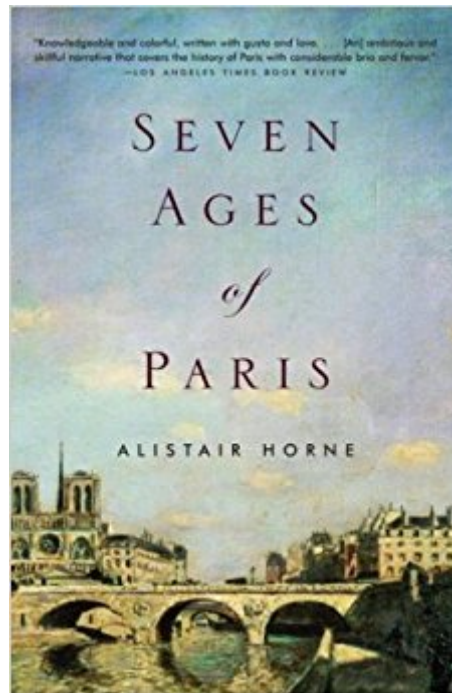




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Seven Ages Of Paris



Synopsis

In this luminous portrait of Paris, celebrated historian Alistair Horne gives us the history, culture, disasters, and triumphs of one of the world's truly great cities. Horne makes plain that while Paris may be many things, it is never boring. From the rise of Philippe Auguste through the reigns of Henry IV and Louis XIV (who abandoned Paris for Versailles); Napoleon's rise and fall; Baron Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris (at the cost of much of the medieval city); the Belle Epoque and the Great War that brought it to an end; the Nazi Occupation, the Liberation, and the postwar period dominated by de Gaulle--Horne brings the city's highs and lows, savagery and sophistication, and heroes and villains splendidly to life. With a keen eye for the telling anecdote and pivotal moment, he portrays an array of vivid incidents to show us how Paris endures through each age, is altered but always emerges more brilliant and beautiful than ever. *The Seven Ages of Paris* is a great historian's tribute to a city he loves and has spent a lifetime learning to know.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the past few years we've had a massive biography of New York City ("Gotham") and several only slightly less massive biographies of London (by Peter Ackroyd, Stephen Inwood, etc.). Alistair Horne, an Englishman who has spent most of his life writing about France, rightly decided that it's about time we gave equal time to the City Of Light. He has written a very good book. If you don't know much about France and the French, Mr. Horne's book covers so many different areas that it is sure to whet your appetite to learn more. Even if you're a longtime Francophile, the author has dug so deeply into his sources that you're bound to be delighted and/or surprised at many of the tidbits he's unearthed. For example, during the siege of Paris in the autumn of 1870, the Parisians were

able to communicate with the rest of France by successfully sending out balloons. But the balloons were never able to make it back in to Paris. The solution? Mr. Horne takes up the story: "It was the humble carrier-pigeon that was to prove the only means of breaking the blockade in reverse. A microphotography unit was set up in Tours, and there government despatches were reduced to a minute size, printed on feathery collodion membranes, so that one pigeon could carry up to 40,000 despatches, equivalent to the contents of a complete book. On reaching Paris, the despatches were projected by magic lantern, their contents transcribed by a battery of clerks.....As a counter-measure, the Prussians imported falcons, which prompted one of the many imaginative Parisian 'inventors' to suggest that the pigeons be equipped with whistles to frighten off the predators". And while many people know that the siege reduced Parisians to having to eat horses, dogs, cats, rats and even animals from the zoo.....

One of the most beautiful cities in the world has finally found a worthy biographer in A. J. Horne. Paris has always held a fascination for most, being a center of not only political and commercial interest, but also home to the art and culture known throughout the world. Horne's book describes the history of the city, with particular interest on the architectural changes, by highlighting seven different time periods, beginning with an introduction of the early beginnings of the city culminating in the late 1960's riots which shook Paris. Wonderfully written, with snippets of information hard to find elsewhere. For example, I often wondered by St. Genevieve was the patron saint of the city. Horne supplies that information that very early during the history of the city an attack was feared from the invaders of the west and as the city prepared to flee, young Genevieve had a vision that the attack would not take place and halted the evacuation. It's little pieces of information such as this, which made the book an exceptionally fun as well as educating read. Special attention is also paid to other significant historical events, especially those after the 1600's. What really strikes the read is one thing: the number of uprisings (the French Revolution of 1789 was only one in a series) that had struck the city, most of them organized on a grass roots level. This also helps explains why the cobblestones of the streets have been cemented into place...these make very good missiles for those fed up with the weak administration of the city. That is another point that the author stresses...sanitation and city planning came very late to Paris, and this led to unimaginable squalor in various quarters of the city.

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