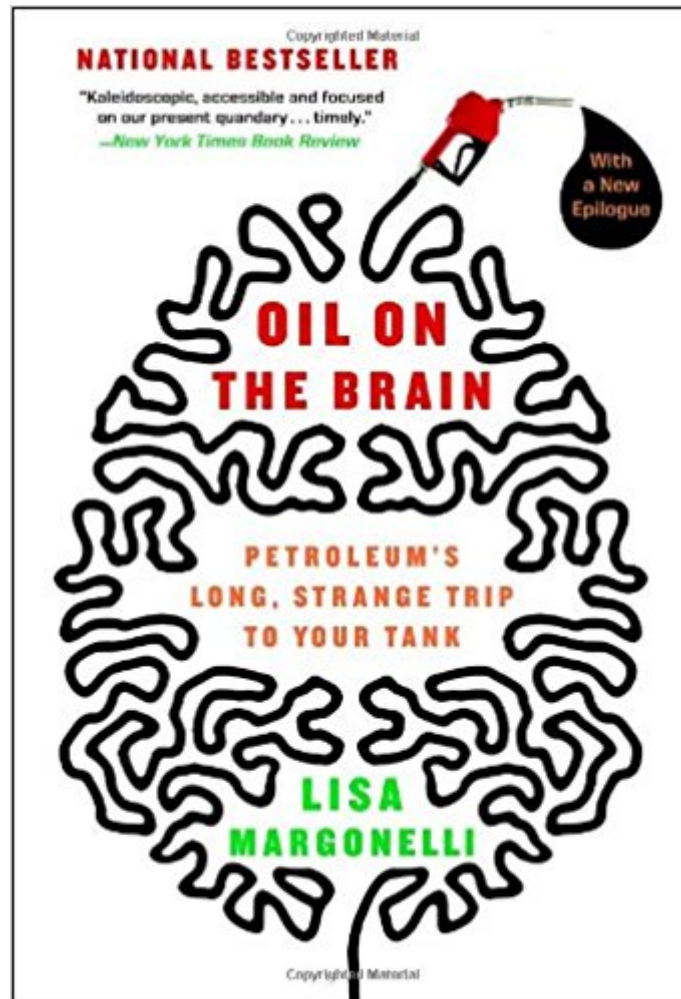


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Oil On The Brain: Petroleum's Long, Strange Trip To Your Tank



Synopsis

Oil on the Brain is a smart, surprisingly funny account of the oil industry—the people, economies, and pipelines that bring us petroleum, brilliantly illuminating a world we encounter every day. Americans buy ten thousand gallons of gasoline a second, without giving it much of a thought. Where does all this gas come from? Lisa Margonelli's desire to learn took her on a one-hundred thousand mile journey from her local gas station to oil fields half a world away. In search of the truth behind the myths, she wriggled her way into some of the most off-limits places on earth: the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, the New York Mercantile Exchange's crude oil market, oil fields from Venezuela, to Texas, to Chad, and even an Iranian oil platform where the United States fought a forgotten one-day battle. In a story by turns surreal and alarming, Margonelli meets lonely workers on a Texas drilling rig, an oil analyst who almost gave birth on the NYMEX trading floor, Chadian villagers who are said to wander the oil fields in the guise of lions, a Nigerian warlord who changed the world price of oil with a single cell phone call, and Shanghai bureaucrats who dream of creating a new Detroit. Deftly piecing together the mammoth economy of oil, Margonelli finds a series of stark warning signs for American drivers.

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Customer Reviews

For all its constant appearance in news of the business and political worlds, oil as an economic and chemically transformable commodity is remarkably little understood by the average person. Most of us have never seen a barrel of oil or an oil pipeline. Most of us have never watched oil being

cracked in a petrochemical plant to produce gasoline or any of the dozens of other byproducts that permeate modern life. Most of us don't even know how much oil is contained in a barrel, or how much gasoline can be derived from a barrel of black gold. At most, we pull up at the pump and open our gas caps and our wallets. With *OIL ON THE BRAIN*, author Lisa Margonelli opens the doors into perhaps the most geopolitically and environmentally important world of the 21st Century, the mostly invisible world of oil. Structurally, Ms. Margonelli starts at the familiar gas station pump and moves successively backwards through the distribution, production, and exploration chains. At the earliest stages of her exposition, most of which take place in the continental United States, she captures her subject matter through a personal prism - individuals who represents that particular stage in the process of bringing gasoline and heating oil to the end consumer. Thus, we learn about gas station profitability from Michael Gharib, owner of the Twin Peaks gas station in San Francisco, gasoline distributorship from the friendly folks at Coast Oil (owner David Mitchell, dispatcher Chris, and driver/hauler Roger), and refining from optimization manager Ken Cole at BP's plant in Carson, CA. Finally leaving California, we move on to lessons in drilling from fourth generation oilman C.D.

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