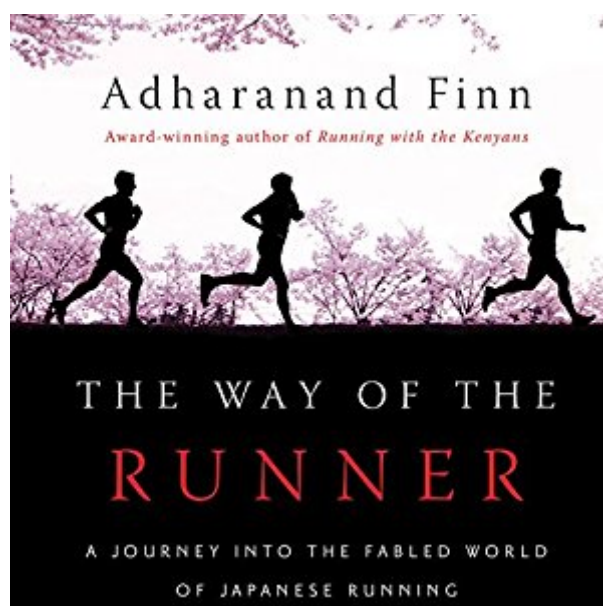


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The Way Of The Runner: A Journey Into The Fabled World Of Japanese Running



Synopsis

Welcome to Japan, the most running-obsessed nation on Earth and home to a unique running culture unlike anything Adharanand Finn, author of *Running with the Kenyans*, has even experienced. It may come as a surprise to many people, but Japan is the most running-obsessed country on Earth. A 135-mile relay race, or ekiden, is the country's biggest annual sporting event. Thousands of professional runners compete for corporate teams in some of the most competitive races in the world. The legendary "marathon monks" run a thousand marathons in a thousand days to reach spiritual enlightenment. Yet so much of Japan's running culture remains a mystery to the outside world, on par with many of the unique aspects of contemporary Japan. Adharanand Finn, the award-winning author of *Running with the Kenyans*, spent six months immersed in this one-of-a-kind running culture to discover what it might teach us about the sport and about Japan. As an amateur runner about to turn 40, he also hoped to find out whether a Japanese approach to training might help him run faster. What he learns - about competition, teamwork, form, chasing personal bests, and himself - will fascinate and surprise anyone keen to explore why we run and how we might do it better.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was a big fan of Adharanand Finn's "Running with the Kenyans." I love his immersive style. He moved to the Rift Valley with his family for that one. Here, he troops the entire family -- including three young children -- to the suburbs of Kyoto to explore Japan's Ekiden running culture. Indeed, the book is as much about his family's journey as it is about his deep dive into Ekiden. Let's just say

that anyone's romantic ideal of a vacation journey via the Trans-Siberian railway will be put off the idea for good here. I loved the premise of this idea. I've been intrigued with Japanese running since the days of the great Boston marathon champion and long-time 25k and 30k WR holder, Toshihiko Seko. [In fact, if I have one quibble about the book, it's that I wish Finn had sought out Seko for comment...or maybe he did and the famously monkish Seko turned him away.] Finn does well to tie the discipline and struggle of running to the self-professed ideal traits of the Japanese. I like the way he uses Robert Whiting's seminal book, "You Gotta Have Wa." Whiting did much the same thing as Finn, but used baseball as his vehicle. Finn quotes Whiting's work: "The Japanese believe that only through endless training can one achieve the unity of mind and body necessary to excel . . . The traditional view in this rich but cramped and resource-poor land is that nothing comes easily, and that only through doryoku (effort) and the ability to persevere in the face of adversity can one achieve success." Finn finds that the obsessive Ekiden culture fits Japan like hand in glove...the ideas that the nail that is stuck up gets hammered down, and of sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the team. These ideas are steeped deep into Japanese culture.

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