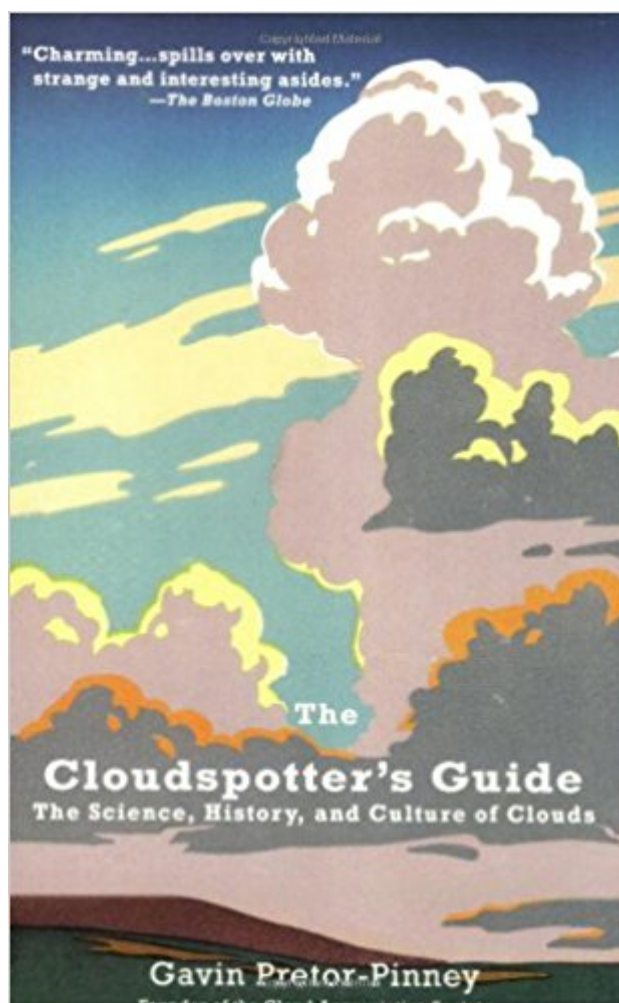


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The Cloudspotter's Guide: The Science, History, And Culture Of Clouds



Synopsis

Now in paperback: the runaway British bestseller that has cloudspotters everywhere looking up. Where do clouds come from? Why do they look the way they do? And why have they captured the imagination of timeless artists, Romantic poets, and every kid who's ever held a crayon? Veteran journalist and lifelong sky watcher Gavin Pretor-Pinney reveals everything there is to know about clouds, from history and science to art and pop culture. Cumulus, nimbostratus, and the dramatic and surfable Morning Glory cloud are just a few of the varieties explored in this smart, witty, and eclectic tour through the skies. Illustrated with striking photographs (including a new section in full-color) and line drawings featuring everything from classical paintings to lava lamps, The Cloudspotter's Guide will have enthusiasts, weather watchers, and the just plain curious floating on cloud nine.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With tongue firmly in cheek and more than a little irony, Pretor-Pinney, founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society, clears up any confusion readers may have about what separates a stratus from a cirrus from a cumulonimbus. He starts at the bottom—that is, at sea level—and discusses the types of clouds that form at each level in the atmosphere. The result is an amusing and remarkably informative jaunt through the heavenly vapors that draws on classical poetry, physics, geekery and pop culture. Despite this improbable mélange, Pretor-Pinney succeeds in fleshing out subtleties and making difficult concepts like convection, advection, condensation and atmospheric optics comprehensible to almost any reader. The author has included dozens of illustrations, cloud photos

(including one that looks like two cats dancing and another that resembles Thor hurling a lightning bolt) and diagrams showing the anatomy and lifecycles of clouds. Rounding out the volume are a chapter on the human effects on clouds and a narrative about the author's pursuit of the "Morning Glory," which he calls "the most spectacular cloud in the world." By mixing self-deprecating humor and hard science, Pretor-Pinney makes learning about clouds fun. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Charming...spills over with strange and interesting asides."--The Boston Globe
"This book will entice readers of every stripe."--The Seattle Times
"Lively, literate, and great fun to read."--Kirkus Reviews
From the Hardcover edition.

If you are interested enough to buy a book on clouds, you will love this book. It is a great introduction to the science of clouds, identifying clouds and appreciating clouds for themselves. The book is written with gentle British humor, but there is real substance in the text. It would have been nice to have color photos, but the black and white are sufficient to identifying the cloud type you will encounter (what can you expect for the low price). For myself, the Cloudspotter's Guide has been a way to enjoy the clouded sky in a thoughtful way that has enhanced my appreciation for the world around me. My car's moon roof is now a cloud roof, and open all the time. (And for those color photographs, buy the Cloud Collector's Handbook by the same author.)

Rare is the day that at least a little cloud does not cloud our lives, though except to say "that's a big cloud!" or "do you think it'll rain?" few people know much about clouds. This gem of a book fills a skyful absence of useful facts; rainbows and clouds may be the last elements of nature that humans failed to consign to a zoo, a can or a landfill. Even so, clouds may be an endangered species; years ago in the Sonoran Desert, clouds used to rain upon the just and the unjust on summer afternoons ... now those clouds seem to have gone, to be replaced by haboobs followed by drenching night deluges. Cumulus, Cirrus, the dramatic Morning Glory and wispy Carmen Miranda are among the clouds in this book. Glider pilots travel thousands of miles to surf the Morning Glory when it forms in the springtime of September and October over Burketown in Australia's northern Queensland. Personally, when flying a glider, I always looked for "Q's" which gave an upward lift like a fast elevator. (Q = Cumulus) Little did I realize the innocent desert mid-afternoon Q's were baby brothers of Cumulonimbus, the King of Clouds who can soar a dozen miles. These gods of the sky, which all

wise pilots politely skirt instead of slicing through, churn energy measured by multiples of atomic bomb explosions. Care for a challenge? Try to get a "great" picture of a Q. Perhaps instead, in the superb words of Pretor-Pinney, it is better to consider "... clouds are nature's poetry ... expressions of the atmosphere's moods that can be read like those of a person's countenance ... Clouds are for dreamers, and their contemplation benefits the soul." In Orillia, Canada, where I grew up, clouds may last a week at a time. In the desert, where I now live, clouds change as quickly as a politician's views on everything but clouds. Perhaps if politicians paid more attention to clouds and less to clods the world would be much better. Pretor-Pinney, co-founder of 'The Idler' magazine in England, provides a wonderful field of study that will greatly pleasure any person without inflicting harm on any living creature or artifact of nature. He also founded 'The Cloud Appreciation Society' of which my wife is a member (the last scientific organization I belonged to was 'The Flat Earth Society' -- now sadly defunct, though the Earth is much the same). This is a book, an idea and a cause to restore some sanity to this world that has gone mad, bad, sad and rad -- too rad.

Hands-down the greatest treatise on the natural history of clouds - how they get made, how to classify them. Cloud classification may seem silly at first blush, but the fact is that you actually do SEE more when you know what you're looking at. Author's wit is fantastic, making this a wonderful read. Lovely gift for observant friends (and even some not-so-observant ones).

LOVE this book. I've bought it several times and given away to friends, I love it that much. This purchase was to replace my copy. Unfortunately this book arrived with a deep slice/cut in the cover that cut through to the first couple of pages. Seems like someone opening a box in the distribution factory cut through it with a boxcutter and it wasn't caught in a quality check. :(This is disappointing because I take this book hiking/backpacking (for cloudspotting) and the cover will fall apart.

What a great and fun book. As the author said who hasn't, as a child, sat outside and looked at clouds and wondered if you could sit on those soft pillowy billows and marveled at the multitude of shapes (at least those of us who grew up where you could see the sky). This book reminds us as adults to do the same and rekindles that enjoyment again. The physics of clouds is well enough explained without being over the top. An enjoyable read on a fine summer day and yeah Gavin, who wants a boring cloudless sky, not me.

I found the book to be an enjoyable read- especially when read outside under the clouds. The

mixture of science, a little humor, plus some interesting historical references made for a fine overview of all the various cloud types. The latin names of all the cloud species might seem a little daunting as you enter the first chapter, but don't let that deter you from wading in. You'll certainly change your perspective about what you see in the skies from your first reading session. I looked at a print copy before I bought the kindle version and was afraid the pictures in the electronic version might be disappointing. They are not. Certainly the hardback will present higher quality photos but the kindle book graphics are still very instructive. I go back to the book with each change in the weather to reinforce what I have been learning and that has been fun, too. I think if you are at all interested in the weather around you, you will enjoy your study of this book.

Very informative, never covered these things in science class

Love this book! Clouds have always fascinated me, but I have never really understood how they work and what forces create and move them. Gavin Pretor-Pinney has managed to get every bit of information I have ever wanted to know into this book in a way that is entertaining and understandable. Since we have recently moved to the mountains, hardly a week goes by without ample opportunity to observe nearly every cloud in the book. I am glad I got the digital version so that I have it with me and can refer to it often.

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