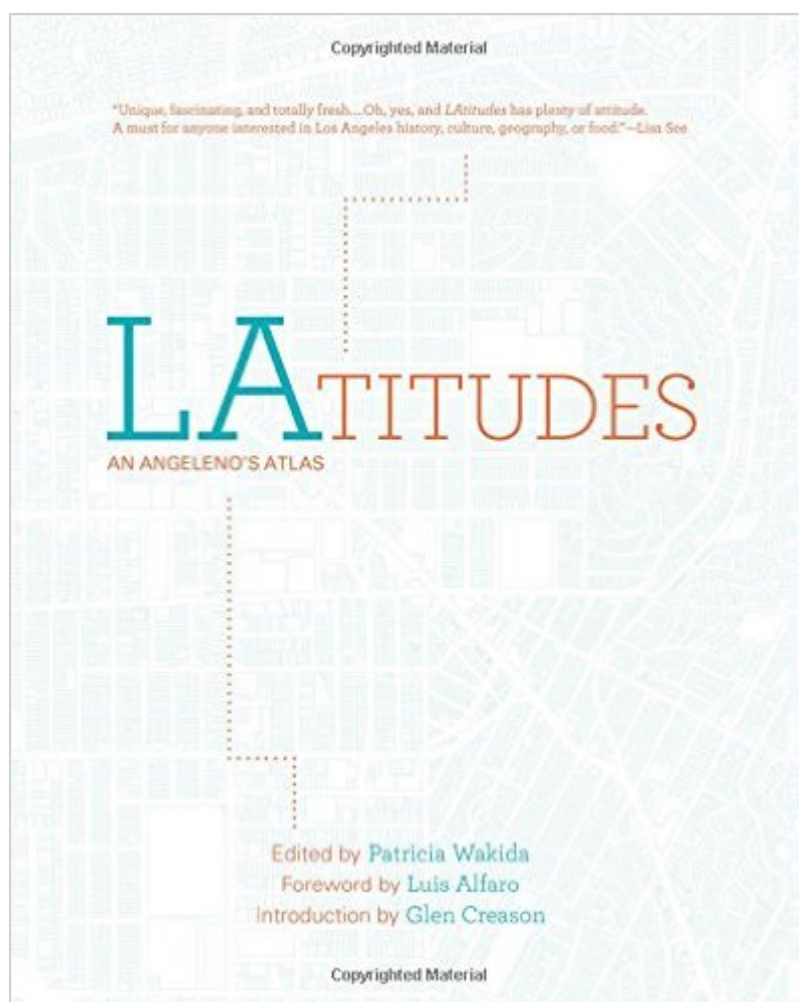


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LAtitudes: An Angeleno's Atlas



Synopsis

A transformative look at Los Angeles This literary and cartographic exploration of Los Angeles reorients our understanding of the city in highly imaginative ways. Illuminated by boldly conceived and artfully rendered maps and infographics, nineteen essays by LA's most exciting writers reveal complex histories and perspectives of a place notorious for superficiality. This chorus of voices explores wildly different subjects: Cindi Alvitre unveils the indigenous Tongva presence of the Los Angeles Basin; Michael Jaime-Becerra takes us into the smoky, spicy kitchens of a family taquero business in El Monte; Steve Graves traces the cowboy-and-spacemen-themed landscapes of the San Fernando Valley. Overlooked sites and phenomena become apparent: LGBT churches and synagogues, a fabled "Cycleway," mustachioed golden carp, urban forests, lost buildings, ugly buildings. What has been ignored, such as environmental and social injustice, is addressed with powerful anger and elegiac sadness, and what has been maligned is reexamined with a sense of pride: the city's freeways, for example, take the shape of a dove when viewed from midair and pulsate with wailing blues, surf rock, and brassy banda. Inspired by other texts that combine literature and landscape, including Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City*, this book's juxtapositions make surprising connections and stir up undercurrents of truth. To all those who inhabit, love, or seek to understand Los Angeles, *LAitudes* gives meaning and reward.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I feel like I have waited for this book my whole life. For anyone who grew up in L.A., or lived in L.A., or for whatever reason loves L.A., this book is a heartfelt valentine to America's most fascinating

metropolis. It delves into architecture, history, geography, agriculture, the environment, and the tangled racial relations of the indigenous Native Americans, the Californios, the Anglo settlers, and the Xican@s, each of which left lasting, if not always evident, imprints on the city and who continue to mold it today. But *LAitudes* is not all serious -- there are whimsical chapters on the history of L.A. radio, sure to inspire sweet nostalgia; there is a detailed map of non-chain Mexican restaurants; and there is even a quick rundown of the urban flora unique to the city. *LAitudes* has something to interest everyone and certainly anyone who has the pleasure of reading this delightful book will experience a number of "ah ha" moments and a deeper appreciation of the L.A. we have lived and loved.

I found this book delightful the first time I held it in my hands and ran a finger over the cover: portions of it, like the title, are raised. Inside, the illustrations are often unexpected and almost always add to the essays. I don't often go to the city of LA because I don't particularly like cities. But LA is a hard place to stay away from. If I'm not driving to the airport, I'm taking the train and enjoying Union Station. I've watched shows in the city, gone to museums, even met friends for lunch in Chinatown. As a non-native, I found some of the essays to be especially enjoyable because they stretched my mind or set fire to my imagination--or both. In particular: Teddy Varno's "The Bovine Metropolis," Luis J. Rodriguez's "How Xican@s Are the Makeweight of Los Angeles's Past, Present, and Future Perspectives," and Charles Hood's "Orphans, Dwarfs, Strangers, and Monsters," an essay (you wouldn't guess this from the title) about trees. Unfortunately the quality of the essays isn't uniform. A couple of them wouldn't have passed muster in a college composition class. In addition, Heyday, the publisher, needs a copy editor with a better eye. Plenty of typos, and somebody should have caught the fact that a "mountain lion" and a "cougar" are the same animal. But on the whole I recommend this book and plan to buy several copies for Christmas presents. Oh yeah--and I love the shifting meanings of the title!

In general. Having New York and various European cities as models in my head, it actually cost me some time wrap my head around that this was a very different type of city, and that it needs to be appreciated on its own terms. One can easily get lost in the miles and miles of traffic-ridden freeways, endless strip malls and empty sidewalks. Getting to appreciate what LA has to offer takes a real effort and it reveals itself slowly. Getting beyond clichés about "there there" and "no history", you can see that LA, and California in general, do not have a long history in terms of written documentation, but there most certainly is a unique, rich and diverse historical heritage

that shaped the region into what it is. This book compiles essays from writers with different backgrounds that address widely different topics that are beyond the clichéd narratives of Junipero Serra's missions, the Gold Rush, etc. Each essay is approximately 10 pages long and is, at least in part, based on a map showing a particular characteristic. Topics range from a description of the demographics, economy and ecology of pre-Columbian, colonial and Mexican greater LA basin, homesteading in the outer parts of what is now LA, descriptions of vegetation and the LA River, and descriptions of failed schemes and potential alternative histories they might have presented. Also included are essays that belie the idyllic stereotypical image sometimes presented, and show the struggles of various groups against the darker side of the city. This book is a good complement to Mike Davis's "City of Quartz", which also presents an alternative history of Los Angeles.

Learning so much about LA history and its' people.

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