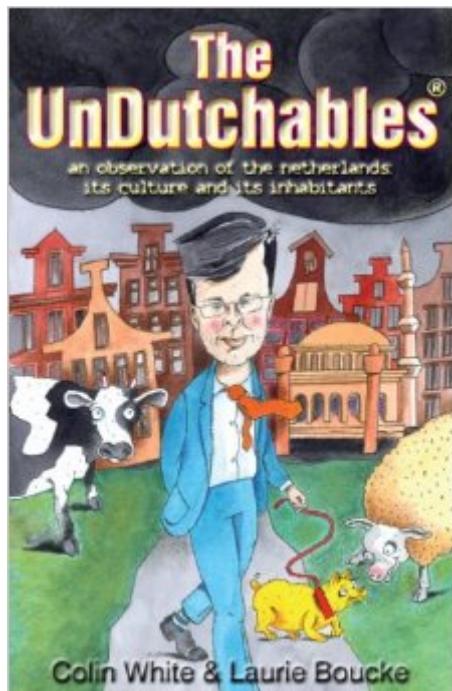


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The UnDutchables: An Observation Of The Netherlands, Its Culture And Its Inhabitants



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Being Dutch and not having lived there for 25 years, I had to get this book when I heard of it. It was money well spend. I laughed so hard sometimes that I cried. I bought a copy for my mother who still lives in the Netherlands, she didn't think it was very funny, but I told her that the truth hurts sometimes. I still go back "home" on a regular basis with my family and after reading this book I look at my fellow Dutchmen through different glasses. My husband is American, he read the book and says that he sees some of those things in me, so even after 25 years I'm still Dutch and proud of it. The book is great fun, but you have to have a sense of humor and take it with a grain of salt. I recommend the book to anyone who is Dutch or who knows someone Dutch.

Two days ago, I returned from my 4th trip to the Netherlands in the last year. My boyfriend is Dutch, and while I was there, one of his friends gave me this book. I laughed so hard I nearly cried (especially with the part about Dutch toilets-how true it is!). My Dutch friends are always telling me, "If it ain't Dutch, it ain't much!" and even they found this book to be an almost completely accurate portrayal of themselves and their society. After spending as much time there as I have, I can tell you honestly that the Dutch are a very unique people, but incredibly endearing as well. Their idiosyncrasies will grow on you, and this book uncovers them all!

I read this book when a professor lent it to one of my classmates. I made the mistake of paging through it in class, and I nearly gagged trying not to laugh out loud. I am Michigan Dutch; there is an entire section of the book devoted to us as well. The parts about being encouraged to marry another person of Dutch descent and constantly comparing ourselves to the Netherlands Dutch really hit home! Although I'd be lying if I said this book highlights the finer points of our culture, it definitely identifies some of our quirks and stereotypes that we laugh at ourselves. After all, every culture has its virtues and vices, and this book has some of both. I found the section on the Dutch bathroom to be the most hilarious. It illustrates that there are certain practices that are just entrenched in different cultures that are a little mysterious and a little silly, and sometimes you just have to stop and laugh at them a little. The authors of this book identified more than a few of those and exaggerated them for greater humor. Now, for what this book is not. It is definitely not a travel guide, guide for exchange students, or serious scholarly description. There are other great books out there for those purposes. In fact, this book is probably best enjoyed by people who already have some background knowledge about Dutch culture. I would have given it five stars but for some scattered factual errors -- once again, this isn't a textbook. If you're interested in Dutch culture, I'd recommend seeking out more information about painters, religion, politics, history, etc. in scholarly sources because this book functions better as a complement to a wider body of knowledge than a stand-alone, authoritative description. The bottom line: this book is a lot of fun if you read it with a sense of humor and a grain of salt!

I lived in the Netherlands for a few years (in Leiden) and found this book to be an essential in surviving there as a foreigner! The Dutch are extremely friendly and hospitable, but take some getting used to as I'm sure my odd American characteristics bewildered them as well. (Example: The Dutch do not pepper their sentences with words such as, "great, "awesome, WOW...") The book explains every bewildering characteristic of this strange and fascinating country from the weather to the pot to the Red Light District to the lack of seasoning in the cuisine. The Dutch are a proud people and every reason to be so. They live in one of the most beautiful and liberal countries in the world. Now if only the sun would shine more...

I was somewhat taken by surprise by the high marks my compatriots (i.e. other Dutch people) awarded this engaging little book. While as Dutch we generally downplay our own importance, it is my experience that we usually do not particularly appreciate other people doing the same.

Therefore, I would have expected the grapes more sour than they appear to be. Many observations are very true, even when they're extrapolated for comic effect. The treatment of children is a constant source of bewilderment to foreigners, for example (and has been for a long time; I have read 18th-century travel accounts that are equally astonished). Likewise, our obsession with speed-skating is difficult to carry across to other nations. However, I feel there are two things that need some comment. First, *The Undutchables* is mainly about life in Amsterdam. Particularly the description of Dutch houses is typical to Amsterdam and does not necessarily hold true for other cities and certainly not for the countryside. Secondly, many of the observations can mainly and sometimes exclusively be attributed to the older generations. The one-extremely-small-cookie-per-coffee-session ritual, for example, is virtually non-existent among those under forty (maybe even fifty) years of age. Likewise, modern Dutch are a lot freer with money than they were two generations ago: a fact reflected in the strong decrease in saving. All in all, a slightly biased book of sharp observation at which even the Dutch themselves may laugh, sometimes wholehearted, but sometimes also like 'a farmer with a sore tooth'.

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