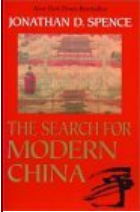


Subjects Covered:

History | Biography | Guidebook | Travelogue | Language | Religion | Philosophy | Fiction | Movie | Art

If you have any book to recommend, please do not hesitate to [let us know](#). Thank you for pitching in!

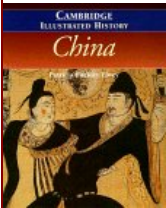
HISTORY



[The Search for Modern China](#)

By Jonathan D. Spence

The author teaches Chinese history at Yale University and this is one of his twelve books on the subject. A favorite among American college professors to teach with, this book provides an introduction to the past 400 years of Chinese history with reasonable amount of details.



[The Cambridge Illustrated History of China](#)

By Patricia Buckley Ebrey

The author is a historian at University of Illinois. Her other books include *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*.

If you are looking for a basic overview that compresses 8,000 years of a civilization into a single volume, this richly illustrated book would be a perfect choice making enjoyable reading.



[The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds](#)

By Jonathan D. Spence

This book examines the influence China has exercised on the Western imagination. Using literary, historical and travel writings from the 14th century to the present, Spence discloses the various ways China has been perceived. Total 279 pages.

[China : A New History](#)

By John King Fairbank

An introductory history book by the most renowned American scholar of China. It covers the country's long history from the earliest archaeological records to present. This short yet important work, completed two days before his death in 1991, will inspire readers to pursue more detailed accounts of Chinese history and culture. Another great book by John King Fairbank is [The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985](#).

[The Great Wall of China](#)

By Arthur Waldron

If you consider climbing the Great Wall one of the highlights of your life, you may as well study the history (or myth) of this Chinese landmark.

1421: The Year China Discovered America

by Gavin Menzies

from Booklist:

"Menzies makes the fascinating argument that the Chinese discovered the Americas a full 70 years before Columbus. Not only did the Chinese discover America first, but they also, according to the author, established a number of subsequently lost colonies in the Caribbean. Furthermore, he asserts that the Chinese circumnavigated the globe, desalinated water, and perfected the art of cartography. In fact, he believes that most of the renowned European explorers actually sailed with maps charted by the Chinese. Though most historical records were destroyed during centuries of turmoil in the Far East, he manages to cobble together some feasible evidence supporting his controversial conclusions. Sure to cause a stir among historians, this questionable tale of adventure on the high seas will be hotly debated in academic circles".

Margaret Flanagan, Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

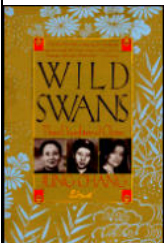
Mao: The Unknown Story

by Jung Chang & Jon Halliday

from Amazon.com

"In the epilogue to her biography of Mao Tse-tung, Jung Chang and her husband and cowriter Jon Halliday lament that, "Today, Mao's portrait and his corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of the Chinese capital." For Chang, author of Wild Swans, this fact is an affront, not just to history, but to decency. Mao: The Unknown Story does not contain a formal dedication, but it is clear that Chang is writing to honor the millions of Chinese who fell victim to Mao's drive for absolute power in his 50-plus-year struggle to dominate China and the 20th-century political landscape. From the outset, Chang and Halliday are determined to shatter the "myth" of Mao, and they succeed with the force, not just of moral outrage, but of facts. The result is a book, more indictment than portrait, that paints Mao as a brutal totalitarian, a thug, who unleashed Stalin-like purges of millions with relish and without compunction, all for his personal gain. Through the authors' unrelenting lens even his would-be heroism as the leader of the Long March and father of modern China is exposed as reckless opportunism, subjecting his charges to months of unnecessary hardship in order to maintain the upper hand over his rival, Chang Kuo-tao, an experienced military commander."

BIOGRAPHY



Wild Swans : Three Daughters of China

By Jung Chang

Chinese history of the past one hundred years comes to life through the story of three women, the author, her mother and grandmother. We consider this book a rare gem and highly recommend it to our customers. If you have time for just one book on China before your trip, this may well be the one.

[Click here to learn more about the author](#)



[Grace: An American Woman's Forty Years in China, 1934-1974](#)

By Eleanor McCallie Cooper & William Liu

Authored by Grace's cousin and son, this book was first recommended to us by a client from Simon Fraser University, where William Liu teaches. We fell in love with and highly recommend it to everyone.

This is a touching, real love story between an American woman and a Chinese engineer.

Based on a collection of letters, autobiographical fragments, and narrations from Grace's children and relatives, the book provides the reader with an insightful look into the tumultuous years of modern China.

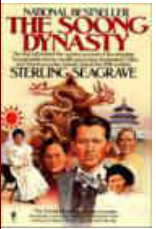


[Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now](#)

By Jan Wong

The author is a columnist with Canada's national newspaper The Globe and Mail. A third-generation Chinese Canadian born in Montreal, Jan Wong went to China in 1972 as one of the first foreign undergraduate students permitted to study at Beijing University since 1949.

As a devoted Maoist, she lived through her Cultural Revolution years the typical way any Mao's Red Guard lived. The book includes her observations of the Chinese pro-democracy movement of 1989, which occurred on her watch as The Globe and Mail's correspondent in Beijing.



[The Soong Dynasty](#)

By Sterling Seagrave

Mei Ling, wife of Chiang Kai-shek and the youngest of the three Soong sisters, died in New York in October 2003. Her death rekindled people's interest in the story of the Soong family, whose wealth and power dominated China and U.S.-Asia policy for decades in the last century. As the saying goes, Mei Ling loves power, Ai Ling loves money, and Ching Ling loves China being the wife of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Read the book and see how it all happened.

[Dragon Lady : The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China](#)

By Sterling Seagrave

Dowager Cixi ruled China from behind the curtain during the last decades of China's last imperial dynasty. There are numerous and conflicting accounts of Cixi's life; the author tries to provide a new point of view different from those held by Communist China and many scholars in the west.

[The Private Life of Chairman Mao](#)

Dr. Li Zhisui

Unlike the biography [Mao Zedong](#) written by Jonathan D. Spence, this book offers a personal and detailed account of the Chinese dictator's private life - Dr. Li was Mao's personal physician for 23 years.

Emperor of China : Self-Portrait of K'ang-Hsi

By Jonathan D. Spence

K'ang-Hsi (also spelled Kangxi) was one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history widely admired by the Chinese regardless of ideology. Literary renditions of his life are abundant while glorification of him through cinematic efforts and TV series is the rage of the day in China. Jonathan Spence made an ambitious attempt to recreate the diary of the great man.

Falling Leaves

By Adeline Yen Mah

The story of a little Chinese girl who grew up in a wealthy family yet her life was full of fear, isolation and pain. Thought to be bad luck that her mother died while giving birth to her, Adeline was scorned and rejected by her millionaire father and siblings. She was further tormented by the cold-hearted French-Chinese step-mother. The account of Adeline's survival of such a painful and destructive upbringing, especially her fruitless efforts trying to win her parents' love, is heart-rending. Despite all the suffering she had endured, the gifted girl eventually made her way to the US and built a successful life there.

Mr. China: A Memoir

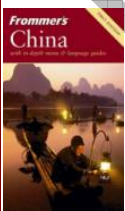
by Tim Clissold

A British business consultant trained in physics at Cambridge University but worked in accounting and auditing, Clissold joined up with a Wall Street banker-turned entrepreneur in the early 1990s and together they embarked on a decade-long adventure in China investing in a wide range of Chinese businesses scattered across the country. His conflicts with the managers of the Chinese businesses his firm invested in are so vividly narrated that it beats fiction! Clissold could easily turn his rivalry with Old Shi into a movie. Tim studied Chinese in Beijing for two years before meeting the American banker in Hong Kong and is very fluent in this acquired language. His narrations sometime go off track, which may be annoying to readers who already have a good understanding of China. But those off-topic observations show the depth of his knowledge of China, which may be the reason that his editor did not ask him to cut them out. This book chronicles so well China's chaotic but rapid economic expansion in the decade post-Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour [not organized by Laurus Travel!] in 1992 that anyone interested in China's explosive economic growth should read it.

GUIDEBOOK

Frommer's China

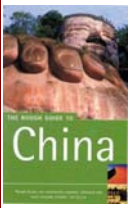
By Peter Neville-Hadley



The book covers China's top attractions plus introductions to unique places that are not often found in other China guidebooks. The author's informative and candid writing style makes the book highly readable.

Other books by the same author: [Beijing](#) & [China: the Silk Routes](#)

[Rough Guide to China](#)



by **Simon Lewis & David Leffman**

Many independent travelers find the Rough Guide to be very practical and use it for pre-trip planning at home as well as getting around while in China. The background sections of the book are outstanding, giving the reader a solid overview of Chinese history and culture. The primary sites of interest to travelers are adequately covered. Another nice feature is that the book weighs a mere 1.3 pounds despite the thoroughness of its content.

LANGUAGE

Some useful phrases with audio clips can be found at [China tour and travel - Useful Chinese Phrases](#). If you would like to go further, the language books published by Lonely Planet, [Mandarin Phrasebook](#), or [Mandarin Chinese: A Rough Guide Phrasebook \(Rough Guide Phrasebook Series\)](#) would be helpful. Berlitz's [Chinese for Travellers](#) is also a good choice.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

[Chinese Religions](#)

By **Julia Ching**

According to Book News Inc., the book is "a survey organized in three parts: the indigenous traditions (including the religion of antiquity, Confucianism, and Taoism); the religions of foreign origin (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity), with Neo-Confucianism considered as China's response to Buddhist influences; and the legacy of syncretism representing the fruits of union between the native and the non-native.

[Short History of Chinese Philosophy](#)

By **Yu-Lan Fung & Derk Bedde (Translator)**

The book has introduced generations of readers to Chinese philosophy and is justly considered a classic. Although viewed a bit outdated by some readers, this book remains an excellent and influential survey of Chinese philosophy. Author Fung Yu-Lan was one of China's most important philosophers and historians of philosophy of the 20th century.

[Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China](#)

By **A. C. Graham**

An excellent introduction to Pre-Qin philosophical argumentation, this classic book is especially profound in its coverage of Taoism and Mohism.

[Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy](#)

By **Philip J. Ivanhoe (Editor), Bryan W. Van Norden (Editor)**

The book translates selections from a variety of early Chinese philosophers, including Confucius and his later followers Mencius and Xunzi, the "Taoists" Laozi and Zhuangzi, Mohists, and others.

The Confucian Analects**By James Legge (Editor), Confucius (Author)**

Confucianism played and continues to play a vital role in the evolution of the Chinese civilization. The Confucian Analects form the doctrine that influenced the political, social and philosophical history of China. For serious readers, this book cannot be ignored. However, beginners might want to start with introductory books such as H. G. Creel's ['Confucius and the Chinese Way'](#) (out of print) and ['Confucius and the Analects: New Essays'](#).

Tao Te Ching : 25th-Anniversary Edition**By Lao Tsu, Gia-Fu Feng (Translator), Jane English (Translator)**

The Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu is the cornerstone of Taoism. Among the more than a dozen popular versions available, this one is loved by many readers for its clarity in translation as well as beautiful accompanying calligraphy and photographs.

Chuang Tzu (Also known as Zhuangzi)**By Burton Watson (Translator)**

You may find Chuang Tzu is more fun and more rewarding to read than Lao Tzu. Chuang Tzu is famous for his story of how he dreamed that he was a butterfly, and then woke up, but was not sure whether he was Chuang Tzu who had been dreaming that he was a butterfly, or was a butterfly, who was now dreaming that he was Chuang Tzu. Besides Burton Watson's version, A.C. Graham's ['The Inner Chapters'](#) and Victor Mair's ['Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu'](#) are also reliable translations.

ART**Chinese Art (World of Art)****By Mary Tregear**

A more current overview of Chinese art. The author is the Keeper of the Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. She offers a chronologically organized work that covers topics in brief survey form, using representative examples of bronzes, painting, lacquer ware, ceramics, jade, and stone carving.

Understanding Far Eastern Art**By Julia Hutt**

Published in 1987, this book is an authoritative and profusely illustrated introduction to the unique qualities and characteristics of the art of China, Japan, and Korea. Covering ceramics, sculpture, painting, prints, lacquer, textiles and metalwork, it opens up the art of the East to Western eyes unaccustomed to the cultural traditions of the Orient.

Another solid reference is [The Art and Architecture of China](#) by Sickmann and Soper.

FICTION/MOVIE

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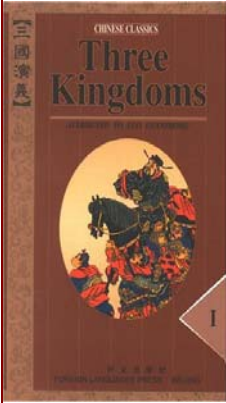
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[The Joy Luck Club](#), [The Bonesetter's Daughter](#) and [The Hundred Secret Senses](#)

By Amy Tan

We read them all and love them all!

[Three Kingdoms](#)



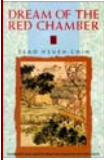
By Luo Guanzhong (Author), Moss Roberts (Translator)

Patrick Hanan wrote in New York Times Book Review:

"The subject matter of Three Kingdoms has long held an extraordinary grip on the Chinese imagination. . . . No less an authority than Mao Zedong asserted that when he set out on the campaigns that would ultimately bring him to power, Three Kingdoms was the book he valued most."

Editors at Amazon.com wrote:

"Three Kingdoms tells the story of the fateful last reign of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 200 A.D.) when the Chinese empire was divided into three warring kingdoms. Writing some twelve hundred years later, the Ming author Luo Guanzhong drew on histories, dramas, and poems portraying the crisis to fashion a sophisticated, compelling narrative that has become the Chinese national epic. This abridged edition captures the novel's intimate and unsparing view of how power is wielded."

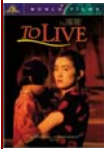


[Dream of the Red Chamber](#)

by Tsao Hsueh-Chin (Author)

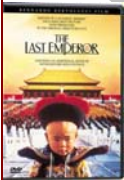
An abridged version of the most famous Chinese classical novel "The Story of Stone", a Chinese Romeo-and-Juliet love story and a portrait of one of the world's great civilizations. It was translated and adapted by Chi-chen Wang.

[Movies available in DVD](#)



[To live](#)

A movie directed by Zhang Yimou, the foremost director from China's influential "fifth generation" of filmmakers, casting China's best-known actress Gong Li and actor Ge You. This is a masterpiece that follows the sweep of Chinese history from the mid-1940's onwards through the hardships of one ordinary family living through chaos and extraordinary events. We Strongly recommend this movie to everyone. It will make you cry and laugh and want to watch it again and again.



[The Last Emperor](#)

This masterpiece of the 1980's inspired many Westerners to travel to China to enjoy the rich history and culture that is so beautifully captured in the visually stunning and very emotional true story of Pu Yi, the last emperor of China.

[Farewell My Concubine](#)

Directed by Chen Kaige, casting Leslie Cheung, Gong Li and Zhang Fengyi, it is a romantic tragedy

about two noted Peking Opera actors and their struggle living through the historical vicissitudes between 1924 and 1977.

[Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon](#)

Editors at Amazon.com wrote: "An epic set against the breathtaking landscapes of ancient China, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, combines the exhilarating martial arts choreography by Yuen Wo-Ping (The Matrix) with the sensitivity and classical storytelling of an Ang Lee film. The result is something truly unexpected: romantic, emotionally powerful entertainment".



[Blue Kite](#)

Directed by multi-talented and yet rebellious Tian Zhuangzhuang, this is the most acclaimed and controversial of all of the films coming out of the new Chinese cinema. Told from the perspective of a young boy, it traces the fate of an ordinary Beijing family as they experience the political and social upheavals in 1950's and 60's. After seeing it, you'll realize why the Chinese government is afraid of it and until this day still bans it.

TRAVELOGUES

[Riding the Iron Rooster](#)

By Paul Theroux

Theroux tried to capture the flavor and collective psyche of mainland China during the last quarter of the 20th Century. Many readers like his witty style and vivid description. But some readers find his overall negative view of the characters he encountered through the trip annoying. Also bear in mind that China has changed tremendously since Theroux's travel.

[The City of Light](#)

by Jacob D'Ancona, David Selbourne (Translator)

Translated from Italian, this book is a diary of an Italian Jewish merchant who arrived in Fujian, China four years before Marco Polo's claimed arrival in 1275. It provides accounts and comments of Chinese society and manners during the Southern Song dynasty, through the eyes of a Western man. Authentic or not, it makes an interesting read.

[The Desert Road to Turkestan \(Kodansha Globe\)](#) by **Owen Lattimore** is an account of a journey across the Gobi Desert by camel in the early part of the 20th century. The author was an American who was later persecuted in the anti-Communist witch-hunt of the 60s for his knowledge of China.

[Seven Years in Tibet](#) by **Heinrich Harrer** was originally published in 1953. This adventure classic recounts Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer's 1943 escape from a British internment camp in India, his daring trek across the Himalayas, and his happy sojourn in Tibet. He eventually became tutor to the young Dalai Lama. *You can buy from Amazon.com the movie version of the story starring Brad Pitt.*

River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze

by Peter Hessler

"In 1996, 26-year-old Peter Hessler arrived in Fuling, a town on China's Yangtze River, to begin a two-year Peace Corps stint as a teacher at the local college. Along with fellow teacher Adam Meier, the two are the first foreigners to be in this part of the Sichuan province for 50 years. Expecting a calm couple of years, Hessler at first does not realize the social, cultural, and personal implications of being thrust into a such radically different society. In River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze, Hessler tells of his experience with the citizens of Fuling, the political and historical climate, and the feel of the city itself".

Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present

by Peter Hessler

from Publishers Weekly

"Hessler, who first wrote about China in his 2001 bestseller, River Town, a portrait of his Peace Corps years in Fuling, continues his conflicted affair with that complex country in a second book that reflects the maturity of time and experience. Having lived in China for a decade now, fluent in Mandarin and working as a correspondent in Beijing, Hessler displays impressive knowledge, research and personal encounters as he brings the country's peoples, foibles and history into sharp focus. He frames his narrative with short chapters about Chinese artifacts: the underground city being excavated at Anyang; the oracle bones of the title ("inscriptions on shell and bone" considered the earliest known writing in East Asia); and he pays particular attention to how language affects culture, often using Chinese characters and symbols to make a point. A talented writer and journalist, Hessler has courage—he's undercover at the Falun Gong demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and in the middle of anti-American protests in Nanjing after the Chinese embassy bombings in Belgrade—and a sense of humor (the Nanjing rioters attack a statue of Ronald McDonald since Nanjing has no embassies). The tales of his Fuling students' adventures in the new China's boom towns; the Uighur trader, an ethnic minority from China's western border, who gets asylum after entering the U.S. with jade (false) documents; the oracle bones scholar Chen Mengjia, who committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution—all add a seductive element of human interest. There's little information available in China, we learn, but Hessler gets the stories that no one talks about and delivers them in a personal study that informs, entertains and mesmerizes. Everyone in the Western world should read this book".

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