



A Different Kind of Luxury: Japanese Lessons in Simple Living and Inner Abundance

Andy Couturier

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Raised in the tumult of Japan's industrial powerhouse, the eleven men and women profiled in this book have all made the transition to sustainable, fulfilling lives. They are today artists, philosophers, and farmers who reside deep in the mountains of rural Japan. Their lives may be simple, yet they are surrounded by the luxuries of nature, art, contemplation, delicious food, and an abundance of time. For example:

- Atsuko Watanabe is an environmentalist and home-schooler who explores Christian mysticism while raising her two daughters in an old farmhouse
- Akira Ito is an ex-petroleum engineer who has become a painter and children's book illustrator and explores the role of *chi* (life energy) in the universe through art and music
- Kogan Murata grows rice and crafts elegant bamboo flutes that he plays for alms in the surrounding villages
- Jinko Kaneko is a fine artist and fabric dyer who runs a Himalayan-style curry restaurant in the Japan Alps

By presenting the journeys of these ordinary—yet exceptional—people, Andy Couturier shows how we too can travel a meaningful path of living simply, with respect for our communities and our natural resources. When we leave behind the tremendous burdens of wage labor, debt, stress, and daily busyness, we grow rich in a whole new way. These Japanese are pioneers in a sense; drawing on traditional Eastern spiritual wisdom, they have forged a new style of modernity, and in their success is a lesson for us all: live a life that matters.

Andy Couturier is an essayist, poet, and writing teacher. He lived in Japan for four years where he taught, was a journalist, and worked on environmental causes. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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