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50 Cities Of The U.S.A.: Explore America's Cities With 50 Fact-filled Maps (The 50 States)



Synopsis

Explore skyscraper streets, museum miles, local food trucks and city parks of the United States of America and discover more than 2,000 facts that celebrate the people, culture, and diversity that have helped make America what it is today. From Anchorage to Washington D.C., take a trip through America's well-loved cities with this unique A-Z like no other, lavishly illustrated and annotated with key cultural icons, from famous people and inventions to events, food and monuments. Cities include Anchorage, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boise, Boston, Burlington, Charleston, Charlotte, Cheyenne, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Denver, Detroit, Hartford, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Newark, Newport, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, ME, Portland, OR, Rapid City, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Seattle, St. Louis, Tucson, Virginia Beach, Washington, D.C.

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Customer Reviews

"Readers will learn plenty of trivia-worthy details about these cities" - Publishers Weekly
"a trove of data nonetheless for tourists of both the active and armchair sorts." - Kirkus Reviews

Gabrielle Balkan comes from a family of book-loving teachers and is passionate about literacy, education, and good stories - just as her people taught her to be. She's made good on her degree in education by working in children's publishing and related education fields for some 15 years. Gabrielle grew up across from the Indiana State Fair and now lives in Brooklyn with her writer-husband, twins, and orange cat. Illustrator Sol Linero lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her clients include Scholastic, Oprah magazine, Jamie Oliver Magazine and Wired.

I've been an atlas hound ever since I could read, with Rand McNally World Facts & Maps (Annual) being my go to source prior to the internet. My wife, too, has a love of these type of "show and tell" books, and as eye-catching as this one was, we both were looking forward to browsing through it. The first thing I noticed is that while this book does skip a few states, they do thoroughly cover the 50 cities they've chosen. Because some states get short shrift, some of the geographically larger or more populated states have multiple cities represented, including my home state of Ohio, which in addition to Columbus, includes my hometown of Cleveland Ohio. (Really hard to leave out the city that is home to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.) The next thing I noticed is that the book is very loosely organized. Presumably this is aimed more at children, because it often looks like it was put together by a three-year-old. This can be good or bad, depending on your perspective. It's fun to read through descriptions of cities we know well (Nashville, New Orleans, Atlanta, Chicago, etc.) and compare our experiences and personal highlights to the authors'. Also, the native sons and daughters is interesting, mainly because most of them are quite obscure and hardly famous, although they all have done something interesting to merit attention. It's also nice to get some ideas of some other cities that we haven't visited, and this book has provided more than a few ideas for future road trips and vacations. The large format of the book makes it one for leaving out on the coffee table or somewhere in the den, and the loose structure encourages random reading and page flipping. More than once I have found myself looking at the book to kill a few minutes and ended up spending a half hour or more with it. Not

everyone will be enamored of the kid-centric feel of this book, but there's lots of information and all kinds of visuals to keep both the intellectual and the artist in the reader occupied. That's why we rate it at five stars.

This was a much bigger hit for the adults than the kids who looked through it. None of the kids (all good readers) who looked at it maintained their interest, but the adults perused it and discussed it in greater detail. My dad has been to almost all of the cities (missing 2 or 3 I think he said) and I've been to most of them, too. He enjoyed looking through it and remembering the cities. I found it interesting. I live in Nashville and I have to admit the recommended activities for a day were strange and had a somewhat odd bias, and not towards keeping kids entertained. Judging from the Nashville pages, for example, this is a really great hype from the local tourism board, but not especially activities that I most recommend for kids in my city. And I say that as someone who regularly goes to many of the museum venues mentioned and takes kids to them, but other sites tend to be of more interest to the kids especially. We are a museum attending family. It reads almost like some places paid for consideration to get mentioned. The activities for a day are definitely nearly impossible to do all in one day so that should be considered in the recommendations, too, especially with all of the geographic jumping around from place to place in traffic and trying to find parking, especially when you are unfamiliar with the city. And the highlighted restaurants with the long lines are not ideal for kids and are going to require longer than the allotted hour to visit. But there are interesting facts and I saw some things in other cities that interested me next time or when I finally visit them. So take it all with a grain of salt, I would say. It makes an interesting coffee table book (not that I own a coffee table) that got passed around during our eclipse party. My friend thought it would be fun especially for military families who have traveled or will travel to many of these locations, too. The design and layout is what makes it obviously a kid aimed book with a mish mash of info bits (like a DK book) and bright colors. It's not linear so that may bother some, but is standard for a lot of modern books like this. I enjoyed that element as a treasure finding book, one to spark interest but not to substitute for a good travel book or brochure for any of these cities, even for literate kids who like the pretty pictures in yes, a DK travel book. Overall, the random facts and figures for a city, some more general interest than others, will appeal to some and be off putting to others.

My expectations for Balkan and Linero's 50 Cities of the USA were unrealized. And both the writer and illustrator were at fault. Since the the

large 13x11 inch hardbound book is written for seven to ten year olds I looked it over with my grandson; he spent a little time with me talking about places that he had been or wanted to go, but he wasn't captivated. It's fifty cities, but not one from each state, so that was disappointing. Each city is given a large illustrated map (Linero), but each is crowded with not especially good illustrations. Since we were planning a day trip to Nashville (and I know it well), that's where we started. My grandson had no interest in the key facts offered (population, size, tallest building, etc.), but he was interested in the suggested activities for a day in Nashville. Twelve activities were listed, starting at 9 AM and allowing one hour for each activity including driving in city traffic to reach destinations across town. Breakfast at Pancake Pantry sounded good (despite the long lines), but that suggestion was followed by a recommendation to buy an astrology book at Parnassus Books. Really? For a third grader? This was followed by a walk in a state park, a visit to the Frist Museum, a lunch at a really busy place, and on to the Country Music Hall of Fame, Belle Meade, Centennial Park, and four more activities granny is too tired to even type! Really? I understand that no one is really expected to do everything in one day, but titling that section "Suggested Day Activities" would have been more helpful. Frankly, the author included too many less than interesting people, places, and activities; sometimes less is better.

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