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Upper Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Japan

**Part 1**

**00.15–01.10** It is a land of dual identities, one of neon glitz and industrial innovation, the other given to the quiet shrines of Kyoto and honoured tea ceremonies.

With a population of over 127 million people, Japan is a country that harmonises the forces of what is western and modern with those that are traditional Japanese.

It is a place where American baseball isn’t out of place next to Sumo wrestling.

The country of Japan is comprised of a chain of islands stretching from north to south in the Pacific Ocean just off the Asian mainland.

Honshu is the largest of the four main islands. The country’s capital, Tokyo, is here.

The bustling urban area of greater Tokyo is the largest metropolitan area on Earth with a population of 35 million people.

**01.11–01.48** The path to modernisation was forged under the Meiji restoration of 1868. It was at this time, warlords known as shogun returned power to the Emperor Meiji and Japan began moving away from its feudal past.

It looked to the West for a new, more modern political and industrial model. Before long, Japan was one of the dominant powers in Asia and began expanding its influence in the region, occupying parts of Korea, and gaining influence over parts of China in the early 20th century.

**01.49–02.05** When World War II broke out, Japan sided with the Axis powers of Italy and Germany. Its bombing raid on the US naval station at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, on December 7th 1941, brought the United States into World War II.

**02.06–02.19** The Japanese war effort came to an end when US Allied Forces dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. A week later, Japan surrendered.

Life

**Part 2**

**02.20–03.01** The post-war period has been one of incredible prosperity for Japan. The government is firmly rooted in democracy under a constitution based on drafts prepared by the Allied Forces.

Although it is a land of few natural resources, Japan has become one of the most industrialised countries in the world.

Its cultural emphasis on education has helped it become a world leader in technology, manufacturing and finance. Its products are exported around the world with brands like Sony and Toyota virtually ubiquitous.

**03.02–03.43** But beyond the bullet trains and neon of Tokyo, there lies a rich cultural tradition.

In private life, guests may be honoured in a tea ceremony. The emphasis in this ceremony is on ritual, simplicity and the beauty of daily routine.

Those themes are echoed in the arts, where painters like Hiroshige captured moments of life and were a great influence on European Impressionist painters.

**03.44–03.57** Today, Japan continues to be a source of industrial innovation and an important leader in the international community, while keeping its traditions and culture always in focus.