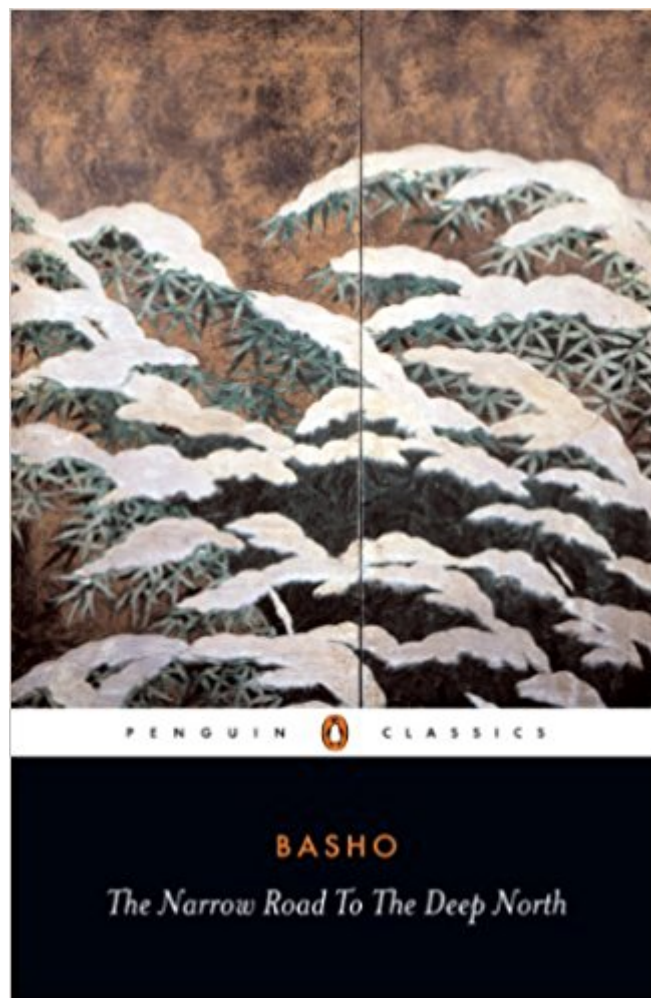




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# The Narrow Road To The Deep North And Other Travel Sketches (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

'It was with awe That I beheld Fresh leaves, green leaves, Bright in the sun' ~ In his perfectly crafted haiku poems, Basho described the natural world with great simplicity and delicacy of feeling. When he composed *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, he was an ardent student of Zen Buddhism, setting off on a series of travels designed to strip away the trappings of the material world and bring spiritual enlightenment. He wrote of the seasons changing, of the smells of the rain, the brightness of the moon, and beauty of the waterfall, through which he sense mysteries of the universe. There's seventeenth-century travel writing not only chronicle Basho's perilous journeys through Japan, but they also capture his vision of eternity in the transient world around him. ~ In his lucid translation Nobuyuki Yuasa captures the Lyrical qualities of Basho's poetry and prose by using the natural rhythms and language of the contemporary speech. IN his introduction, he examines the development of the haibun style in which poetry and prose stand side by side. this edition also includes maps and notes on the texts. ~ For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.~

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Matsuo Basho (1644-94) was the greatest of the Japanese haiku poets. The vitality and flexibility his genius gave to the strict 17-syllable form brought haiku to a level of immaculate perfection. In later life Basho turned to Zen Buddhism and the travel sketches in this volume reflect his attempts to cast off earthly attachments and reach out to spiritual fulfillment. The sketches are written in the haibun style--a linking of verse and prose. The title piece, in particular, reveals Basho striving to discover a vision of eternity in the transient world around him and is his personal evocation of the mysteries of the universe.

Basho, the Japanese poet and diarist, was born in Iga-ueno near Kyoto in 1644. He spent his youth as companion to the son of the local lord, and with him he studied the writing of seventeen-syllable verse. In 1667 he moved to Edo (now Tokyo) where he continued to write verse. He eventually became a recluse, living on the outskirts of Edo in a hut. When he traveled he relied entirely on the hospitality of temples and fellow-poets. In his writings he was strongly influenced by the Zen sect of Buddhism.

This is a fantastic book, and gorgeous translations. If I had to quibble, I'd say that I wish the author had been able to include the Japanese versions throughout the introduction. When there are Japanese versions before the translation, it's great to speak them aloud and hear how they roll off the tongue, how they rhyme, how they hang together in Japanese. But really, the best translations of Basho I've found. Very glad I bought this. Wish it was on Kindle!

The translation of the prose is fine, but the translator chose to render the haiku in English in four-line stanzas, which makes the haiku overly wordy and required adding unnecessary words into the translation for padding. I'm most certainly not an advocate of enforcing 17 syllable constraints on haiku translations, but these poems don't even read like haiku. The translator admitted it was an experimental translation technique; the experiment failed. If you want to read Basho's travel essays, this book is where to find them, but don't get it for the haiku.

In this digital device-obsessed world here is a clear, clean story of a humble Haiku poet on the road in 1600's in Japan. The immediacy of quiet, raw nature and the ease of walking a path day after day are what makes Basho's world achingly beautiful and desirable. A classic. I have had this book since the early 70's and it still inspires and soothes and reminds me of what our bodies and souls truly need to thrive: simplicity and nature.

The late seventeenth century in Europe was the Baroque period, a time of empty bombast and meaningless rhetoric, at least in poetry. In contrast, Japanese poets were seeking to cast off all artifice and reduce their poetry to the bare essentials. The greatest of these was Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), widely regarded as the finest exponent of the haiku. "The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches," translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa, is a collection of several of Basho's travel diaries, including "The Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton," "A Visit to the Kashima Shrine," "The Records of a Travel-Worn Satchel," "A Visit to the Sarashina Shrine," and "The Narrow Road to the Deep North." Basho was no mere tourist. His insatiable wanderlust stemmed from a desire to lose himself, to become one with nature. A Zen Buddhist, Basho was on a quest for Enlightenment. Whether he was successful is beyond my competence to say. Although he often travelled alone, at other times he was accompanied by friends and disciples, and on the way he met many people who helped him--Buddhist priests, samurais, wealthy merchants. Basho's prose and verse display a deep love of nature, spiritual richness, and a sense of history. His work also conveys a strong sense of loneliness and melancholy and he doesn't shy away from the less romantic aspects of travel--getting lost, being thrown off a horse, staying in cheap, flea- and lice-infested inns. He also displays a self-deprecating sense of humor. Those of us who learned to write haikus in school may be puzzled by Yuasa's translations, which are in four lines instead of the standard three. Yuasa's introduction explains that he found it impossible to convey the richness of Basho's thought in only three lines. The translation is highly readable, with a helpful introduction (which takes up a third of the slender volume) and notes, which are essential for those of us with little background in Japanese history and culture. A book well worth reading and re-reading.

I expected to really love this, but I only like it. It's a bit hard to get into .. unlike Basho's poems (there are translated poems littered throughout of course). Interesting tidbits on history as it revolved around the writer. For something quick and breezy I wouldn't advise it; but if you're looking for information on the author and/or the time period its very good.

A book with five autobiographical travels, three of them being his expectant last journey of life, with required farwell party etc., of Basho with haiku injected by the author, his traveling companions, or persons met along the way. It was quite an interesting read on culture and the way of life in Japan during Basho's day. The book was satisfying and interesting as a travel journal and for a taste of Basho's personality and of the cultural mores of Japanese feudal society. A sense of the Japanese

appreciation of nature and of symbols in nature was also conveyed. Haiku seems to embody something beyond words, natural symbols that we observe everyday captured; a sometimes great ineffable meaning in the mundane. Some of the poetry was good, as far as the translation communicated, however quite a lot also seemed lost in translation that might have been expounded upon. Yuasa Noboyuki, the translator, and writer of the forward, might have done better by talking about these difficulties and that might have brought some light to many of the haikus. The translating haiku with all of the original sense is almost impossible, so I have been told. I also have been told that Ezra Pound expounded, someplace, on just how impossible translating haiku into English is. Noboyuki might have done better to expound on his difficulties translating Japanese haiku into English and his futile attempts to convey the totality of the haiku, which could have raised the vibrancy of some of them; it was vague effort that he included in talking about this aspect. The poems were charming, as were the autobiographical travel stories of Basho. A good read.

Journey with Basho if for no other reason than to see the world thru eyes of a of a remarkable man.

Beautiful

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