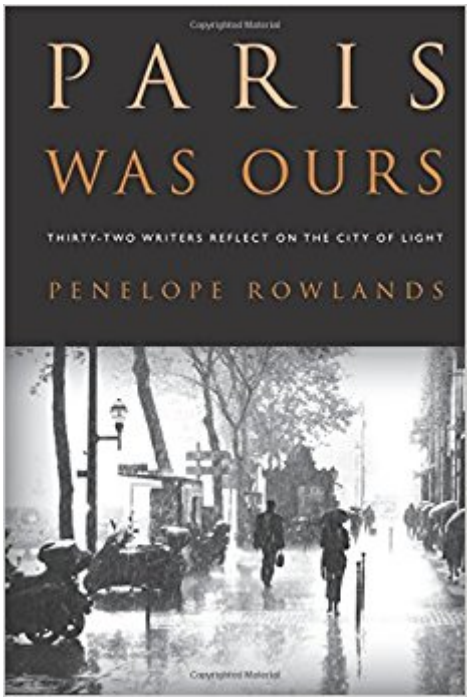
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Paris Was Ours



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Synopsis

Paris is Ã¢â ¬Å“the world capital of memory and desire,Ã¢â ¬Â• concludes one of the writers in this intimate and insightful collection of memoirs of the city. Living in Paris changed these writers forever. In thirty-two personal essays--more than half of which are here published for the first time--the writers describe how they were seduced by Paris and then began to see things differently. They came to write, to cook, to find love, to study, to raise children, to escape, or to live the way itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s done in French movies; they came from the United States, Canada, and England; from Iran, Iraq, and Cuba; and--a few--from other parts of France. And they stayed, not as tourists, but for a long time; some are still living there. They were outsiders who became insiders, who here share their observations and revelations. Some are well-known writers: Diane Johnson, David Sedaris, Judith Thurman, Joe Queenan, and Edmund White. Others may be lesser known but are no less passionate on the subject. Together, their reflections add up to an unusually perceptive and multifaceted portrait of a city that is entrancing, at times exasperating, but always fascinating. They remind us that Paris belongs to everyone it has touched, and to each in a different way.

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Customer Reviews

In original and previously published essays, 32 diverse writers share both exciting and depressing Paris moments. Diane Johnson, evaluating French stereotypes, was surprised that French hostesses serve store-bought entrees. Jeremy Mercer was taken in by the owner of the famous bookstore Shakespeare & Co., living there rent-free (downstairs Ã…â œwith the riffraff, and Janine di Giovanni saw French mothers hit their children to enforce good manners. In three of the

most substantial essays, Alicia Drake muses on the disconcerting ability of the French to accept human faults as she visits sites from which the Nazis, aided by French police, deported Jews to their deaths; Stacy Schiff finds that picking up the dry cleaning was less of a chore when done on ground Ben Franklin and John Adams trod before her; and Roxane Farmanfarmaian escaped revolutionary Iran for springtime in Paris. Many of the original pieces are wordy, mired in mundaneness, and lacking forceful editing by journalist Rowlands (A Dash of Daring: Carmel Snow and Her Life in Fashion, Arts and Letters), But overall this book should strike a chord in those harboring love/hate relationships with Paris and Parisians. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Rowlands compiles into one volume 32 works, about half of which have never been seen before, by different writers who relay their experiences of living in Paris. Although the contributors are as mixed a bag as the City of LightÃ¢â ¬â„¢s 20 arrondissements, they report universal similarities: In Paris, the customer is, if ever, only rarely Ã¢â ¬Å“right.Ã¢â ¬Â• The cityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s taunting, melancholy beauty is unsurpassed. And any moment passed in the Luxembourg Gardens can be considered time well spent. Rowlands does a seamless job of presenting a city as seen by so many eyes (those of David Sedaris, Stacey Schiff, and ZoÃƒÂ© ValdÃƒÂ©s, to name a few) that readers whoÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve visited will recognize their own memories, and those who havenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t will glean a globally in-depth portrait. (The piece by a Parisian single-mom, blogging about her homelessness, is particularly poignant.) Judith Thurman perhaps sums up the whole endeavor best when she writes that Ã¢â ¬Å“one of the greatest charms of having lived in Paris is the Proustian glamour of being able to claim that one did so.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Annie Bostrom

Having spent a year living in Paris with two school-aged children, I am glad to finally read a book about the city that does not simply sing its praises. The premise, in the form of many essays, is that for good, bad, or in-between, Paris affected the lives of the writers permanently. The essays are refreshing, honest, and, for the most part, well-written. We have been back for 7 months now, and people still greet me with "How wonderful it was for you to get to live in Paris for a year" or "I am so jealous" etc. This usually comes from people who have spent a week or three in the city, or lived there when younger without children. After feeling alone with my very mixed feelings for all of this time, I finally have some "friends". Friends who know what it is really like for ex-pats, and can articulate the contrast between the perception of Paris strangers often have, and the reality. Like anywhere else, Paris, especially for foreigners with children, is a mixed bag. This book, through its

diverse accounts of that city and its people brings that point home. Black, white, and shades of gray. A little magic at times, a lot of obstacles at others. As a whole, "Paris was Ours" brings together the many different experiences of people in a city that is often romanticized. The essays are funny, sad, informative, and for me, a little bit redemptive. I recommend it highly.

Purchased from .comThis most entertaining book was a compilation of 32 contributing essays by people who manged the impossible dream of living in Paris. I enjoyed all but one of the first hand experiences of grappling the culture shock that confronts expats trying to become a citizen of Paris. The only essay that was like reading a foreign language was written in half English and half French. When I finished reading it I had no idea of what I had just skimmed through.If becoming a Parisiene is this difficult I am surprised that anyone who was not born in France actually survived the many differences and hardships that one encounters in Paris (labor strikes, short and sporadic hours of operation for cafes, markets,etc.) and trying to deal with various shop owners who, until you get on their good side, can be very nasty and rude.Penelope Rowlands lived in Paris as a single mother with a 10 year old child who was constantly being yelled at (and worse)for unknowingly committing no-nos which are not tolerated by the French.Why do some endure all of these imposed barriers while others throw up their hands and exclaim Assez!This collection of essays was entertaining and explains the many nuances associated with living as an expat in the City of Light.

Love this book about Paris. We have always loved the City of Light, but when my sister married a Parisian, we felt completely out of tune with his customs, habits and, sometimes, his comments. Most books on Paris are light and delicious, making you long for the food and the culture, as you should. This book, however, gives a much more realistic look at the differences between Parisian culture and American culture. Sometimes it’s glamorous, and often it’s not. I truly appreciate our experiences there more and understand my brother-in-law much better. It’s nice to take away the glossy finish and understand the beauty and grit of the city.

I loved this book for the depth it achieves, through the many varied essays, in conjuring the elegant, saucy conundrum that is Paris. Whatever one takes away from the Parisian experience, clearly very many find it unforgettable. The essays are vivid and engaging overall, and reek of Paris in all its confounding glory. More than any other book or film, this one makes me want to go back, to drive and park crazy, to walk wide avenues and narrow alleys, to shop for cheese, to exercise my French at the hub of a universe of people who are impossibly lovely, droll, tough, tolerant, indifferent and

yet indignant about everything.

This book is an anthology of stories about people who have moved to Paris to live there. Experiences vary, and this is not a book by travel agents. The good, the bad, and the unpleasant are included. Very realistic if you are considering moving there to live, it will give you a better idea of situations than a travel book would give you.

As other reviewers have stated, "Paris Was Ours" is unique in that it doesn't just glorify the city, but also shows the day-to-day hardships faced by its residents. Rowlands writes: "Vacation syndrome is dangerously seductive. You actually believe that this magical place you have come to allows you to be the contented, stress-free person you really are. There's a lot of vacation syndrome in Paris." And the thirty-two stories that follow show that it's not all baguettes and eclairs in the City of Light. The city is expensive, it can be mean and in some cases, impossible to live comfortably. I really enjoyed some of the stories, while others left me a bit bored. However, I think all of the contributions were worthwhile and I certainly recommend reading this book if you love Paris.

Wonderful impressions of Paris written by folks who spent a good deal of time in Paris. Will be traveling to Paris soon so I wanted to read this book recommended by a sales lady in a little boutique in Cape Cod who also spent time in Paris and her trip had a lasting positive effect on her. I am sure my trip, while only short term, will allow me to write some inspirational thoughts. Took notes of places to visit that may not be in the tourist guides. Very special accounts of Paris by those who lived there. Loved the book.

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