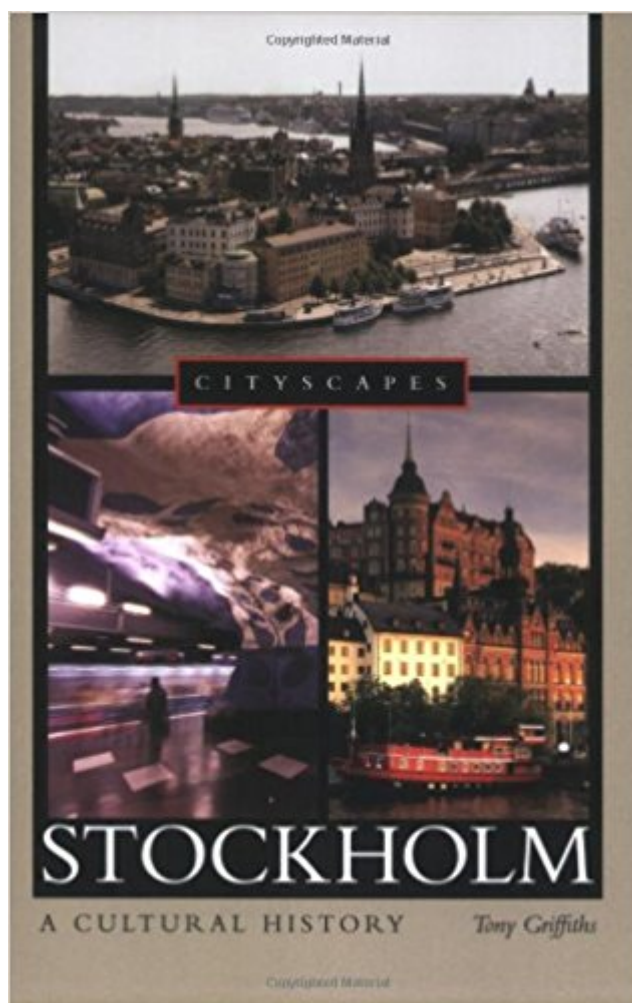


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Stockholm: A Cultural History (Cityscapes)



Synopsis

Situated on one of the world's most beautiful harbors, Stockholm has set the benchmark for civilized urban living since the time of the Vikings. Tony Griffiths reveals a city of power, intrigue, and murder; of scientists and investors; and a sensual city, home of Greta Garbo and the smÅ¶rgÅ¶sbord. Its medieval period saw the Vasa dynasty turn a small town into the capital of a dominant European power and a major trading port. In the Napoleonic era, Stockholm established itself as a center of both technical and social innovation. While the city has suffered more than its fair share of misfortune, Stockholm's cultural and commercial elite transformed it into a community which now welcomes innovation and spreads the fruits of its achievements far beyond its borders.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tony Griffiths teaches at Flinders University and is the author of Scandinavia.

I expected this to be more of a coffee table book, but it is relatively small (I didn't read the description well enough) and unimpressive. The text is thorough, but it is lacking in photographs. I wish that it had double the photos, even at the expense of the text. Our copy cover was blank and looked as if it was missing something. If you are looking for something bigger and more fantastic, look elsewhere. We purchased this for \$30 and I think the price would have been more fair at \$20.

An interesting cultural study of Stockholm, offering a broad historical perspective of an important but

not well known city. While the book was engaging and offered considerable detail, it seemed a bit cynical at times. I felt that this tone detracted a bit from the reading experience. Nonetheless, I'm glad to have read it.

My grandfather's name was Carl Gustav Peterson, and thanks to him I am one-quarter Swedish. But I have never been to Sweden, which accounts for my reading this book - I saw it as a vehicle for a vicarious trip to Sweden, or at least to Stockholm. Tony Griffiths is an Aussie who lived in Stockholm for an extended period of time. That means that he has a pretty good feel for Stockholm, but it also means that the book is geared more for readers in the British Commonwealth than to Americans. Still, STOCKHOLM: A CULTURAL HISTORY proved to be an interesting and informative overview of the city and country this American's forebears left 150 years ago. Except for a portion of the Introduction, STOCKHOLM is NOT structured as some sort of tour guide around the city. Instead, in a leisurely and somewhat meandering fashion, it provides the social, economic, cultural, and historical background for life in Stockholm. Along the way, Griffiths includes brief profiles of many Swedes of note, including August Strindberg and his classmate Alfred Nobel, Ingvar Kamprad (billionaire founder of IKEA), ABBA (another example of the Swedish penchant for acronyms), and Greta Garbo and Ingrid Bergman. And there is plenty on the "character" of Stockholmers. For example, their "morbid interest in death", which, among other things, impels most to make a carefully considered decision on the tombstone that will mark their grave: "This is taken seriously as a major marker of identity and style, as important as the choice of ring-tone on a mobile phone." Or their propensity for "systems" in structuring virtually every social and economic issue: "In Stockholm, to evade the system, to behave without a system, to pretend the system does not exist, to wander about and conduct life unsystematically is to ask for trouble. Conformity is often not a choice, but part of a failsafe built-in way of life." The book includes one map and about three dozen photographs. It is written in a breezy, moderately hip, sometimes humorous, and occasionally snarky fashion. It served my purpose of learning about Stockholm and Sweden in a non-pedagogical way. It would also make for a fine introduction to Stockholm before an Aussie, Brit, or Yank actually went there.

I bought this book ahead of my trip to Stockholm so I could learn more about the city. It is fascinating and incredibly well written. I love how the chapters are laid out thematically (not chronologically) with clever titles like "Mutual Misunderstandings" and "Murky Ends." I can't imagine a wittier, more fun-to-read history. I wish I had a book like this for every great city I've

visited.

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