



The World in a City: Traveling the Globe Through the Neighborhoods of the New New York

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“The whole world can be found in this city. . . .”

–from the Preface

Fifty years ago, New York City had only a handful of ethnic groups. Today, the whole world can be found within the city’s five boroughs—and celebrated New York Times reporter Joseph Berger sets out to discover it, bringing alive the sights, smells, tastes, and people of the globe while taking readers on an intimate tour of the world’s most cosmopolitan city.

For urban enthusiasts and armchair explorers alike, *The World in a City* is a look at today’s polyglot and polychrome, cosmopolitan and culturally rich New York and the lessons it holds for the rest of the United States as immigration changes the face of the nation. With three out of five of the city’s residents either foreign-born or second-generation Americans, New York has become more than ever a collection of villages—virtually self-reliant hamlets, each exquisitely textured by its particular ethnicities, history, and politics. For the price of a subway ride, you can visit Ghana, the Philippines, Ecuador, Uzbekistan, and Bangladesh.

As Berger shows us in this absorbing and enlightening tour, New York is an endlessly fascinating crossroads. Naturally, tears exist in this colorful social fabric: the controversy over Korean-language shop signs in tony Douglaston, Queens; the uneasy proximity of traditional cottages and new McMansions built by recently arrived Russian residents of Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. Yet in spite of the tensions among neighbors, what Berger has found most miraculous about New York is how the city and its more than eight million denizens can adapt to—and even embrace—change like no other place on earth, from the former pushcart knish vendor on the Lower East Side who now caters to his customers via the Internet, to the recent émigrés from former Soviet republics to Brooklyn’s Brighton Beach and Midwood whose arrival saved New York’s furrier trade from certain extinction.

Like the place it chronicles, *The World in a City* is an engaging hybrid. Blending elements of sociology, pop culture, and travel writing, this is the rare book that enlightens readers while imbuing them with the hope that even in this increasingly fractious and polarized world, we can indeed co-exist in harmony.

The World in a City: Traveling the Globe Through the Neighborhoods of the New New York Details

Date : Published September 25th 2007 by Ballantine Books

ISBN : 9780345487384

Author : Joseph Berger

Format : Hardcover 267 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, New York, History

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From Reader Review The World in a City: Traveling the Globe Through the Neighborhoods of the New New York for online ebook

Erin says

I'm excited about this- it's about a lot of outer neighborhoods and their constituents, how the immigrant experience is so different than it used to be, and how the city has changed and/or stayed the same. I've read 2 chapters and already love it!

Anne says

I gave this book a try - I started from the beginning, skipped around, read the end in an attempt to find some meat to this book. There is none. It's all New York tourism fluff. So sad - it had so much potential!

Nicole Smith says

This book jumped out at me from a travel guide shelf. I wish I had read it about five years ago - or rather I wish it had been published more recently. Reading about all these neighborhoods that are at arms length for me right now made me want to go explore them all. However, the too true observation that New York City is a place that is ever changing place was a little off the mark with the added prediction that the book would be outdated in 20 years. Less than 10 years later I know a couple of the neighborhoods have already changed and shifted, and suspect most of them have.

Luckily the fact of change in the neighborhoods doesn't mean I can't, shouldn't, or won't go explore them more. It just means I'll have a different experience than the one outlined in this book as I walk around neighborhoods and find different gems.

I'm grateful for the reminder and push to explore my own backyard.

John says

If you're familiar with New York City, you'll recognize what a truly impressive job Berger's done profiling changes in several neighborhoods over the past generation. If not, his portayals of life outside the more touristy areas should give an appreciation of how diverse life there can be. At first, I was tempted to skip around with the order in which I read the essays; however, it became clear that they've been arranged as they are so that the parts make a well-put-together whole. Highly recommended.

Melissa says

Such a sweet collection of NYC immigrant and neighborhood stories. Berger takes you to neighborhoods well known, like Chinatown, or lesser-known, like Gerritsen Beach, and shares stories of people who once

lived there or currently live there, and also paints a picture of what life is like. Berger is a journalist, so the chapters read more like essays, with the (to-be-expected) insertion of his opinion here and there. I didn't really like the profile on Norwood (his thesis wasn't all there, and he didn't even profile the neighborhood) and could have done without the nostalgic overtone throughout. My takeaway is though the immigrant story is beautiful, it is always changing--and that's why you really find some great stories.

D.G. says

****2.5 Stars****

I thought this book was going to be different. The 'Traveling the Globe' part of the subtitle gave me the impression that this book would tell me about all the different cultures in NY and which neighborhood I should go if I wanted to get a taste of it.

To be truthful there was a bit of that, but the book was inundated with nostalgia. Most chapters were about elderly people complaining about the way things it used to be and how the neighborhood had changed. This was BORING.

I think I would only recommend this book to fellow New Yorkers if they want to know more about their City.

Michael Lewyn says

Each chapter in this book profiles a different neighborhood that has been transformed over the past few decades - in most cases, by the "new immigration" from Latin America, Asia, and even Africa (though Berger also discusses a couple of newly-gentrifying areas and the Orthodox Judaism that now dominates Midwood).

As a new resident of NYC, I got some ideas about places to visit; in fact, this morning I visited the Bukharan Jewish Center, the opulent Bukharan synagogue in Forest Hills that Berger mentions. I also learned why there are so many Bukharan restaurants that often do not appear to be open; according to Berger, Bukharan Jews have a custom of gathering in restaurants during the seven-day mourning period after a relative's death (as well as monthly and annual anniversaries of same), thus creating a market for restaurants that are open only for such special occasions. This book is full of similar tidbits about other ethnic groups and their neighborhoods.

One caveat: because this book was written in 2007, some of the specific bakeries, restaurants, etc. mentioned in the book have already closed.

Flora says

Charming! Also, a helpful window into neighborhood trends. It's amazing how much has changed even in the four years between this book's publication and the time I started reading it. ("Greece is a rich country now!" someone crowed in Astoria. I just can't get that out of my mind.)

Sarah says

I loved this book! Shame that I discovered it so late, as it's almost 10 years old now. I was surprised to see how quickly neighborhoods were changing at that time.

Also great for providing context and history to the areas I live near.

Rachelle Rae says

If you are a New York Cityophile like myself, you will love this book. Berger takes you on a journey through some of New York's swiftly changing, far flung and not so far flung neighborhoods. The journey he takes the reader on is based on interviews with resident, observations of street life, memories of his own life growing up in the city, and larger ones of the collective city history. At the end of each neighborhood chapter he lists suggested places to go visit and eat in the neighborhoods he has just described, sometimes I wonder why they don't always match up to what he has just talked about. At times I think he gets caught up in the politics of neighborhoods, I think this adds more depth to the book, but it also sidetracks it and makes it much more than a jaunt through the neighborhoods of this city of multiple identities.

Scott says

An insight into ny that I was craving. Although it was tedious at times, it still reassured me that not all of ny can be rough, and that although it is a diverse city to say the least, it is still a melting pot and second generation immigrants integrate. Can't wait to live there and try all the restaurants and barbers listed.

Mike says

Great and informative book on some of the neighborhoods in New York City.

Benjamin says

A pretty engaging look at New York and its ethnic past and future. It really nails down the nostalgia with which people (especially from the outside) regard the city, the identification of things lost, the collective suffering and achievement. Also identifies the new wave of immigration that is changing the city so radically, as well as the economic effects of the real estate boom (although it will be interesting to see what the popped bubble effect will be). I was annoyed at Berger's insistence on drawing everything back to his own family's immigrant roots though, as it just made this weird confusion of objective and personal writing in circumstances that didn't really relate. It seemed like a stretch to me. Plus, did he honestly just call a samosa a "knish-like dish?" Seriously? Why?

Chris says

If you ever want to understand the change culture and immigration trends that New York and its suburbs have been through this is the book to read to learn and study all that. The author takes you on this amazing historical journey through each major neighborhood in New York so you can understand what it was before and what it as turned into today. The sad thing that is that the author made a point in saying that despite all his incredible researching and interviewing in each neighborhood, it will all change again in a couple of years so this point will probably be outdated in ten years from its print date. Despite that I think it still makes this book worth reading because you can understand all the people who came before and walked those streets to who is there now so you get a better feel for why things have changed and where they came from.

This book I have had for a very long time. I'm sad that I didn't read it right away when it came out because then I would have been able to realize just what was going on then. By now the neighborhoods have changed again and many stores that once stood where they are for 50+ to 100+ years are probably gone by now. Sad when you think about it because its a part of history that is being taken away. New York has stores there that for generations were run by family members. Today new immigrants want to do the same thing but with the influx of new people coming in everyday that is hard to do.

If you live in New York this book is like a treasure map of once great places in each neighborhood. It is filled with places to go and restaurants to eat at that have been around since the first and second wave one Irish and Jewish immigrants. The author talks with people in each area about their experiences growing up there and what it is all like. If you visit Gerritsen Beach you will learn that most generations of families have been there forever. People know each other so well you could leave a key with them and they will take care of your place until you get back.

What I loved learning most from this book was how people of different cultures and countries stay in contact with their families back home. There are so many businesses now that have come about in helping people see their loved ones via Skype. I also never knew the mink industry in Brighton Beach was so huge because of the major Russian population and their love for mink. After reading such a book you begin to see how the melting pot of cultures work together to live in, somewhat, harmony. A barber in East Harlem doesn't like that his once Italian rich enclave is now mostly filled with Dominicans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. He loves his barber shop but realizes that he will soon have to stop.

A book like this shows how rich the life in New York really is. You begin to understand what makes up each neighborhood and how the got to be that way. Once you understand the immigration makeup you can go out and appreciate the different flavors of people and the foods they bring to see what makes NYC so great. When I live there one day I plan to use this book as a road place to places I need to visit and walk around in.

Beth says

Lots of great stories about New York. For a reporter for what my partner calls the "belly button paper" (New York Times), he's pretty careful to notice the good, the bad, and the ugly in his hometown. My only quibble is he seems a bit less comfortable with black people (esp. black people born in the U.S. versus African and Caribbean immigrants)--that is, talking to and about black people--than with other people of color, and he ought not to be, considering he's a New Yorker born of poor Jewish immigrants and he's a reporter for a major newspaper. But other than that, good stuff.
