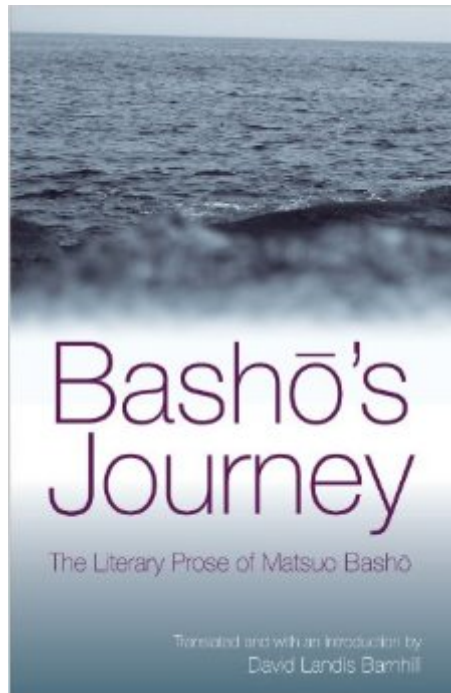


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# Basho's Journey: The Literary Prose Of Matsuo Basho



## Synopsis

Offers the most comprehensive collection of Basho's prose available, beautifully translated into English. In *Basho's Journey*, David Landis Barnhill provides the definitive translation of Matsuo Basho's literary prose, as well as a companion piece to his previous translation, *Basho's Haiku*. One of the world's greatest nature writers, Basho (1644–1694) is well known for his subtle sensitivity to the natural world, and his writings have influenced contemporary American environmental writers such as Gretel Ehrlich, John Elder, and Gary Snyder. This volume concentrates on Basho's travel journal, literary diary (*Saga Diary*), and haibun. The premiere form of literary prose in medieval Japan, the travel journal described the uncertainty and occasional humor of traveling, appreciations of nature, and encounters with areas rich in cultural history. Haiku poetry often accompanied the prose. The literary diary also had a long history, with a format similar to the travel journal but with a focus on the place where the poet was living. Basho was the first master of haibun, short poetic prose sketches that usually included haiku. As he did in *Basho's Haiku*, Barnhill arranges the work chronologically in order to show Basho's development as a writer. These accessible translations capture the spirit of the original Japanese prose, permitting the nature images to hint at the deeper meaning in the work. Barnhill's introduction presents an overview of Basho's prose and discusses the significance of nature in this literary form, while also noting Basho's significance to contemporary American literature and environmental thought. Excellent notes clearly annotate the translations. "Barnhill's approach to translation is straightforward and unfussy, aiming to be as accurate as possible, making his two volumes a highly serviceable compilation. They will be of great value to readers." — *The Japan Times* "Read cover to cover, the volume presents the breadth of Basho's prose. If you open it randomly, on almost every page you encounter haunting images of the landscape, village life, and literary culture of Japan. This book inspires us to stop and pay attention to the poetry of the world around us." —

Buddhadharma | Barnhill reveals the importance of narrative and social contexts in reading Basho. Barnhill's careful translations and notes reveal a poet both independent and pious. Above all, Basho's experience of "cultured nature" emerges unforgettably." — *The Providence Sunday Journal* on *Basho's Journey* and *Basho's Haiku* "Barnhill's translations maintain the Japanese originals' direct sparseness, and retain their dramatic sequence, which all too many translations unfortunately and unnecessarily sacrifice." — Taigen Dan Leighton, cotranslator of *Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A Translation of Eihei Shingi*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the latest books out on the travel journals of Matsuo Basho and this lovely book contains all five journals. The translator David Landis Barnhill has arranged the journals in chronological order to show how Basho's writing developed over the years. The journals included are 'Journey of Bleached Bones in a Field' [Nozarashi Kiko], 'Kashima Journal' [Kashima Kiko], 'Knapsack Notebook' [Oi No Kobumi], 'Sarashina Journal' [Sarashima Kiko], and 'The Narrow Road to the Deep North' [Oku No Hosomichi]. Basho's 'Saga Diary' [Saga Nikki] is also included along with a massive 80 of Basho's haibun (short poetic prose pieces that include haiku) and over 320 of Basho's haiku are scattered throughout the book, which also includes maps of each of the five journeys and extensive notes and a glossary.

For me, Barnhill's translations of Basho are among the finest available, capturing their brevity, succinctness and even a little of their poetry (as opposed to W.S. Merwin's prosy bread loafs). What is especially appreciated is having so much of Basho's prose work translated. I only hope he decides to translate Buson next. Japanese poets in English translation are woefully underrepresented.

Having walked some of the paths that Basho did, I simply love revisiting this book. It is a classic and anyone who enjoys haiku, haibun, or loves Japan and its culture would find this a plus on their shelves.

This is a wonderful work on 17th century Japan as experienced by Basho one of the countries greatest poets. More than the poetry they encompass, the journals allow one to travel on the roads which the poetry represents. It is easy to pick up and to put down again as one creates ones own poems on any day of any season.

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