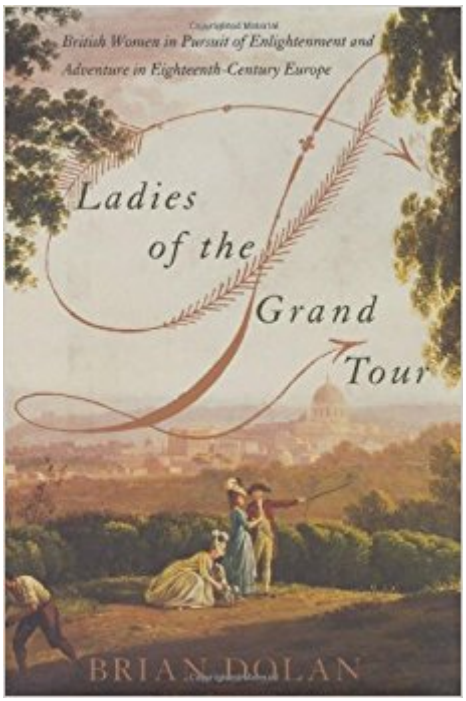
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Ladies Of The Grand Tour: British Women In Pursuit Of Enlightenment And Adventure In Eighteenth-Century Europe



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Synopsis

According to the 1747 publication The Art of Governing a Wife, women in Georgian England were to "lay up and save, look to the house, talk to few and take of all within." However, some women broke from these directives and took up the distinctly male privilege of traveling to the Continent to develop mind, spirit, and body.For many the Grand Tour -- often undertaken in great parades of coaches laden with servants, trunks, and furniture -- became an intellectual and romantic rite of passage. The landscape, health spas, salons, and social scene of Enlightenment Europe provided a wealth of glamorous, revolutionary, and therapeutic experiences from which many ladies returned "the best informed and most perfect creatures."

Book Information

Hardcover: 352 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins; 1 edition (November 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060185430

ISBN-13: 978-0060185435

Product Dimensions: 9.4 x 6.5 x 1.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #834,402 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #91 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Gender Studies > Women in History #1194 inÃ Â Books > Travel > Europe > General #3602 inÃ Â Books > History > World > Women in History

Customer Reviews

For upper-class Englishmen in the 18th century, travel on the Continent represented pretty much what it does for college students today a chance to learn a few things and have some unsupervised fun. For women of that era, however, it might represent an opportunity denied to them at home: freedom from a narrowly defined femininity, the chance to develop and exercise their intelligence, an escape from an abusive marriage or, occasionally, a career as a travel writer or political correspondent. As Dolan points out, however, these benefits came at some real cost, since Continental travel, even for the rich, was neither comfortable nor safe, and the woman who remained too long abroad risked condemnation at home as unpatriotic, unfeminine or unchaste. While some were decidedly the last, using a sojourn abroad to pursue an irregular sexual liaison or to conceal its results, many found in revolutionary Paris or benign Tuscany a personal and

intellectual liberty impossible in England and, like Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote home to say so. Although this book is richly detailed and immensely entertaining, it is a bit of a grab-bag in which women of no particular interest jostle for space with the genuinely significant. Still, it is hard to forget the otherwise obscure Elizabeth Webster, reluctant repatriate, being borne backwards over the Alps so that she would not lose sight of her beloved Italy until the last possible moment. 16 pages of color photos not seen by PW. (Nov. 16)Forecast: This entertaining volume will please students of women's history and of travel literature.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The notion of a grand tour of Europe as an essential rite of passage for aristocratic young Englishmen has been a historical given for generations. Dolan, a university lecturer, is more interested in a less common phenomenon: British women who traveled the Continent at a time when most aristocratic women's travels were narrowly constrained. Drawing on journals, letters, and diaries, Dolan explores the many goals those women sought in travel: "Education & Improvement," "Liberty & Independence," "Fashionable Society & Foreign Affairs," "Sea Breezes & Sanity," "Fine Art & Fashion," "Revelation & Revolution." Continental nations were hardly a feminist paradise, but traveling itself gave many women more freedom than they would have had at home, and writing about their travels gave many an opportunity to exercise their intelligence and define the characteristics of the Georgian lady of letters. Although it is not an essential acquisition, Ladies of the Grand Tour is thoroughly researched and gracefully written. Mary CarrollCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

Excellent condition and great read.

A good resource-- slightly dry but solid.

This charming book revives interest in these 18th-century travelers and female wits. I was delighted to find it on --gently used! Finding these treasures is almost as good as haunting a bookstore--almost!! The book's condition was quite good--a few topic sentences had been underlined in bright blue ink. So I imagined a girl in a private school. The book illustrates a period and a class not usually treated seriously (18th-century women travelers from England to the continent). Lady Holland's spaniel has the same name as my spaniel's--a coincidence (illustration following page 114).

This book wasn’t what I was expecting, but it is very well researched and clearly presented. I was hoping to be swept away with English Ladies on a Grand Tour escape to the Continent. Instead, this book is a documentary of women’s rights, and lack of, in Eighteenth Century England. As an avid reader of Georgian/Regency/Victorian literature (and well researched romance novels) many of the points in this book were not news to me. But it still made for interesting reading and would be especially helpful to anyone researching this topic.Because of my enjoyment in reading romantic fiction set in England during this time period, the chapter on "Fashionable Society and Foreign Affairs" was of particular interest to me. Lady Webster’s affair and real-life concealment of her daughter seemed more fantastical than a novel. But of course, real life can be stranger than fiction. Some of the diary entries throughout were fascinating and I will be looking for the journals of Lady Mary Coke.Favorite quote: "The Continent provided an escape from English laws and customs; a refuge from gossip and ostracism; it could even provide a higher standard of living in an alternative society." An interesting view of the advantages of heading abroad, and the need for some to escape England’s rigid society. Sixteen pages of lovely, color paintings and photographs are a treat!

I was predisposed to love this book. I just love the whole premise of spending months knee-deep in centuries-old letters and journals, trying to determine what drove women abroad in the 1700s. Reading old letters seems so romantic to me, and it saddens me that future generations are unlikely to find a bundle of old letters tied together with a silk ribbon. Nowadays, even if we do write letters, we rarely have the patience to write in the absorbing detail that people of the past did. But at least we can go back and read about them.I feel very much at home in the Georgian era of British history and so it wasn’t hard for me to acclimate myself to all the naming conventions of the aristocracy or the famous names of the period. I think, though, that if I were not as familiar with the history of the period, it would be difficult for me to remember who was who. Luckily, at the end of the book, Dolan includes a list with brief biography of the main figures he focuses on.For me, this book was very hit or miss, depending on the chapter. For example, I found the chapter on British women in France during the French Revolution fascinating. I can’t imagine ever wanting to stay and live in a country when it was going through such a terrifying process, and that people did and wrote about it is amazing to me. I also found it interesting that the French Revolution’s rallying cry of liberty, equality and fraternity really resonated with women of the period (including Mary Wollstonecraft) and had a considerable influence on the women’s rights movement. I did not find some of the other chapters quite as interesting, though. For example, the chapter on women’s salons wasn’t as great as I thought it would be.I also enjoyed learning about travel in the 18th century. It seems to have

consisted of many over-hyped sights, shady tour guides, questionable souvenirs and sometimes horrible hotel stays. I loved that sense of familiarity.When reading books of this type, I am of two minds about the women portrayed in them. Often, I am appalled by the powerlessness of their situations. By how often they are unhappy. By how naive they can be due to very limited life experiences. But then I "meet" women like Mary Wollstonecraft, who stayed in France throughout the revolution. Or Lady Holland who bounced back from a miserable first marriage to go through a scandalous divorce proceeding all so that she could marry her long-time lover. The courage and style some of these women had is inspiring.I really enjoyed this book and am glad I pulled it off my shelf. While I’m not sure it would appeal to all history lovers, I think those with a love of Georgian England would really enjoy it, as would those who want to see those first seeds of the feminist movement planted. While it was not what I’d call a riveting read, it was very enjoyable and I think I learned more about the period and its key female players by reading it.

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