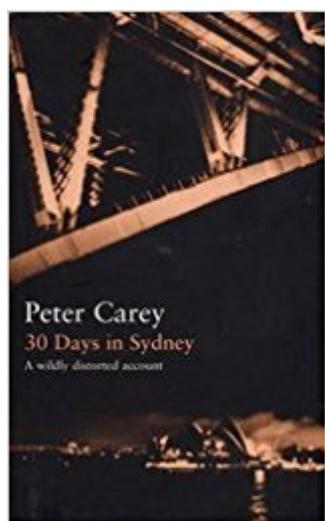


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# 30 Days In Sydney: The Writer And The City (The Writer & The City)



## Synopsis

After living in New York for ten years novelist Peter Carey returned home to Sydney with the idea of capturing its ebullient character via the four elements. 'I would never seek to define Manhattan by asking my New York friends for stories of Earth and Air and Fire and Water,' he writes, 'but that is exactly what was in my mind as I walked through immigration at Kingsford Smith International Airport.' But Carey's friends turn out to be anarchic characters each of whom has had his own very individual ways of story-telling. Carey draws the reader helplessly into a wild and wonderful journey of discovery and re-discovery. Reading this book is a very physical experience, as bracing as the famous Southerly buster that sometimes batters Sydney's beauteous shores. Famous visual extravaganzas such as Bondi Beach, the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge and the Blue Mountains all take on a strange new intensity when exposed to the penetrating gaze of Peter and his friends. "Thirty Days In Sydney" offers the reader a private glimpse behind the glittering facades and the venetian blinds. It will exhilarate and enchant all who visit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a fabulously idiosyncratic small masterpiece ... it's so good it takes your breath away."

--"Times""of London" (UK)"This is a hymn of praise to Sydneyand to its people. A little book, but an incredibly rich one." --"Scotland ""on Sunday "(UK)"It is a vintage performance. He makes you want to get on the next Qantas flight out of Heathrow." --"Evening Standard" (UK)"The writer in him gets

truly hooked, and so does the reader ... a book of fierce color and shape." --"New York Times"

Peter Carey is the author of seven highly acclaimed novels including the 1988 winner of the Booker Prize, OSCAR AND LUCINDA. His latest novel is TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG. He lives in New York with his wife Alison Summers and their two sons.

Peter Carey, a prolific and gifted writer, has written a short, insightful book that gives the reader not only a feel for the historical city of Sydney, but a clear view of the character and grit of Australians old and new. The depiction of a rugged sailing race fraught with danger tells as much about the character of Australian men as it does about the dangerous sport. An excellent read.

Great writer! It really takes me back to my childhood in Australia. I love this book. Beautiful choice of words. Interesting and humorous too.

Peter Carey's 30 Days In Sydney claims to present a wildly distorted account of a writer's return to a city he knows well. After ten years in New York, the author spends a month in the city he left behind and he records the experience. It's not at all distorted, except interestingly via an essential personal perspective. It's more than a travelogue, less than a memoir, certainly not a guidebook. The form is intriguing. It could pass as a commonplace book, the merely fleshed out notes of an individual's visit to his own past. And the form works well. The idea, it seems, is to communicate a feel for a place. The result is a collected experience where the personal rubs shoulders with the historical, where memory meets geography, where the past is partly lived again through recollection and the lives of others who themselves have moved on. And all of this takes place in less than sixty thousand words. Peter Carey's aim of using the ancient elements, fire, air, earth and water, as a thread to bind his impressions, however, simply does not work. The idea appears and then seems to be forgotten for some time. The earth is surely special in Australia, quite unlike anywhere else. And water is everywhere in Sydney, whose harbour is surely one of the world's most beautiful places. Fire certainly formed - and continues to form - this landscape: no Australian needs to be reminded of this. Air, however, did not seem to have its own angle, apart from the author having arrived by plane. Looking back now, perhaps the thread was there, despite the fact that at the time it seemed something of a complication. Themes apart, 30 Days In Sydney is a delightful read because of the characters that Peter Carey meets, depicts and describes, both the living and the dead, the contemporary and the historical. The mix is unique. The rawness is abrasive, but the sophistication

alongside is always breathtaking. Sydney is the kind of city where multiple cultures coexist. In that it is not unique. But it is also the largest city of a nation that has recently rediscovered an aboriginal identity that is being apologetically sanctified. It's a city where the bar at the opera probably has a poker machine. In Manly, the multi-class seaside suburb, a beautiful person with headphones and roller blades can flash past the open door of an amusement arcade while the police swing band, live in the open air, all in uniform and wearing shades, plays a Glen Miller selection. It's a place where you can be pushed off the sidewalk by a redneck right outside the most utterly twee of art galleries. Such contrasts are all there in Peter Carey's book.

Peter Carey hits a good number of solid beats in his *30 Days in Sydney: A Wildly Distorted Account*. The book is written from Carey's perspective as an expat Australian (he now lives in New York) so it has the detached yet attached feel of the writer both at home with his people and land and yet alienated. This perch enables Carey to visit old friends and landscapes and make new connections and interpretations about the Australian past, present and future. As a travel book in this genre, from this angle, Carey delivers what he promises as a writer.

Peter Carey spent 30 days in Sydney in 2000 and we readers are the lucky recipients of his account. He clearly loves Sydney and demonstrates this love in every page of this little volume. His love is contagious. For example, on viewing what he calls "the great Pacific Ocean," he writes: "It is one of a hundred places you will find in Sydney which take your breath away, and I, familiar but disoriented, was in a state of constant amazement that any metropolis could be so blessed." He also obviously cares deeply for his friends who still live there. About his friend Jack Ledoux he says: "I have lived in more than one house Jack has designed and would be a happy man if I could wake up in one tomorrow morning and live in it all my life. Every time I walk into one of his constructions, it makes me happy." What an extraordinary way to describe a friend! Mr. Carey sets out to describe this great city in terms of earth, air, fire and water. He does this by having several zany friends of his-- some of them friends of thirty years-- tell their stories. Any one of these characters ought to be found in a novel, at least one of Mr. Carey's. In his hands they become flesh and blood and as interesting as the city they describe. Good stuff jumps out on every page. Mr. Carey admits that he cannot drive over Sydney's famous bridge without having a panic attack, a fact that is particularly significant to me since I suffer from the same problem with high bridges. Then there is the delicious account of the word "Eternity" and the little man responsible for writing the word everywhere or anywhere he felt his God called him to write it. Carey's handling of the "Aborigine problem" is

particularly poignant in his discussion of Vicki, who was taken from her parents and raised by a white family. Carey, now living in New York, did not move to Sydney, the city his mother said was just like Liberace, until he was almost forty-- ". . . even then I carried in my baggage a typical Melbournian distrust of that vulgar crooked convict town." I for one would love to see him write similar books about both Melbourne and New York. So much good writing-- so many marvelous stories in 248 pages. A great read!

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