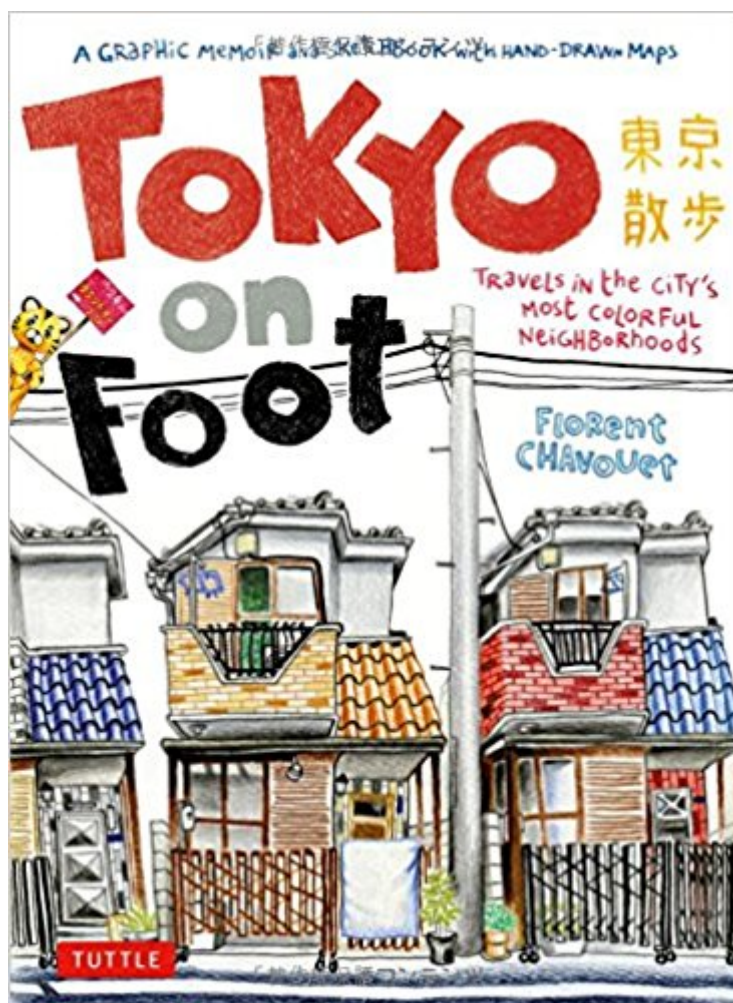


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Tokyo On Foot: Travels In The City's Most Colorful Neighborhoods



Synopsis

This prize-winning book is both an illustrated tour of a Tokyo rarely seen in Japan travel guides and an artist's warm, funny, visually rich, and always entertaining graphic memoir. Florent Chavouet, a young graphic artist, spent six months exploring Tokyo while his girlfriend interned at a company there. Each day he would set forth with a pouch full of color pencils and a sketchpad, and visit different neighborhoods. This stunning book records the city that he got to know during his adventures. It isn't the Tokyo of packaged tours and glossy guidebooks, but a grittier, vibrant place, full of ordinary people going about their daily lives and the scenes and activities that unfold on the streets of a bustling metropolis. Here you find business men and women, hipsters, students, grandmothers, shopkeepers, policemen, and other urban types and tribes in all manner of dress and hairstyles. A temple nestles among skyscrapers; the corner grocery anchors a diverse assortment of dwellings, cafes, and shops—often tangled in electric lines. The artist mixes styles and tags his pictures with wry comments and observations. Realistically rendered advertisements or posters of pop stars contrast with cartoon sketches of iconic objects or droll vignettes, like a housewife walking her pet pig, a Godzilla statue in a local park, and an urban fishing pond that charges 400 yen per half hour. This very personal guide to Tokyo is organized by neighborhood with hand-drawn maps that provide an overview of each neighborhood, but what really defines them is what caught the artist's eye and attracted his formidable drawing talent. Florent Chavouet begins his introduction by observing that, "Tokyo is said to be the most beautiful of ugly cities." With wit, a playful sense of humor, and the multicolor pencils of his kit, he sets aside the question of urban ugliness or beauty and captures the Japanese essence of a great city in this truly vital portrait.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I almost didn't pick up this book, with its dull "Tokyo on Foot" title ... which, in addition to being pretty generic, isn't even accurate--as we learn in several amusing anecdotes, this is actually "Tokyo on Bicycle"! However, the whimsical sketches on the front and back cover grabbed my attention, and as soon as I started flipping through the pages I was hooked. I lived in Japan for two years, one of them in Yokohama (so I am quite familiar with Tokyo), and this captured the experience of living in the Tokyo area perfectly: hunched over grannies, aggressive insects, old bicycles, expensive fruit, taxi drivers, police officers who seem to strive to be either your best friend or worst enemy, a mix of curiosity and suspicion toward the gaijin who actually are *living* in Japan as opposed to simply passing through as tourists, etc., etc. One of the only major omissions I can think of that a resident of Tokyo will notice is the absence of trains, subways, etc. (this is "Tokyo on Foot"/by bike, after all). Note, however, that this is not really the "tourist's Tokyo". The fact that this book starts off in nondescript Machiya (an area of Tokyo warranting only a few scant sentences even in the Japanese language version of Wikipedia) should be a clue. If you pick up this book hoping to see sketches of Meiji Shrine, the Imperial Palace, or Asakusa's Sensoji Temple, you will be sorely disappointed. Likewise, this is not the traditional culture connoisseur or otaku's guide to Tokyo--no tea ceremonies or kimono, and anime/manga make only a brief appearance.

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