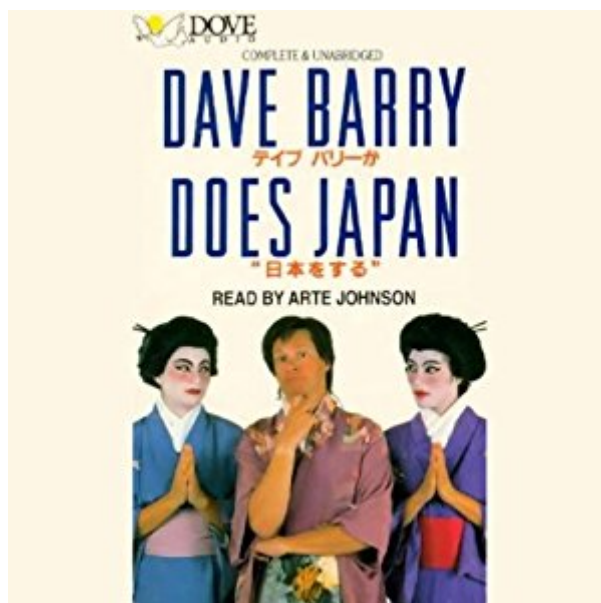


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Dave Barry Does Japan



Synopsis

Barry samples Japan's native cuisine (things that have eyeballs or suckers or other flagrantly unacceptable organs still attached to them); experiences the agonies of Kabuki and the ecstasies of karaoke; takes his first (and last) bath in public; and explores culture shock in all its humorous forms. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a great book for anyone who has spent a week or more in Japan (a layover at Narita for a few hours doesn't count). Sure, the cover looks really dopey and not even close to a close representation of real Japan, but the contents hit Japanese and American culture right on. I can't guarantee Kiwis, Canucks, Aussies or other English speakers will relate to it. If you like Dave Barry's dumb jokes, cheap shots, and self-deprecating humor and have been to Japan before, you'll probably love this book. If you parse his words and look for literal accuracy regarding Japanese culture you'll miss the point. Note to fellow Nikkei: Don't get too defensive. Some of the things he finds weird about Japanese people may apply to us as well, but keep in mind he makes as much fun of himself and other Americans as he does of the people he observed in Japan.

I've read at least a half-dozen of Barry's books, and this is BY FAR my favorite. My wife and I both laugh out-loud when we re-read it, and I have bought multiple copies to give to friends. What makes it so good? Barry at his best is an observer who steps back from daily life just far enough to notice how crazy everything is. So Random House had the brilliant idea to send him to Japan, thereby

giving him a brand NEW world in which to notice how crazy everything is! Not having been to Japan, I found myself learning along with Barry. Did you know that most streets in Tokyo have no names, and address numbers are not ordered? Imagine trying to find the trendy new bar under those circumstances... Did you know that the word "No" is considered impolite in Japan? Imagine trying, as an American, to make arrangements with a Japanese travel agent when you don't understand that she's trying to tell you that some of your preferred travel options don't exist... The results, at least in Barry's hands, are hilarious. Yet there are some folks who've given this book just one or two stars. Their complaints seem to come in two categories: Barry is smug, superior, and ignorant, laughing at things just because he doesn't understand them; and/or the book just isn't funny. Some of the people arguing that the book isn't funny mention having lived in Japan, and I can understand that the book would be less amusing for them, because the craziness Barry is observing would already be familiar. If that doesn't apply to you, then I say trust the majority of reviewers here who have found the book to be quite funny. As for Barry being a smug, stereotypically ugly American: he is NOT laughing at the Japanese and their culture, but at the MISMATCH between himself and the Japanese--either enjoying the sheer novelty of the unfamiliar or poking fun at his own ignorance. No one who reads the whole book with open eyes can fail to notice his admiration for many aspects of Japanese culture (nor his preference for the individuality and self-expression of American culture). And no one who reads the serious chapter about his visit to Hiroshima can justify calling Barry arrogantly pro-American. My bottom line: this book is very interesting, very funny, and deeply humane. If Barry has written anything better, I haven't read it.

This book kept popping up on my recommendations, and I finally gave in and bought it. I have recently been wading through a series of Japan-orientated intercultural texts, and this book was a breath of fresh air. It is equal parts funny and insightful. The book takes an irreverent, realistic look at Japan. This is the point of view of the tourist. Some things, like plastic squid and Sumo, really are strange to us. Dave Barry is not afraid to call a spade a spade. He does not attempt to cross-examine his own cultural biases, but just is happy to say "Look at that. Weird." Also, he is a very funny writer. I have not read any Dave Barry books before this one. The chapter on Hiroshima shows that he can be respectful as well as silly. That chapter really made the book for me. My only real complaint with the book is that it is "thin." It is a short book, with a large font. Unlike humorous travelogues by Bill Bryson, this book has very little depth and is no more than a "surface glance" at a small part (Tokyo and Kyoto) of Japan. However, Dave Barry is honest about this and says so straight out. Still, it is lots of fun.

My kids ages 14 and 17 are very much into Anime and all things Japanese right now. We still have stories together at night as a family time. Dave Barry is one of those fantastic writers whose writing is talented enough to engage the teenagers and adults in the family. We all laughed so hard as we read it, multiple times I had to stop reading because our laughter was drowning out the story! You don't have to be a fan of Japanese to find it funny but if you are it adds more layers to the humor. There is also a serious and informative and sobering chapter on Hiroshima, not my kids favorite but educationally I think this would be an ideal book for a family trip for the family to read together.

I read this book very quickly. It is typical Dave Barry, in line with many of his other books. It is very funny, and he has a good grasp of what is strange/funny/usual in Japan. As an American who has lived in Japan for more than 7 years, I recognize that his book gives a very nice view of what a tourist visiting for a short time will take away. As expected, his insights are far different from my own, simply based on length of time. I would recommend it to anyone planning a vacation here, although I disagree with him that learning any Japanese prior to a visit will make the slightest difference.

Super funny. I recently rediscovered Dave Barry after not reading anything of his for years and years. Dang he's funny. Good, light bedtime reading. I'm learning a little bit about Japan too...it's nice to actually be able to have fun learning about stuff.

Typical Dave Barry humor, including some real howlers. But the book is dated: it's probably two decades out of date. Some of the things he experienced in Japan have really changed. Also he didn't do a lot of reading on Japanese culture before he went over so there are some pretty obvious cultural misunderstandings that could have been obviated. Time for Dave and his family to go back!

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