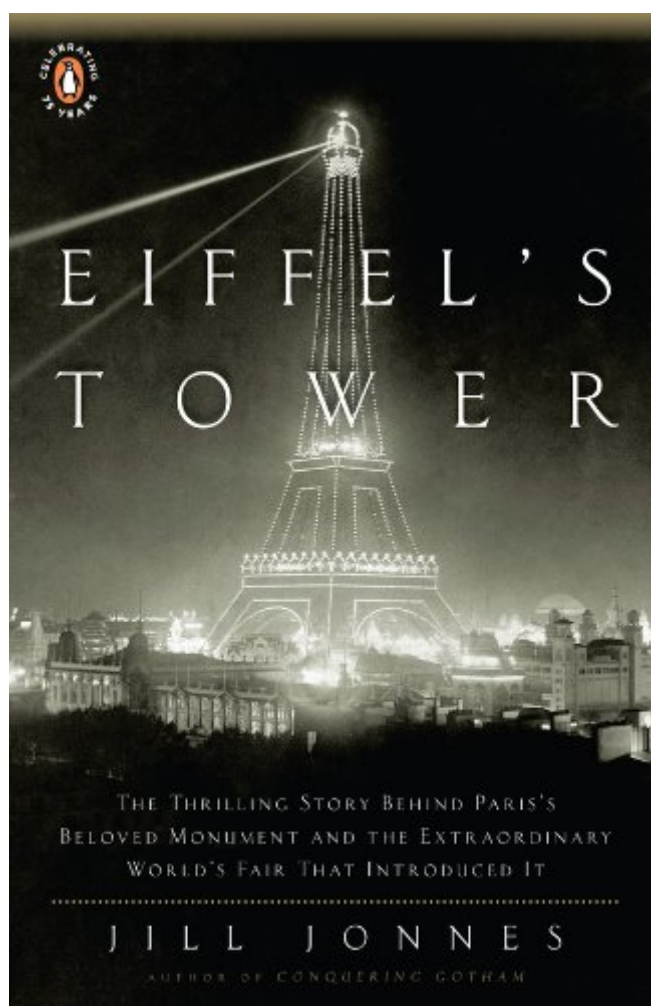


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Eiffel's Tower: The Thrilling Story Behind Paris's Beloved Monument And The Extraordinary World's Fair That Introduced It



Synopsis

The story of the world-famous monument and the extraordinary world it introduced it, by the author of *Conquering Gotham and Urban Forests* In this first general history of the Eiffel Tower in English, Jill Jonnes-acclaimed author of *Conquering Gotham*-offers an eye-opening look not only at the construction of one of the modern world's most iconic structures, but also the epochal event that surrounded its arrival as a wonder of the world. In this marvelously entertaining portrait of Belle Époque France, fear and loathing over Eiffel's brash design share the spotlight with the celebrities that made the 1889 Exposition Universelle an event to remember-including Buffalo Bill and his sharpshooter Annie Oakley, Thomas Edison, and artists Whistler, Gauguin, and van Gogh. Eiffel's Tower is a richly textured portrait of an era at the dawn of modernity, reveling in the limitless promise of the future. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

During the restoration of the Statue of Liberty some years ago, I supervised several museum projects relating to its history and construction, which attracted me to the life and work of the famous

French engineer, Gustave Eiffel. Everyone knows that his company designed and built the Eiffel Tower, but few know that they were also responsible for the internal support structure of America's most famous symbol. The builder of a number of remarkable railroad viaducts including the magnificent Garabit bridge, Eiffel immortalized himself with the unprecedented construction of the 300 meter tower, known to all the world as the Eiffel Tower. So, when any books appear on the market relating to Eiffel, I feel compelled to have it. Such was true when I came across Jill Jonnes' newest publication, "Eiffel's Tower," I bought it. And from the day it arrived as I perused the first few pages, I found it utterly irresistible. Confronted with the life of a very complex personality and a long list of masterful achievements as is the case with Eiffel, Jonnes sensibly keeps her focus on the building of the tower as the centerpiece of the 1889 Paris Exposition, but sets it in the context of the many other fascinating individuals whose lives and activities--at least for a time--revolved around the tower. As the tower gradually rises to the heavens in the face of mounting controversy and public criticism, it serves as a backdrop to a veritable who's who of characters, including Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, Thomas Alva Edison, Rosa Bonheur, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and James McNeill Whistler, whose various adventures are played out in its ever-extending shadow. Jonnes' well-researched account does not ignore the engineering aspects of the Tower's construction, such as the frustrating problems with the installation of the elevator system, but she knows the right moment to pull away and pick up on any one of the several story-lines that gradually evolve throughout the book. As history, it has the taste and feel of really good fiction. But don't expect a dry historical kind of ending, which in so many cases, merely . . . ends. "Eiffel's Tower" concludes in triumph and tragedy with the completion of the tower to world-wide praise and recognition on all sides (well, almost), followed by the Panama Canal disaster which fell heavily on the shoulders of Eiffel. Highly recommended.

This is a charming book. The Eiffel Tower in all its context. The tower was an engineering marvel, but it was created to be the big focus of a world exposition in Paris in 1889. So Ms. Jonnes tells us the story of that fair, too. It stars the plainspoken Buffalo Bill Cody and Annie Oakley and their troupe of genuine native Americans. There was also an artists' exposition. So Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh have important roles, together with Theo Van Gogh, who largely supported both of them. Fellow painter James Whistler was a crazy, arrogant Paris-based American. James Gordon Bennett was a very flashy newspaper magnate who started a Parisian edition of his New York Herald. The top brass at the Otis Elevator Company have starring roles as well. Thomas Edison's new phonograph was a major hit at the fair, and the fair

was a major step forward in his own success. These threads are all handled masterfully. Various readers might prefer more of this and less of that. I could have done with more on the finances of the tower and the fair (there's a long shot if there ever was one); also a soupçon more as to the actual construction. But you certainly get a better idea of the construction than Ambrose gives you in his book about the railroad (but less than Ed Berenson gives you in his fine book about the Statue of Liberty). You'll probably want to read more about Annie Oakley after this. What a wonderful person. She grew up in Ohio, nothing to do with the wild west. She was just a crack shot. Her ability was highly regarded among the upper classes of the day, and went a long way toward winning Paris over to the whole Wild West show and the fair in general. Cody made gobs of money with his show (which toured all over Europe and America), but blew it all in real estate ventures out west. A true entrepreneur and idealist.

I loved this book because I learned so many interesting things in it. Although it is ostensibly about the building of the Eiffel Tower, which is why I bought it, I cannot imagine reading so much about Buffalo Bill or Annie Oakley under any other circumstances. The reason I gave the book four stars instead of five is because the author tries to cover so much ground that there are long swaths of narrative that have nothing to do with the Eiffel Tower. In fact, I'm sure that is why the title is so unwieldy-- nobody could quite figure out what would best describe the contents. I'm not sure how the book would have turned out if she had written just about the Eiffel Tower. Maybe not as interesting. The esthetics of the Eiffel Tower and Buffalo Bill/Annie Oakley are so wildly divergent that one experiences a feeling of whiplash. But it's a good read if you're interested in the artists, writers, politics and manners of the day. Having said all that, I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to read a good, true yarn about things that happened not all that long ago. My father was born just six years after the tower was completed.

I enjoyed this book very much. It tells the story of the building of the Eiffel Tower, a landmark that I never appreciated until I stood in front of it. She also weaves in the lives of some very famous people and well known artists that really make more interesting the book interesting. That era in Paris was fascinating and the Expo made it all the more rich. I love Paris and find it to be an amazing city so I thought this book was very good read.

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