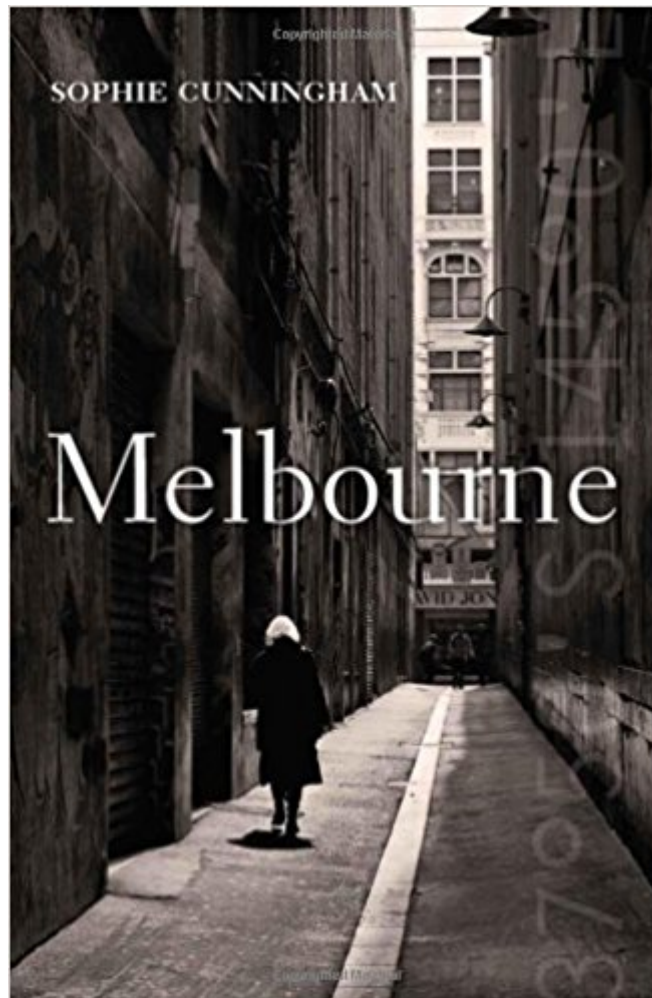




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Melbourne (The City Series)



Synopsis

A year in Melbourne's city life told in diary form, this contemporary and personal portrait depicts major events from the Australian heat wave, which culminated in more than 400 bushfires, to the destructive deluge of a hailstorm. While walking through Melbourne's oldest suburb to its largest market, experiencing an Australian Rules Football game, and attending the comedy festival, writer Sophie Cunningham journeys deep into her own recollections of the city she grew up in, and tells stories from its history. She strolls by Melbourne's rivers and creeks and considers the history of the wetlands and river that sit at Melbourne's heart, for it is water; the corralling of it, the excess of it, the squandering of it, the lack of it; that defines Melbourne's history, its present, and its future.

Book Information

Series: The City Series

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Customer Reviews

Sophie Cunningham is the former editor of Meanjin Quarterly and a former publisher for Allen & Unwin, Penguin, and McPhee Gribble. She is the author of Bird and Geography and her work has been included in The Best Australian Essays 2000 and The Best Australian Fiction.

I don't want to be too harsh on this book, because I guess I came into it with the wrong expectations. I will be visiting Melbourne and was looking for a book that would give me some insight on the city, something along the lines of the Crown Journeys series that had famous writers

writing about their cities. Not a guidebook, but something that gives you the flavor of the place while maybe giving you some ideas for places to visit. This book doesn't really fit that bill. It's a very personal account, to the point that if you didn't grow up in Melbourne in the 1970s, I'm not sure how interesting it will be to you. Lots of names get thrown around as though we're supposed to know who they are. It's a very narrow slice of life -- this writer's specific interests and circle of friends, who are part of a pretty specific part of Melbourne's arts culture. While I did glean a few nuggets of history and a couple interesting places to visit, it was really not what I was looking for. She is a good writer, though, and if you're more familiar with Melbourne's culture, you might find this more interesting.

The premise had so much potential! I was hoping to get a feel for Melbourne but all I found was self-indulgent name dropping and a very narrow vision of the city. Name dropping is all well and good, especially with accompanying interesting/amusing anecdotes but that was lacking in "Melbourne". Many of the facts quoted were incorrect. For an author who has spent her whole career in publishing and is Chair of the Literature Board of the Council of Australia, the whole book is very disappointing. In fact, I am disappointed that I wasted my precious reading time on it....

the stories here carried through a Melbourne of my lifetime as a narrative of seasons, football, friends and family. A place I do not know, but could now wander through understanding the links of football club allegiance, the lost live music scene and the hidden scene of wonderful bars.

As a fellow Melbournian I looked forward to reading this account of our great metropolis. Sadly, Sophie Cunningham does not help the reader appreciate the many cultures and 'feelings' of Melbourne but rather just her own personal experience. What turns out is therefore is one angle of the almost five million accounts of people who in Melbourne yet it fails to be either personal, emotional or interesting (although there are lots of interesting tidbits and trivia that are some reward for your efforts). Cunningham only describes a Melbourne made up of elites who rarely venture to where the masses live... St Albans, Noble Park, Mordialloc, Greensborough, etc. I think she believes that Fitzroy is all Melbourne has to offer and everywhere else is an excursion (which ironically is typical of the inner north attitude). Missed opportunity with relentless, embarrassing name dropping on every page.

Totally loved this book. Have given several copies as gifts. It really maps the amazing city of

Melbourne! Highly recommend!

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