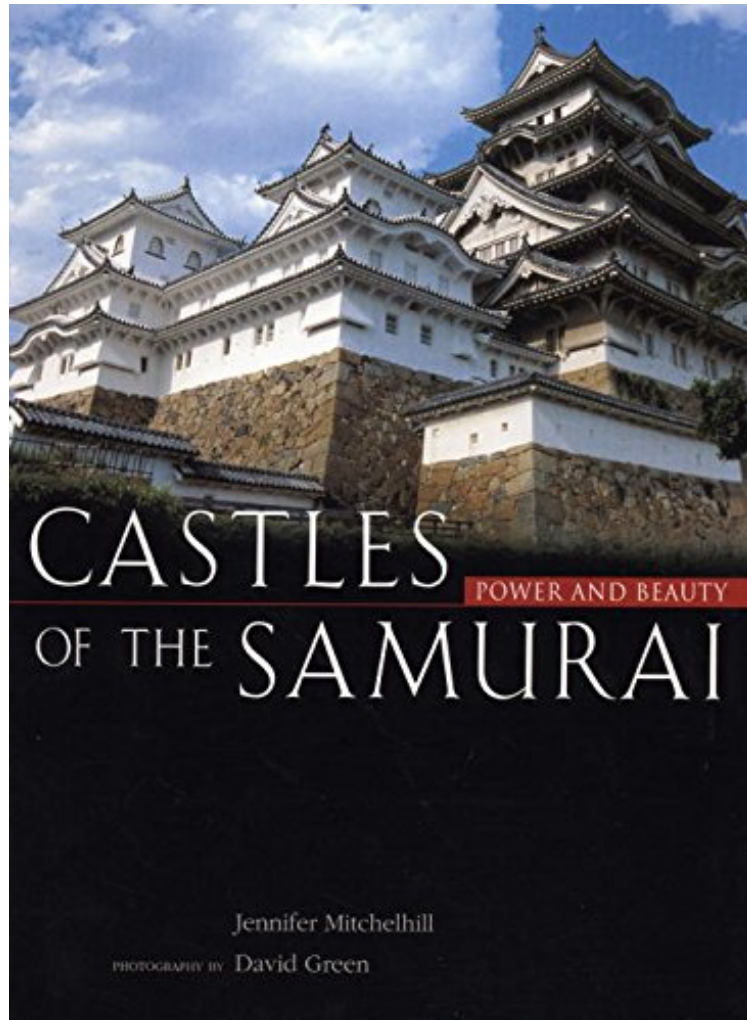


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Castles of the Samurai: Power and Beauty

Jennifer Mitchelhill

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WulfianAn excellent book but too short! Still great in many ways! Despite that I would recommend this book to anyone interested in samurai castles!

The Castles of Japan are both technical and aesthetic marvels. They are technical marvels in that they are perfectly suited to their roles of defensive fortresses and administrative centers in time of war. They are aesthetic marvels in that every curve and line reflects an extraordinary sense of beauty. How these castles came about, how they were built, and what their ultimate fate was, all this is depicted in sensitive prose and eye-opening photography. The book is divided into four parts. The first deals with the question of who built these castles and why, taking a incisive look at Japanese history and the internecine fighting between samurai clans. The second part takes up the castle as a fortress - the importance of its location, its layout, stone walls and moats, towers, gates, shooting holes, and stone drops. The third part considers the beauty of the castle as a symbol, explaining not only the intricate craftsmanship seen in structural detail but also the aesthetics of the samurai class itself. Whether for people who are interested in castles themselves and wish to compare Japanese castles with others they are familiar with, or for people who would like to know more about this unique example of world architecture, or for those who would like to add to their knowledge of samurai and Japanese culture, Castles of the Samurai provides a delightful visual treat and absorbing reading experience. The book also contains information for tourists who plan to visit the sites of the surviving castles.

From the PublisherThe castles of Japan are both technical and aesthetic marvels. They are technical marvels in that they are perfectly suited to their roles of defensive fortresses and administrative centers in time of war. They are aesthetic marvels in that every curve and line reflects an extraordinary sense of beauty. How these castles came about, how they were built, and what their ultimate fate was, all this is depicted in sensitive prose and eye-opening photography. The great period of castle building in Japan occurred in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when powerful lords such as Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu were striving to unite the nation. This was the time of the famous swordsman Miyamoto Musashi, who fought on the losing side in one of the decisive battles of this era. Over a hundred awe-inspiring castles were constructed in a short forty years. The book gives not only the background to this era, but also details the essential elements of castle construction, such as location, layout, walls, moats, towers, storehouses, gates, shooting holes, and more. Each of these elements is described and illustrated in such a way as to etch them on the mind. Last is the question of why the samurai of that time took such pains to make their castles things of beauty rather than unadorned, utilitarian strongholds. The answer to this question is found in the fact that the samurai were more than simple fighting men; they were also men of culture who had the power and the resources to express their aesthetic tastes even in the construction of castles. Written in sharp, clear prose, illustrated with powerful, full-color photographs, CASTLES OF THE SAMURAI is the perfect introduction to one of Japan's greatest architectural achievements. The book also contains a wealth of practical information for tourists who plan to visit the sites of the surviving castles.

About the AuthorDavid Green is a graduate in applied science with master's degrees in business administration and military history. The author of numerous articles on World War II and a keen photographer, his interest in Japanese castles began while he was teaching at a Japanese senior high school. He is married to Jennifer Mitchelhill and lives in Melbourne, Australia. Jennifer Mitchelhill is a marketing graduate who started her own business in design before commencing further studies in architectural history. While teaching English at a Japanese senior high school she undertook a research project on the rebuilding of Kanazawa castle. This book grew out of her research. She lives in Melbourne with her husband, David Green, and their son, Harvey.