

Destination: Japan. (Your tour guides include Kurosawa)

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Page: 13

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This has been Golden Week in Japan, one of the most important holiday periods of the year there. It began on Sunday, ends today and marks four national holidays: Emperor Showa Day, Constitution Day, Greenery Day and Children's Day. Like many Quebecers do over the vacation week of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Canada Day, the Japanese take advantage of Golden Week to travel. On DVD, you can explore the themes of Japan and travel without leaving home. Here are a half-dozen ways to make the trip.

Kamatagi (*Canada/Japan, 2005*) A multiple prizewinner at the 2005 Montreal World Film Festival, this is a coming-of-age story of a young Montreal man sent to live with his uncle, a master potter in rural Shigaraki. The patient mastery of fire and clay – and of the opposite sex – is seductive. The DVD from Westmount-based Filmoption International has director Claude Gagnon's commentary in French and English.



Lost in Translation (*U.S./ Japan, 2003*) Bill Murray plays a has-been American actor who comes to Tokyo to do commercials, and Scarlett Johansson is the lonely young woman who saves his soul at the Park Hyatt Hotel. Sofia Coppola got an Oscar for the screenplay. The nice-looking Universal Studios DVD, loaded with extras, is distributed in Canada by Alliance Atlantis.

The Seven Samurai (*Japan, 1954*) Akira Kurosawa's 3½ hour masterpiece is about a group of samurai warriors who travel to a defenceless village to help fend off a band of 40 bandits. (Hollywood re-made this as a Western, *The Magnificent Seven*.) Upmarket U.S. DVD company Criterion has a remastered three-disc set; also try its newly upgraded transfers of two other Kurosawa samurai films, *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro*.

Stupeur et tremblements (*France/Japan, 2003*) After graduation, Belgian university student Amelie gets a job in Japan, where she was born and lived as a child. Fluent in Japanese, she expects things to go easily at the big corporation that hires her as an interpreter. Then things start to go wrong. Based on a

bestselling autobiographical novel, the film is available on DVD here from Christal.



Hiroshima, mon amour (*France/Japan, 1959*) "Tu n'as rien vu a Hiroshima, rien." - "J'ai tout vu, tout." Echoes of a wartime romance haunt a French actress who takes a Japanese lover in Hiroshima, 14 years after the dropping of the A-bomb. Jump-cuts and flashbacks keep the viewer guessing in this classic by Alain Resnais, written by Marguerite Duras. Christal Films produced the DVD in Quebec (no subtitles, though).

*And from another angle: **Japanese Story** (Australia, 2003)* Being a stranger in a strange land is not easy. In this romantic adventure story set in the Australian outback, a Japanese businessman falls for a geologist (Toni Collette) who's guiding him around the Pilbara desert. It's like Hiroshima, mon amour, in reverse, with as many tears and one shocking denouement. Sony Pictures has a special-edition DVD.

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