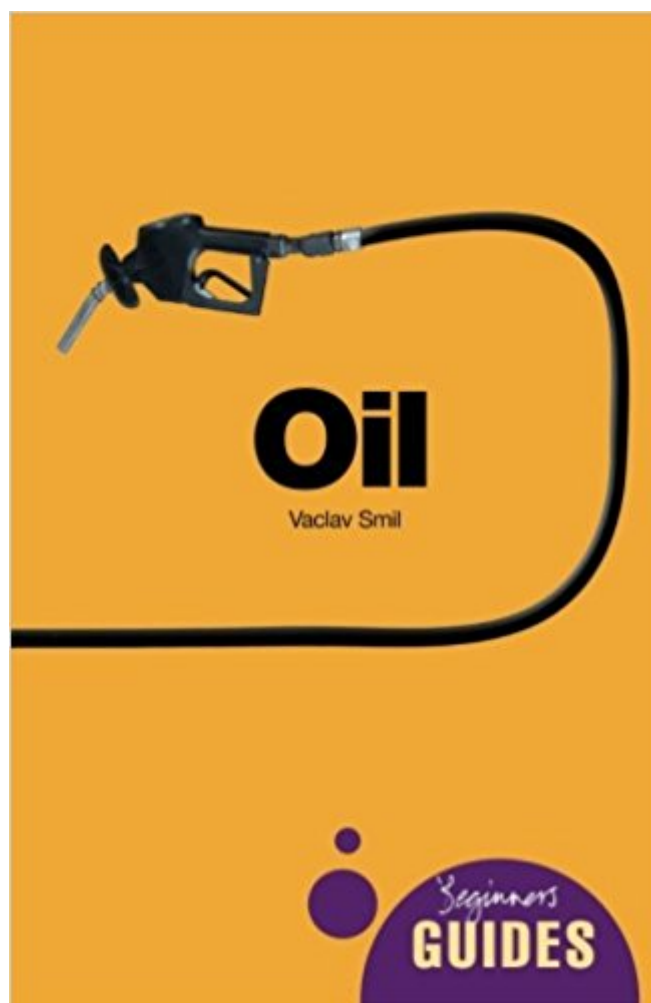


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Oil: A Beginner's Guide (Beginner's Guides)



Synopsis

Packed with fascinating facts and insight, this book will fuel dinner party debate, and provide readers with the science and politics behind the world's most controversial resource. Without oil, there would be no globalisation, no plastic, little transport, and a global political landscape that few would recognise. It is the lifeblood of the modern world, and humanity's dependence upon it looks set to continue for decades to come. In this captivating book, the author of the acclaimed *Energy: A Beginner's Guide*, Vaclav Smil, explains all matters related to the 'black stuff', from its discovery in the earth, right through to the political maelstrom that surrounds it today. Author Vaclav Smil is Distinguished Professor in the Faculty of Environment at the University of Manitoba, Canada. He has written over 10 books on energy and been a keynote speaker at both the World Economic Forum and the Global Roundtable on Climate Change. He is the first non-American to receive the American Association for the Advancement of Science Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology and is a Special Fellow of the Royal Society.

Book Information

Series: Beginner's Guides

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Oneworld Publications; Beginner's Guides edition (February 27, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1851685715

ISBN-13: 978-1851685714

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #296,467 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Fossil Fuels > Petroleum #124 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Energy & Mining > Oil & Energy #170 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Eastern Religions & Sacred Texts > Taoism

Customer Reviews

"At last, an accurate and readable book which effectively presents the whole range of issues which are required for an understanding of the complex global oil system." -- Peter Odell, Professor Emeritus of International Energy Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, and recipient of the 2006 OPEC Award
"Smil's knowledge is famously and fabulously encyclopedic." -- Professor Jeffrey D.

Sachs, Director, Earth Institute at Columbia University and author of *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*"Terrific. Smil has done it again, producing a book from which we can all create new insights, this time explaining oil production, consumption and the broader impacts it has upon society." -- Chris Mottershead, Distinguished Advisor Energy and the Environment, BP plc, and Director of the Carbon Trust in London"In a fluent, easy style [Smil] delves into the world of oil from its discovery on the ground through to its effect on prices at the petrol pumps, and to its impact on future generations." -- The Good Book Guide, May 2008

Author Vaclav Smil is Distinguished Professor in the Faculty of Environment at the University of Manitoba, Canada. He has written over 10 books on energy and been a keynote speaker at both the World Economic Forum and the Global Roundtable on Climate Change. He is the first non-American to receive the American Association for the Advancement of Science Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology and is a Special Fellow of the Royal Society.

This is an excellent primer on oil for people who want to be oil-literate. Here's what the book covers.- Oil's uses and benefits.- What oil is, how it's found, and where it's been found.- How oil is produced, transported and processed.- Oil economics and politics.- Oil-related social and environmental issues.- Oil-related energy security issues.- How long oil will last.This 202-page book contains 28 helpful charts and diagrams, plus many excellent sidebar essays. Highly recommended.

As an apology for giving this book three stars let me first say that I am by all means a layman when it comes to geological and oil terminology. While this book was excellent at describing the areas of sizeable oil deposits, the types of deposit, the types of oil and gas that are extracted from these geographical regions / types of areas, oftentimes I found Smil's technical argot and other such language a bit of a reach for me. That being said I skimmed through that which was utterly confusing for this non-technically experienced mind, and absorbed a great deal of knowledge surrounding the history of the industry and the methods of extracting, producing, and distributing petroleum based products. I will surely revisit this book after reading some non-technical works (they abound on), and will likely be able to glean a great deal more information than previously accessible. I would describe this book as "step 2," or "book 2" after visiting a text that would be more oriented to those working in finance or other non-technical fields that need a summary understanding of the industry.

Living in Houston, I am familiar with much of the oil and gas vernacular, but this book took much of what I have heard and created a story to encapsulate those phrases into a bigger picture. It didn't quite get into the details I was hoping to learn about the refining process, but the overview of it is fantastic. There is a lot of technical information that is useful to go deeper. I plan to read it a second time to better understand that.

Full of detailed information about all aspects of oil production and use, all tied in closely with human history and culture. Smil takes pains to explain the more complicated concepts and processes in a way that a layperson can understand, without oversimplifying, and the book has a very well organized structure.

The book is clearly labeled "a beginner's guide", and that's what it is --- a fairly quick-reading, high-level overview of an extremely complex subject. I think Smil does a creditable job in clarifying the importance of the oil industry in today's complex global economy. Without the oil and gas industry, there'd be no airlines, automobiles, trucks, buses, plastics...nor would there be much of a chemical industry. Smil describes the background and processes used in the entire oil industry, from exploration through production, transportation and ultimate delivery to the consumer. He includes background information about how hydrocarbons are created, the geology in which it is found, and its impact on modern society. The book is generally strong, although some controversial material in the first and last chapter may be subject to alternate interpretation, and given the creativity of the industry to innovate new methods for extracting previously unconsidered reserves, we may well see Smil revising his estimates of "how long will oil last" upwards (as will economists who predict doomsday scenarios for the oil industry).

Excellent, full of facts, trends and comparisons. Anyway, this definitely isn't "a beginner's guide". It is much more. I know something about the subject. I studied and absolved it at the Technical University.

I think that the book did a great job of explaining the oil business for someone who is a novice. It took the time to explain minute details that some books would have taken for granted. I recommend this book not only for the information but because it's a easy read and the cost is pretty reasonable.

Great read to open the door to the behemoth that is the oil industry.

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