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# Subwayland: Adventures In The World Beneath New York



## Synopsis

Since the doors of the first subway train opened in 1904, New Yorkers and tourists alike have been fascinated, amused, amazed, repelled and bewildered by the world-within-a-world that lies beneath the city. Now, as the subway celebrates its centennial anniversary, the creator of The New York Times's award-winning "Tunnel Vision" column leads us on an extended tour of this storied subterranean land, revealing:

- \* Its inhabitants: the Tango Man, the traveling magician, Mayor Bloomberg
- \* Its wildlife: the subway-riding pigeons, the Fulton Street cat, the blind mules
- \* Its customs, taboos and secret histories: door blocking, leg spreading, pole hugging, even, yes, token sucking
- \* Its government: the sheriff of Grand Central, the Ethel Merman of the shuttle, the motorman who drove the last No. 1 train beneath the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001

Tips for the first-time traveler: how to get a seat, how to get a date, the fine art of "pre-walking"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Love it, loathe it or simply view it as the most efficient way to get from Brooklyn to the Upper West Side, the New York City subway system is an urban wonder: running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Kennedy says it boasts 468 stations, 656 miles of passenger tracks and 6,400 cars, which might carry up to 200 passengers each. It also offers New Yorkers and visitors alike "the gift of proximity"—an "enforced neighborhood" that makes New York "more... cohesive than a city its size ever had a right to be." So argues Kennedy, author of the New York Times column "Tunnel Vision," in the introduction to this collection of three years of his musings on train buffs, poetically inspired

token booth operators, singles cars, token suckers, subway performers, track workers and underground fauna. Thematically organized into sections like "Underground Government" and "Wildlife," the travelogue of the world beneath the city offers a wealth of fascinating sketches, such as the A line's pigeon stowaways in Far Rockaway, the misanthropic comic at 53rd and Fifth and the man who built a replica of a motorman's cab in his bedroom ("When I show it to people, right away they know I'm not married," he says ruefully). Trivia abounds: the E train is the best train to sleep on; some of the subway's early construction was thanks to blind mules; 27 of the retired Redbird cars form an artificial reef off Delaware; and a recent Lost Property Unit auction offered 285 beepers, five violins and a box of tambourines. 7 b&w photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

œOn every page of this handsomely-written collection, Randy Kennedy has taught me something new. Everything I cherish about the subways is here: the underground community of solitude, the performers, the lunatics, the sinister desperadoes, the professionals who move us through those tunnels in speed and safety, along with the abiding mysteries. If these pieces don't get the remaining subwayphobes out of their stalled autos and into the city's greatest daily marvel, nothing will." - Pete Hamill "...to read his notes from the underground (and the elevated) is to know that Kennedy crafts city stories on a par with the marvelous Joseph Mitchell's....he discovers Gotham at its scrappiest--the most American place in America.. A"- Entertainment Weekly

"Subwayland", collated from the New York Times' column "Tunnel Vision" by Randy Kennedy over a period of several years, immediately brings to mind the word - MICROCOSM. As an itinerant contract programmer, I am currently a street-walking New Yorker - which to many would be a contradiction in terms, but here I am. So, I was fascinated and really thrilled to learn more about this world that exists a few levels below the streets that I see every weekday. The articles give a good perspective on how the subways enforce brotherhood and/or tolerance amongst New Yorkers, who represent a vast diversity of ethnic and monetary backgrounds. This is seen as central in building a New York state of mind, and contributes significantly to the "melting pot" simile that is almost synonymous with NYC. The book glorifies the subway as a world unto itself. A world that has developed its own cadences, sleep patterns, behaviours, characters, and identity. I read that pigeons ride the subway for food, and get off at the next stop. I was advised that the E train is the best for spending a homeless night of sleep, because it rides entirely underground, which makes it very desirable in winter. I learnt that hardcore subway buffs are called "foamers" because they tend

to foam at their mouths (!);that the lettered lines (E,A,G..) and the numbered lines (6,7..) actually descend from two different transit systems;about crimes like "token sucking" that are unique to the subway;about subway stations that double as schools;about monster vacuum-trains that suck muck off the tracks at the rate of 72,000 cfm and sound like the "end of the world

Subwayland: Adventures in the World Beneath New YorkAs a transplant to New York -- I'm not an immigrant, I am a Southerner who always dreamed of being here and riding the famous subway as if it were a normal thing, and since the moment I arrived, I have had a certain fascination with the subway, which I see as a carrier of dreams-- I have found this to be a most fascinating book. Right around the time I quit reading the New York Times, as much for etymological, grammatical, and usage errors, as for politics. Unfortunately, I quit reading the New York Times before this wonderful reporter began a column devoted to the subway.Fortunately, this wonderful reporter, Randy Kennedy, another New York transplant, from the South (okay, Texas is South/Southwest -- we share a lot of culture), has had the genius to compile his subway column articles in a beautiful book. This book is for those who are interested in the subway's history, as well as in the "culture" of the New York subway -- you see the history, the people who are in there, etc., through the eyes of someone who was not born to this, and, so, sees it with fresh eyes.I've lived in New York for 24 years (5 years ago, on a bus, after a weird incident that put all of the bus riders talking to each other(!), a woman who, by her accident, had been born on the Upper East Side, real proper, pronounced me a New Yorker -- a badge I've been wearing proudly on my forehead ever since), and I've been fascinated with the New York subway since I was 13 (I mean - you could run away from your parents very quickly if you lived in New York -- in my town, you would have to walk a while to the bus stop, then to the bus station, if you really wanted to get away, which, ultimately, is what I did)Coming to New York, I found a new freedom with the subway (if it doesn't go there, I probably never wanted to go there anyway).Subwayland tells me even more about my "secret crush" -- I'm not a subway fanatic, but I do harbor a serious place in my heart for our subway (I lived in Washington DC before I came here -- but the subway there does not hold a candle to our system -- there, they have cameras and can identify you if you do something wrong, but you have to pay per ride, and the pay depends on how far you ride, it is a Cinderella subway - if you are out past midnight, you will have to walk home-- and their subway does not go everywhere you dreams might carry you)Read this book. It will take you back, or take you to some other place, or into a dreamland. Regardless, the read is worth the price.

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