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Amsterdam: A Brief Life Of The City



Synopsis

A magnet for trade and travelers from all over the world, stylish, cosmopolitan Amsterdam is a city of dreams and nightmares, of grand civic architecture and legendary beauty, but also of civil wars, bloody religious purges, and the tragedy of Anne Frank. In this fascinating examination of the city's soul, part history, part travel guide, Geert Mak imaginatively recreates the lives of the early Amsterdammers, and traces Amsterdam's progress from waterlogged settlement to a major financial center and thriving modern metropolis

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Lovers of Amsterdam will revel in the exhaustive reconstruction of everyday life in the medieval city." [Independent on Sunday](#)"A strong sense of irony and a lively prose style make Geert Mak's Amsterdam one of the most unusual and engaging city books; I have read this year." [Sunday Times](#)"Mak's brief is . . . to bring Amsterdam into the modern age. This he does with wit and style. But his real achievement . . . is to make accessible unfussily - and unsentimentally - one of Europe's most astonishing urban success stories." [James Woodall, Financial Times](#)"This excellent book is more than essential." [Irvine Welsh](#)

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Dutch --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Despite more recent releases about Amsterdam, Geert Mak's book remains the standard.

Authoritative, detailed and always interesting, Mak explains the reasons why Amsterdam differs

from all other European capitals. The treatment of early Amsterdam and the Golden Age are especially fascinating, with the insights into Rembrandt's life a real highlight for me.

I'd recommend this honest history of Amsterdam to anyone planning a visit. Very well done and informative. Much of history one wouldn't normally hear from travel agencies.

I was assigned this book as a pre-departure read for a college study abroad program and have been thrilled by Mak's descriptions, research, and integration of primary sources to reveal an evolution of Amsterdam's culture from its very beginnings to the complex identity of the city today. It is not too heavy and is broken up into easy to read sections, so you can easily start and finish stories while in a waiting room. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking to learn more about Amsterdam before visiting.

I chose this book over the more recent book by Russell Shorto based on a review of the latter in the NYTimes. I found it to be an honest, balanced account of the city's history that is often idealized. For me, it was an excellent preparation for my first visit to the city.

This book reminds me of an outstanding history teacher who maintains the interest of his students with a series of fascinating and relevant anecdotes. I enjoyed reading it and I feel that I now have a much better appreciation of this city. I highly recommend it to anyone planning a visit to Amsterdam.

I read this book before and during a recent trip to Amsterdam. It was really nice to have some of the history and specific anecdotes from the book in my mind as we traveled around the city. It would be great if the book were updated if only to cover the period since the mid 90s forward, iirc the book was published in 95 and doesn't cover much of the current culture or history of the city. It's full of history and reasons for how and why Amsterdam came to be what it is, written in a easy to consume, journalistic style.

Easy to follow. Good information.

Geert Mak has a wonderful way of describing things. This book is a great way for someone not acquainted with the history of this enchanting city to know all the basics to better understand it!

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