



Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World's Most Revolutionary Structure

By Alastair Gordon

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Although airports are now best known for interminable waits at check-in counters, liquid restrictions for carry-on luggage, and humiliating shoe-removal rituals at security, they were once the backdrops for jet-setters who strutted, martinis in hand, through curvilinear terminals designed by Eero Saarinen. In the critically acclaimed *Naked Airport*, Alastair Gordon traces the cultural history of this defining institution from its origins in the muddy fields of flying machines to its frontline position in the struggle against international terrorism.

From global politics to action movies to the daily commute, Gordon shows how the airport has changed our sense of time, distance, and style, and ultimately the way cities are built and business is done. He introduces the people who shaped and were shaped by this place of sudden transition: pilots like Charles Lindbergh, architects like Le Corbusier, and political figures like Fiorello LaGuardia and Adolf Hitler. *Naked Airport* is a profoundly original history of a long-neglected yet central component of modern life.

“This charming history documents why airports have always been such intriguing places. Gordon wittily deconstructs air terminal architecture. . . . Here is a book with more than enough quirky details to last a long layover.”—*People*

“[A] splendid cultural history.”—*Atlantic Monthly*

“Gordon, an architecture and design critic, tells his story well, bringing to life some of the main characters and highlighting some of the important issues concerning urbanism and airports.”—Michael Roth, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Gordon provides a truly compelling account of how airports had over the course of three-quarters of a century become the locus of not only modern dreams but postmodern nightmares as well. Don’t leave home without it.”—Terence Riley, director of the Miami Art Museum

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

To today's air passenger—patiently removing his or her shoes for the third time that day, swallowing overpriced fast food or slumping on chairs of sadistically molded plastic—the world of travel depicted in Gordon's lively history will feel like a vanished Golden Age. In six chapters and an epilogue, Gordon, contributing editor for *House and Garden* and *Dwell* and author of *Weekend Utopia*, traces the evolution of the airport from the muddy fields of the 1910s to the "sterile concourses" of the '70s with an eclectic range of reference and an eye for detail. By the late '20s, high rollers could tour the capitals of Europe in two luxurious weeks, sunseekers could take flying boats from Miami to Havana in two hours and airports—from Buffalo to Berlin's Tempelhof—reflected widely varied strains of an optimistic and triumphant modernism. Much of this history is contained in the details of abandoned projects, and Gordon's unearthing of such grand schemes as "Toledo Tomorrow" add immeasurably to his narrative. Smoothly blending cultural and aesthetic history, Gordon's book is also helped by its 108 well chosen b&w illustrations and attractive design. Though the term "airport book" has other connotations, reading Gordon's book might just restore a little of air travel's vanished glamour... until the next checkpoint.

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From [Booklist](#)

Let others savor Humphrey Bogart's steely gaze as he bids farewell to Ingrid Bergman at the end of *Casablanca*: as a cultural historian, Gordon has eyes only for the airport in which this famous farewell takes place. But the tarmac drama of Bogart and Bergman provides only one small tableau in this panoramic chronicle of the evolution of the airport—from the muddy pastures of the 1920s to the high-tech nerve centers of the twenty-first century. Architects receive their due in these pages—including the nearly invisible, glass-and-concrete "naked airport" design of Munich's Oberwiesenfeld—but Gordon also understands how often politics and economics have displaced the architect in shaping the modern airport. (Hitler successfully turned ugly ideology into the rigid monumentalism of Berlin's Tempelhof Airport.) And, in a sophisticated analysis that anticipates his 9/11 conclusion, Gordon recounts how the terrorist attacks and hijackings of the 1960s and 1970s turned airports into a fiercely contested battle zone. A cultural history linking the Wright Brothers of yesterday with the al-Qaeda cells of today will attract many appreciative readers. *Bryce Christensen*

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Review

"The genius of *Naked Airport* is its portrayal of how these way stations have changed from the muddy airfields of the 1920s to their heyday in the '60s and beyond. . . . In charting this evolution, Gordon has written the ideal book to bring with you on a long nonstop flight."

(*Time Out New York*)

"[An] interesting, informative book."

(Jonathan Yardley *Washington Post Book World*)

"This charming history documents why airports have always been such intriguing places. Gordon wittily deconstructs air terminal architecture. . . . Here is a book with more than enough quirky details to last a long layover."

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(Terence Riley, director of the Miami Art Museum)

“Captivating and informative . . . can be warmly recommended, both for its richness of detail and Gordon’s easy command of architectural style.”

(Geoff Dyer *Daily Telegraph* 2008-06-28)

“Gordon’s engaging history tells the story of how airports have changed—from the first muddy airfields transporting people into a new world of experience (the ‘20th-century version of sublime’), through their transformation into ‘symbols of progressive thinking and utopian planning,’ and their sad decline into ‘an allegory for all that was dehumanizing in modern life.’”

(*Guardian Review* 2008-07-19)

"Brilliant."

(*New Statesman* 2008-09-25)

"A sophisticated analysis [that will] attract many readers."

(*Booklist*)

"An epic story."

(*The Boston Globe*)

"*Naked Airport* is as exhilarating as it is literate and informative."

(John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*)

"Splendid perspective..."--*Desert Morning News*

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"Alastair Gordon's breezy, engaging new book *Naked Airport* . . . ingeniously traces the development of airport architecture."

(The New York Observer)

"Gordon's lively history [is written] with an eclectic range of reference and an eye for detail . . . smoothly blending cultural and aesthetic history."

(Publishers Weekly)

"Taxi-ing smoothly between architecture, planning and social history, Gordon explains how the soar-and-crash record of the airport as icon mirrors the rise and fall of technology-driven optimism."

(Independent (UK))

"A richly illustrated and highly readable account of airport design as a social phenomenon."

(Air & Space Magazine)

"*NakedAirport* racks up elite-status frequent-flier miles as it ranges across airports on every continent."

(Bookforum)

"Gordon's prose is deft and witty. . . . *NakedAirport* elegantly traces the development of air travel by positioning the airport as a metaphor for our relationship to history and the rest of the world, capturing both the excitement and the anxiety of modern flight."

(MSNBC)

"A fascinating and accessible survey of airport design."

(Architecture Boston)

"An important and engaging look at airports as typology."

(Frame Magazine)

"Gordon's compelling narrative shows how architecture is bound up with the rest of the world in a way that architectural histories too rarely do."

(The Architect's Newspaper)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Evans:

Typically the book Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World's Most Revolutionary Structure has a lot of information on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was written by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research prior to write this book. This book very easy to read you can get the point easily after reading this book.

Selma McDaniel:

The reason? Because this Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World's Most Revolutionary Structure is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will distress you with the secret this inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book possess such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I have been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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