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CHICAGOLAND FINAL

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What is a Moleskine?

Pronunciation: In Italian, it's *moh lay SKEEN*. But *mole-skin* works just fine for English speakers.

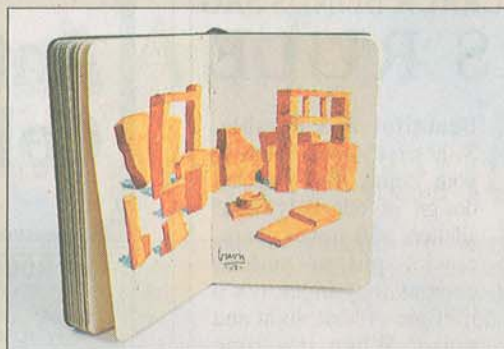
What it is: Brand name for smart-looking, little black (bound) notebooks and journals. Distinguished by their "moleskine" cover that feels smooth and leatherlike but is actually a special synthetic coating over cardboard.

Special features: A sewn-in pocket in the back (meant for stashing things). Elastic band closure. Built-in ribbon bookmark. Rounded corners. Acid-free paper.

Produced by: Moleskine Srl, based in Milan.

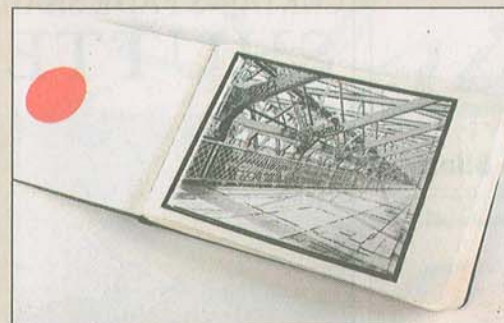
Sold at: Bookstores, specialty shops and online (www.amazon.com).

History: Originally a generic black notebook produced by any number of small French bookbinders in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Sold in



Architect/designer Michael Graves' Moleskin.

Parisian stationary shops, frequented by the avant-garde/artistic crowds. Artists and writers such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Ernest Hemingway and Andre Breton were believed to have used such notebooks. But it was British travel writer Bruce Chatwin (who died in 1989) who was best known for his attachment to his "moleskines." Chatwin even mourned the death of the



Photos from Detour

Photographer Vincent Gianni's Moleskin.

moleskine notebook in his 1987 book, "The Songlines," after learning that the last French publisher to make these little black books was shutting its doors.

A 1998 rebirth: A small Italian publisher starts producing the Moleskine again, turning it into a brand-name product.

Users: Still popular among creative thinkers, but also a big hit with techno-types, according to Maria Sebergondi, vice president of brand equity and communications for Moleskine.

New on the block: City Notebooks, little black Moleskine guidebooks of cities across the world. First Moleskines to contain words (maps, street guides). But still, plenty of blank pages, letting the user tell his/her own travel story. (A City Notebook for Chicago becomes available in August.) A related Moleskine travel blog is up and running, www.moleskinacity.com.

Exhibition: Detour runs through June 29 at the The Art Directors Club in New York. It's a special show of 70 one-of-a-kind Moleskine notebooks created by artists, designers, writers and other creative types from around the world (the likes of Michael Graves, Lou Reed, Cynthia Rowley, Renzo Piano). Open to the public. Call 212-643-1440 or see www.adcglobal.org.

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