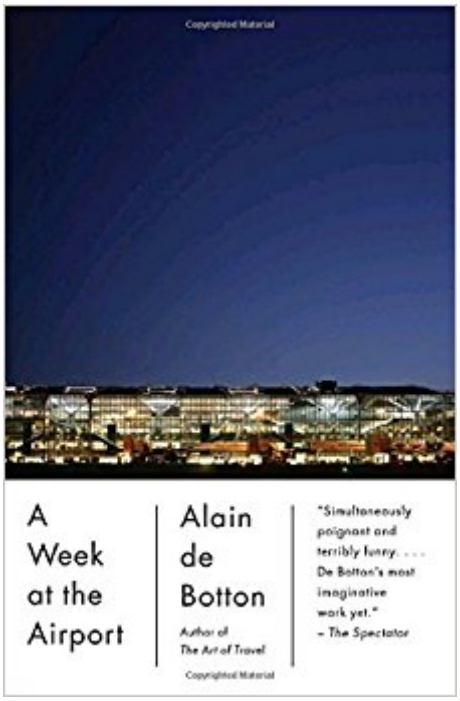
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A Week At The Airport



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Synopsis

From the bestselling author of The Art of Travel comes a wittily intriguing exploration of the strange "non-place" that he believes is the imaginative center of our civilization.Given unprecedented access to one of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s busiest airports as a Ã¢â ¬Å“writer-in-residence,Ã¢â ¬Â• Alain de Botton found it to be a showcase for many of the major crosscurrents of the modern worldÃ¢â ¬â •from our faith in technology to our destruction of nature, from our global interconnectedness to our romanticizing of the exotic. He met travelers from all over and spoke with everyone from baggage handlers to pilots to the airport chaplain. Weaving together these conversations and his own observationsÃ¢â ¬â •of everything from the poetry of room service menus to the eerie silence in the middle of the runway at midnightÃ¢â ¬â •de Botton has produced an extraordinary meditation on a place that most of us never slow down enough to see clearly. Lavishly illustrated in color by renowned photographer Richard Baker, A Week at the Airport reveals the airport in all its turbulence and soullessness andÃ¢â ¬â •yesÃ¢â ¬â •even beauty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Travel writer de Botton sees the airport as the nexus of all that plagues and fascinates us about modern life: environmental destruction, high technology, constant movement, glittering distractions, consumerist temptations, and social interaction and isolation. Having accepted an invitation from British Airways to spend a week at its home, Terminal 5 of Heathrow, he is given unprecedented access to all the parts of the airport that travelers donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t generally see. So, along with the shopping areas and arrival and departure and baggage-claim areas, he wanders into the huge

stations for airplane repairs, the vast storage areas for rejected samples for cabin paraphernalia, the behind-the-scene offices, and the massive food-preparation areas. From a desk announcing his position as writer in residence, de Botton engages in conversations with business travelers, parting lovers, vacationing families, and the myriad workersÃ¢â ¬â •stationary and passing throughÃ¢â ¬â •for whom the airport is workplace. Author of the best-selling The Art of Travel (2002), de Botton is amusing and lyrical in his observations of our modern comings and goings. Photographs add to the allure of this engaging look at air travel. --Vanessa Bush

"Simultaneously poignant and terribly funny . . . De Botton's most imaginative work yet." Ã¢â ¬â •SpectatorÃ Â "Funny, charming, and slender enough to pack in your carry-on." Ã¢â ¬â •Daily MailÃ Â "Surprising. . . . His observations on airport life are wry and thought-provoking." Ã¢â ¬â •TelegraphÃ Â "Shrewd, perceptive and gently ironic." Ã¢â ¬â •Independent

The behavioral economist Dan Ariely posted a story on his blog about a locksmith whose tips dropped once he mastered his craft and could perform his tasks in less time than he could as a novice. His customers equated the speed with which he accomplished his work with a lack of effort or complexity. So it is with some readers who dismiss de Botton's brilliant and economical style with as lacking depth or substance.With sly humor and a keen sense of observation, de Botton offers up well-written essays whose setting is Heathrow Airport but whose subjects range from classical literature to modern relationships to our quest to satisfy psychological needs through consumerism.As he has done earlier de Botton pairs his work with well-chosen photographs to enhance the mood and setting. Although this book is short, it's evident that a great deal of effort went into writing it. A certain amount of effort or at least calm attention is required to appreciate its depth, and the reader who offers up the attention this book deserves will not be disappointed.

I heard about this book on an NPR interview a long while back, and it sounded interesting. I only wish there was more here. It was much shorter than I expected, and didn't really go into the detail that I remember the interview seemed to promise. It only skimmed the surface of the interviewees' lives, careers, and tales of travel. I'm glad I got it used for $0.01, because I would not have paid full price.

When I was a kid (in those simpler, less security conscious days), I used to pester any adult I could

find to take me to visit the airport. I loved to hang out at the observation deck at O'Hare and watch the planes take off and land and also wander around and watch the people at the airport. I rarely fly now (more car and Amtrak trips) but I would have LOVED the chance to experience what the author of this book did: spend a week at the airport.In this wonderful little book, the author spent a week wandering around the new terminal at London's Heathrow Airport, talking to passengers and employees alike and observing everything going on. He talks to everyone, from the head of British Airways to someone who cleans the restrooms.This is a terrific behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of an airport. You might think it sounds dull but it's not that at all.

If you travel, get this short, delightful book on the one place we all take for granted. If you don't travel, read about what you are missing -- on the way there. De Botton writes with characteristic wit and imagination; he has a reporter's curiosity and a knack for detail and poetic metaphor. Planes become magical, complex creatures shuttling to and from worlds replete with characters from the mundane to the exotic: clowns, adventurers, mystics and hookers; the full panoply of humanity in all its wondrous variety, in a setting at once extraordinary and pathologically alienated and alienating. I've read a good many of this author's titles: Religion for Atheists; Status Anxiety; On Travel, etc. and I keep coming back, not necessarily because I'm interested in the subject, but because the writer knows his craft. And that's what reading is about.

As someone who loves travel, and is endlessly intrigued by the happenings at international airports, Alain De Botton's A Week at the Airport is a delightful window into the culture apart that this feature of the modern world embodies.For anyone who has not yet entered De Botton's philosophical world via his writings, A Week at the Airport is short enough, at a little over 100 pages, and put together so nicely (the author has a skilled and touching turn of phrase, deployed as needed), that it's the perfect gateway into his longer and deeper works.Assembled as a series of observations by De Botton and anecdotes from the denizens of this odd other place, A Week at the Airport is a pleasant and well worth it short diversion that should be on your reading list. I finished wanting a longer, deeper tale.I'm giving it 4/5.

This is certainly an idiosyncratic book and not for everyone, but even just a few of the paragraphs are enough to justify it as a great read for me. You can learn more about humans, customer service, air travel...from a philosopher like de Bouton than from a dozen average business books--and the book's just the perfect size to put in your carry-on for while you're below 10,000 feet and can't use

your iKindleDroidNookReaderÃƒâ Ã Â®.I've quoted several passages of this for my upcoming book and whenever I return to those passages I'm always newly impressed by the fluidity and insight in de Bouton's writing.PS "How Proust Can Change Your Life" is another wonderful book from him, and probably more generally interesting if you don't travel a lot.Micah Solomon

It is just OK. Status Anxiety was more interesting and innovative. I understand the books have different aims and subjects but I expected more from this one. I did identify with some of Mr de Botton's experiences but this is all I can recollect now.

He admits he was hired to spend a week at a new terminal at Heathrow, by the terminal's owner. It seems he couldn't find anything really fascinating to say about people traveling. I reckon you should read The Art of Travel if you want a travel guide, but a better book is How Proust can change your Life, or The Consolations of Philosophy. Don't bother with this one.

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