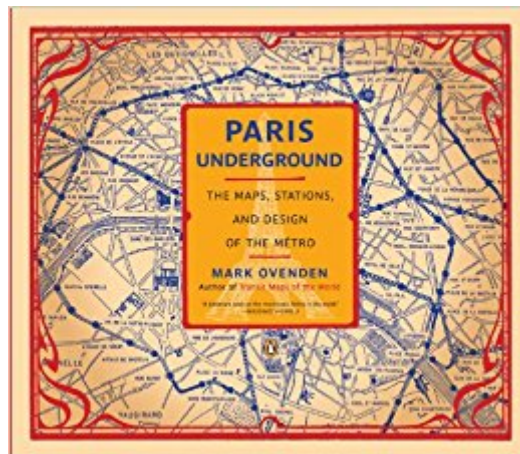




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# Paris Underground: The Maps, Stations, And Design Of The Metro



## Synopsis

The delectable follow up to *Transit Maps of the World* – with a French twist! A word-of-mouth sensation, *Transit Maps of the World* garnered rave reviews and offered delicious eye-candy to the many who devoured its lusciously designed pages. In *Paris Underground*, Mark Ovenden turns his attention to the famous Paris transit system with its inimitable Art Nouveau inspired stations and Art Deco signage. More than one thousand maps, diagrams, and photographs – historical and current – along with fascinating factual tidbits and enthusiastic, informed commentary embellish this gorgeous cultural history of the Métro's design and construction. *Transit* buffs, Francophiles, and anyone who appreciates beautiful design are sure to make *Paris Underground* the season's must-have volume. [Watch a Video](#)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Born in London in 1963, Mark Ovenden evinced an early fascination with trains and TV that has remained with him over the course of his life. Following college he pursued a number of positions in local government and on the radio promoting progressive attitudes towards gay issues before getting a full time job at BBC Radio 1 as a producer. In 1998 he joined MTV as a freelance Music Programmer, where he gave birth to another production company which went on to produce shows for Atlantic252. There Mark was later taken on as a presenter of a weekly record review show with Chris Coco and as their specialist programmes producer and later breakfast newsreader. When Atlantic252 closed down Mark moved to Ministry Of Sound where he helped set up their DAB station, Ibiza unit and later, as Head of Radio there, ran a popular FM version of the station. Mark

moved into consultancy after this working with Purple radio and the DRG. In 2002 while still working in his spare time on his book project he moved to a fledgling TV channel as Channel Manager. Mark Ovenden's *Metro Maps of the World* was published in November 2003 to great critical acclaim. It has since been re-written and updated for the American market and is now published by Penguin as *Transit Maps of the World*. Mark currently resides in Paris where he is researching his next book on a century of cartography of the Paris Metro Map. He is also working on several other book projects, a radio sit-com, and a TV travel show.

This book is somewhat of a rarity for these days, a visual feast of visuals, graphics, diagrams, and, yes, content. Printed on a slightly larger than usual format, and laid out in full color on semi-glossy, heavyweight paper, the book will adorn nearly any table on which it is laid. Although the book could be of interest to most anyone simply by virtue of its gorgeous design and layout, the volume really becomes a delight for those who have used the incredible Paris Metro System anytime in the past decades. The book consists primarily of variants of metro maps printed over the last (and current) century, and although includes some photos, is really focused on the representational diagrams of the metro in all its incarnations over the years. Of particular emphasis is the design and stylistic decisions that were made on each iteration of the map to increase clarity, improve speed of use, and also to represent the system in a pleasing and distinctive format. Some of these discussions, though written at a level of detail that will surprise non-cartographers, are fascinating explorations of the work and effort that goes into these kinds of maps, and this one in particular. The accompanying text also lays out in some detail the construction and extensions of the system built after Line 1, and serves to make this book something that can serve as a long-term exploration of the Metro. Pair this book up with Plotkin's *The Paris Metro: A Ticket to French History* (which has a more developed layout in text of each individual metro station across the entire 14 Lines), and you'll really have a grand exposition of the system. As most anyone who has used the Paris Metro can attest, this system is one of the technological marvels of the world. With millions of rides taken each week across 14 lines and nearly 400 stations, it is still rare (on weekdays) to ever have to wait more than five minutes at any station to get picked up. The stations are purposely designed to carve a history of France into the mind of the traveller, and the system makes a strong, but nearly subliminal, statement about the city itself. If you want to enjoy it when you're not there, this book is one of the best ways to do so.

The second edition of this book is a valuable addition to the English library on the Paris Metro.

There are books in French that deal with the rolling stock and the lines in more detail but this is a pretty comprehensive book. Like others, I am concerned that the map sizes are too small - after all - the real Metro buff is primarily interested in this aspect of the Metro and its evolution. Interestingly, the first edition of this book published by Capital Transport in hardback in the UK - *Paris Metro Style*, is very similar yet very different from this Penguin Paperback. Many of the page layouts in the hardback are different and to my mind, less crowded than the paperback which has too many figures too near the edge of the page. The hardback is available new from at about the same price as the paperback. With "Discover Paris by Metro", a RATP sanctioned guidebook - *Discover Paris by Metro*, in addition to whatever version of this book you chose, the armchair Metro enthusiast is well set for enjoyable reading.

Paris Underground is far more than a history of the famed Paris Métro. It's a fascinating piece of social and political history, mirroring the growth of Paris from the mid-19th c. to today. It takes a long look at logistics -- what it takes to move people in, through and around an increasingly crowded urban environment. And in addition, Paris Underground is a brilliant survey of French engineering and design. Author Mark Ovenden sees, and makes his readers see, how much one seemingly mundane element in an industrial culture -- in this case, a city transit system -- can reveal about the wider culture itself. One key theme is the fierce Parisian resistance to development, however practical, that might insult or degrade the aboveground environment. A hero of Métro design was the designer Hector Guimard, who created the celebrated, elegant Art Nouveau entranceways which are still so much a part of the Paris streetscape, and of our image of the City of Light. Another theme is Ovenden's tracing of the evolution of the maps, big and small, that help people link the surface geography of Paris with the comings and goings beneath its streets. What this cartographic history has to say about contemporary sensibility adds a philosophical dimension to a book that says it's only about a subway system.

This is an excellent and fully comprehensive of the historical events that led up to the building of the first metro line in Paris. It then details the steady implementation of the planned network covering the whole of central Paris and also deals with the structures and stations. Well written and very readable.

I was hoping for more pictures of the Metro today and layouts of the actual stations - kind of geeky. This is more a historical read, which is what is said. It is beautiful in that way, and nicely printed. But

it was not an in depth look at each of the major stations and their layout.

Mark Ovenden has tapped into all things great with this follow-up to his Transit Maps book. Just when I thought he couldn't get any closer to my heart, he came out with this gem, detailing everything about the Paris Underground. I love him all the more for it. These 2 books are a perfect gift for anybody who loves travel, transport and maps. BUY THEM, for others and especially for yourself.

This is a well-written book that traces the history of the Paris Metro through numerous official and unofficial system maps from inception to present. Although it tilts more towards graphic design, railfans will also find a wealth of information not available from other sources.

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