabuki Theater
Information about the Kabuki Theater with links to Noh and Bunraku.

Kabuki Theater
Guide to Japanese Kabuki with links to suggested readings and related articles.

Kabuki Theater
More information from the British Museum on the Kabuki Theater.

Traditional Theater in Japan
A brief introduction to traditional theater in Japan.

Noh Theater
History of Noh Theater including information on the Noh stage, plays, and Noh masks and costumes.

Noh Costumes
Good website on the development of the Noh costume.

Banraku Theater
The Puppetry Home Page gives a brief introduction to the history of Banraku.
What is Haiku?

Explanation about what Haiku is with information on how to write Haiku with examples.

Haiku

Matsuyama's Haiku and its place in Japanese Culture

Haiku and Zen

Learn how Zen Buddhism significantly shaped the historical development of Japanese haiku.

Ikebana

General information on Ikebana.

Ikebana – Mastering Basic Styles

Learn about the three basic styles of Ikebana—nice photographs of the various styles.

Origami

Learn about the history of origami.

Japanese Origami – Paper Folding

More about the history of origami.

Zen Gardens

Learn some general information about the various Zen gardens.

Zen Garden Design

BBC News article about Zen garden design with a link to see a diagram of a Zen garden.

Ryoan-ji Temple

Read about the history of the Ryoan-ji Temple. Includes photographs of the meditation gardens.

Sand and Stone Garden

Brief information on the Sand and Stone Garden developed in the Muromachi Era.

Government and Politics

The Government of Ancient Japan

An introduction to governmental practices including taxes, reform edicts, regulation, corruption, and more.

General History

Ancient Japan

A comprehensive site on all topics of Ancient Japan including time periods, culture, maps, a glossary of terms, literature, language, Buddhism, women, and much more.

Early Japan

A short overview of early history with links defining terms and more details about each time period.
Nara and Heian Period (710-1185)
Outlines the decline of Chinese influence, the rising political rulers, the Hejji Rising and more.

Kamakura Period (1185-1333)
Outlines the rise of the Minamoto family, the Zen sect, and invasion.

The Muromachi Period (1333-1573)
Outlines the Imperial Courts, the ruling shoguns, influence of European traders and more.

Tour of Edo
This is a great interactive site where you take a tour of the 18th century city. Encounter shogun warriors, samurai, foot bearers, trade and entertainment, ride the ferry, and view the costumes of the day.

Daily Life in Ancient Japan

Merchants and Craftsmen
A brief explanation of the merchants and craftsmen—who were part of the class of chonin (townspeople).

Images of Merchants

Various Social Classes in Ancient Japan
Brief explanations of each of the social classes in Ancient Japan including the samurai, farmers, craftsmen, merchants and others.

Tea in Japan
A brief introduction to the Art of Tea with links to the history of tea, tea utensils, tea house and the tea ceremony. This site also contains a link to a glossary of helpful tea words.

Japanese Art of Tea
This site contains a timeline for the history of the tea ceremony. You will also learn about the four principles: harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility.

Chado: The Way of Tea
A good website to learn about Chado: The Way of the Tea.

The Book of Tea by Kakuzo Okakura
A very comprehensive source teaching you all you want to know about the Tea Ceremony, the Schools of Tea, the Tea Room, and Tea-Masters.

Japanese Teahouse
Learn about the architecture of the Japanese teahouse.

Zen Buddhism
A brief explanation of Zen Buddhism.
Shinto
A brief explanation of Shinto.

Buddhism
Some basic information on Buddhism.

Zen Principles – Samurai Principles
Learn the seven principles underlying the spirit of Bushido (Bu—martial arts; shi—warrior; do—the way)

Zen Nuns
Learn about the discrimination of the Zen Buddhist nuns during the Tokugawa period (1603 – 1868)

Samurai History
A brief history of the Samurai with a timetable of important dates.

Samurai Creed
View the creed of the Samurai.

Samurai Quotations
View quotations of the samurai over the years.

Bushido “The Way of the Warrior”
Learn about the origins and influences of the Bushido.

The Sword, The Soul of the Samurai
Bushido made the sword its emblem of power and prowess. Learn more about the Bushido.

The Japanese Blade
Learn everything you ever wanted to know about the Japanese sword.

Arms and Armor
Learn what determined why, how, and to what extent arms and armor were decorated.

Decoration of Arms and Armor
Learn the techniques for decorating arms and armor.

Samurai Armor
A brief explanation of the Samurai.

History of Castletowns
Learn about the history of castles, castle structures, and castletowns.

Castletowns
Learn more about castletowns. This site includes a link to pictures of castletowns.
Background on Castletowns

This site will give you the background of Castletowns.

A History of Japanese Clothing

This site provides a lot of information on clothing for men and women. It also provides information on footwear, children’s clothes, as well as fabric colors and patterns.

Japanese Clothes, Make-up and Hairstyles

A great site to learn about the clothing of the earliest hunters and gatherers, women’s kimonos, samurai clothing, common people’s (farmers) clothing, footwear, as well as wedding clothing.

Women’s Kimono Sleeve Designs

Information about and pictures of women’s kimono sleeve designs.

Kimono Design

This site will tell you about the history of the kimono and also how to make and wear a kimono.

Kid’s Web Japan

This site has kid friendly information on Japanese houses, kimonos, Ikebana, and origami. A good general resource.