

Reading and Movies

We carry a portable library on tour, but you may also be interested in the following books. Be sure to check out the blog portion of our website at www.experienceplus.com/blog for additional suggestions and book reviews.

Guidebooks

We recommend any of the standard, current guidebooks such as Fodor's, Frommer's, Lonely Planet, and Rick Steves. The regional Michelin "Green Guides" for the Loire, Provence, Burgundy, Corsica, and Dordogne are personal favorites and probably the best available sources for historical and geographical information. For encyclopedic history and art, the "Blue Guide" series of guidebooks are recommended. These guides are available in a number of editions by region or by city.

Literature on France

General France or multi-regions:

- *France Today* by John Ardagh. A popular introduction to present-day France. Ardagh addresses topics such as nouvelle cuisine, the role of education, and women in France.
- *Fragile Glory: A Portrait of France and the French* by Richard Bernstein. Observations on modern France over the past two decades by the former Paris bureau chief of the New York Times.
- *A Little Tour in France* by Henry James. A collection of magazine articles written in the 1880s. It's still available in one edition or another and describes many of the places we visit, especially in Provence and the Loire Valley.
- *The Sun King* by Nancy Mitford. A contemporary and popular introduction into the eccentricities of Louis XIV.
- *The Man Who Outshone the Sun King, A Life of Gleaming Opulence & Wretched Reversal in the Reign of Louis XIV* by Charles Drazin tells the story of the rise and fall of Nicolas Fouquet, builder of the Vaux-le-Vicomte chateaux south of Paris.
- *French or Foe?* by Polly Platt. An introduction to understanding the cultural quirks and daily life of the French.
- *Made in France* (2008). Author Laura Morelli's guide to finding the artisanal items that France is known for.
- Georges Simenon. If you are not familiar with this Belgian writer's famous mysteries featuring the classic Parisian detective "Maigret", now's the time to take him up. The Maigret mysteries are short, easy to read (good after a day on the bike or a walk the French countryside) and wonderfully descriptive. We can't think of any fiction writer who describes the French countryside and landscape better than Simenon!
- *Culture Shock – France* by Sally Adamson Taylor. This user's guide to French culture and society provides insights into understanding the French language, people and habits.
- *French Food: On the Table, On the Page, and in French Culture* edited by Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss. A fascinating introduction to the "first" nouvelle cuisine in 15th and 16th century France and its development through the 19th century.
- *The Road from the Past, Traveling through History in France* by Ina Caro. This unusual travelogue makes a great companion for traveling in Paris, southern France, the Dordogne and the Loire Valley. The book combines personal observation with large doses of well-presented history.
- *Wine and War: The French, the Nazis, and the Battle for France's Greatest Treasure* by Donald and Petie Kladstrup. The Kladstrups recount the dangerous and daring exploits of those who fought to keep France's greatest treasure out of the hands of the Nazis.
- *Eat Smart in France* by Ronnie Hess is a pocket size (handy for cyclists and travelers) culinary travel guide that includes the historical development of French cuisine, regional dishes, phrases and menu guide, recipes and more.

- Peter Mayle's master sleuth Sam Levitt caper series. *The Vintage Caper, The Marseille Caper, The Corsican Caper*.

Brittany and Normandy:

- *I'll Never be French (no matter what I do): Living in a Small Village in Brittany* by Mark Greenside. A humorous and gentle approach of the relocate to a foreign country genre told by an educator and political activist living in California until he visits the coast of Brittany and decides to stay. His friendship with his landlady not only assists him with the challenge of learning and blending into a new culture but also weaves into his personal development; although many of his cultural differences are due to lack of speaking the language of his new homeland.
- *Myths and Folk Tales of Celtic France: Legends and Romance of Brittany* by Lewis Spence. The author presents a collection of folklore and tradition of Brittany, one of the Celtic Nations.
- *The Oysters of Locmariaquer* by Eleanor Clark writes a story of the town of Locmariaquer located in Brittany known for its strong dedication to the production of Belon Oysters; *les plates* "the flat ones".
- *The Longest Day: The Classic Epic of D-Day* by Cornelius Ryan tells the history of the Allied Forces invasion of Normandy June 6, 1944 and is considered to be extremely well researched and a "must read".
- *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* by Ben Macintyre. A compelling spy story about Operation Fortitude and the deception of the exact location of the D-Day attack by the Allied Forces in their effort to halt Hitler.
- *The Unlikely Spy* by Daniel Silva. Silva's successful debut novel weaves an intriguing espionage suspense story of the invasion of Normandy.
- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr. A highly recommended read that beautifully tells the story of a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths cross at Saint-Malo, on the Brittany coast, during WWII.

Corsica:

- *Granite Island: A Portrait of Corsica* by Dorothy Carrington. Carrington began her lifelong quest to understand the history, society, and anthropology from her first visit in 1948. This fascinating island of 300,000 souls has been a part of France since 1768 but has always been independent. It's more Italian than French, and, indeed, more 17th century Genoese than Italian.
- *Rose Café: Love and War in Corsica* by John Hanson Mitchell. More than four decades after he lived and worked in Corsica, John Hanson Mitchell writes of his time living on the Mediterranean island at the age of twenty.
- *Mazzeri. Love and Death in Light and Shadow* by Peter Crawley (2013). In this novel the main character travels to Corsica to uncover his family's roots only to find that he is drawn into the history and legend of the island of Corsica and the Mazzeri.
- *The English Girl* by Daniel Silva (2013). A Silva thriller starring Gabriel Albon an art restorer and Israeli spy that keeps one turning the page to discover the fate of a woman that is kidnapped while vacationing on Corsica.

Dordogne:

- *At Home in France* by Ann Barry. Written by a single woman who moved from New York to a house in Carennac. She spends some time travelling the Dordogne region. A nice glimpse at the French through an American's eye.
- *Timeline* by Michael Crichton. Time travel transports you to the 14th century Dordogne River valley in southwestern France. Crichton takes you, breathlessly, through Dordogne's hills and forests with all the Middle Ages' intrigue and violence.

Loire Valley:

- *Following the Sun: A Bicycle Pilgrimage From Andalusia to the Hebrides* by John Hanson Mitchell. As a self-



proclaimed sun worshipper the author shares his travel journey tales from Spain to Scotland on his old Peugeot. His story is filled with history, archeology, lore, and the study of ancient sun worshipping cultures and his conversations with locals along the way. It includes his travels through the Loire Valley of France.

Paris:

- *Seven Ages of Paris* by historian Alistair Horne. Horne traces Paris through seven historical periods beginning with the 12th century, through the WWII occupation, and ending in 1969 in a style that demonstrates the excitement of the city.
- *Paris to the Moon* by Adam Gopnick. Those who wish to be travelers, not simply tourists, yearn for the kind of insights that author Adam Gopnick shares in his book of essays about Paris.
- *Almost French: Love and a New Life in Paris* by Sarah Turnbull. A refreshing twist of love-story and adjustment to cultural differences as the author, a native Australian, falls in love with a Parisian fellow and moves to Paris.
- *Paris the Novel* by Edward Rutherford. The author, well known for his historical novels tells the story of multiple generations of a few families in Paris.

Provence and Southern France:

- *Travels With a Donkey* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Widely available, this is Stevenson's personal essay on walking with a donkey in the Cévennes Mountains of Southern France – an area we pass through on our Cycling Provence Plus tour.
- *A Year in Provence & Toujours Provence*, and *Hotel Pastis* by Peter Mayle (as well as the videos based on his books). These and other Mayle books and films recount his forays into adopting a Provençal lifestyle near the Luberon Mountains of France's Provence. We'll cycle by the author's former house on our Provence tours.
- *Provence* by Lawrence Durrell. A personal essay on the region where Durrell spent the last years of his life. It's fun, readable, and laden with history.
- *Running in Place: Scenes from the South of France* by Nicolas Delbanco. A lovely, well-written book on Provence by an Englishman who falls in love with the region as a child. This literary version of Peter Mayle recounts his return to Provence with his family.
- *French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France* Richard Goodman. Like Mayle, Goodman spent a year living in Provence. This quick read recalls how his gardening brought him in touch with the region and its people.

Literature on Cycling

- *The Cyclist's Training Bible* by Joe Friel.
- *Miles from Nowhere* by Barbara Savage's. One of the best-written bicycle adventure stories ever.
- *Effective Cycling* by John Foresters. Tells you everything you could possibly need to know and more, including safety, maintenance, technique and the physiology of cycling.
- *Bicycling Magazine* regularly carries articles on training and technique. Visit your local library on a Sunday afternoon and peruse their collection.
- *The Tour de France Companion* by Bob Roll. If you're looking for a primer on Tour de France race strategy, the "races within the race", sprinters, the "King of the Mountain," and the under-25 racers, this book is for you.

Movies About or Set in France That We Have Enjoyed

- *Jean de Florette* and sequel *Manon of the Spring*, directed by Claude Berri, 1986. A classic tale of an outsider (Gerard Depardieu) who encounters greed and jealousy when he moves to a small town in Provence. The story continues in *Manon des Sources* (Manon of the Spring) as Manon (Emmanuelle Beart) has grown into a beautiful young shepherdess living in the idyllic Provençal countryside. She's determined to take revenge upon the men responsible for her father's strife.



- *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle* (sequel), directed by Yves Robert, 1990 and 1991 tells the warm and tender story of a young boy growing up in Marseille and vacationing in Provence with his family. The films are often described as gems that honor and celebrate life's simple joys.
- *French Kiss*, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, 1995. Kate (Meg Ryan) flies to France to confront her straying fiancé (Timothy Hutton). She falls for a crook (Kevin Kline) she meets on the plane who has his own reasons to pretend friendship. A light comedy with wonderful views of Nice, Cannes, Provence and Paris.
- *Babette's Feast*, directed by Gabriel Axel, 1987. Though set in Denmark, this movie is about eating, French style. Editorial review by Leonard Maltin: "Exquisite, delicately told tale of two beautiful young minister's daughters who pass up love and fame to remain in their small Danish village. They grow old, using religion as a substitute for living life. Their lives change when they take in Parisian refugee Audran - a woman with a special secret. Subtle, funny, deeply felt, and full of surprises, this instant masterpiece deserves its Best Foreign Film Academy Award. "
- *Chocolat*, directed by Lasse Hallström, 2000. This movie deserves to be seen. The development of the story is mastered with grace and experience: the elements, the scenario, the characters are the perfect products of the writer's imagination. A woman (Juliet Binoche) coming from far and foreign lands, carrying with her a luggage of esoteric knowledge earned in exotic lands, blends chocolate for the villagers of a small town (Flavigny-sur-Ozerain – in the Burgundy region of France).
- *Joyeux Noel* (2005), a movie inspired by a real-life event that depicts an unauthorized truce of the front line soldiers of World War I on Christmas Eve 1914. Watch this inspirational film to see how the truce negotiated by the French, German and Scottish leaders unfolds.
- *Amelie*, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and starring Audrey Tautou, 2002. The story of a shy young woman who finds a box full of childhood memories and returns it to its original owner. After seeing what happens to this person, she sets out on a journey to change the lives of others and in the process discovers who she really is. Now she has to decide if she has the courage to change her life too.
- *The Triplets of Belleville*, directed by Sylvain Chomet. An animated French treat for the eyes, ears, and mind. There's little dialogue, but ample whimsy and heart. It's the story of an orphaned boy who dreams of being a Tour de France champion. When his grandmother buys him his first bike, he's drawn into a whirlwind adventure on two wheels. Truly a unique film!
- *Paris, Je T'Aime (Paris, I Love You)*, 2006. This film features 18 shorts, all set in Paris and by various directors.
- *La Vie en Rose*, directed by Olivier Dahan and Marion Cotillard stars in this biographical film of French star Edith Piaf.
- *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007), directed by Julian Schnabel and starring Mathieu Amalric. This film is not so much about France, but it's one of the best French films we've seen.
- *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis (Welcome to the Sticks)* (2008), directed by Dany Boon. A hilarious comedy about a post office administrator who is transferred from Provence to Bergues – France's version of Siberia. He quickly learns why the locals say, "You cry twice in Bergues: first when you have to come here, and again when you have to leave." Incidentally, this film has now become the highest grossing French film of all time.
- *A Good Year* (2006), directed by Ridley Scott, with an international cast including Russell Crowe and Marion Cotillard. It is based on the 2004 novel of the same name by British author Peter Mayle about a British investment broker inherits his uncle's chateau and vineyard in Provence, where he spent much of his childhood. He discovers a new laid-back lifestyle as he tries to renovate the estate to be sold.
- *Midnight in Paris* (2011), a Woody Allen movie with Owen Wilson and Marion Cotillard. A romantic comedy about a family traveling to the French capital for business. The party includes a young engaged couple forced to confront the illusion that a life different from their own is better.
- *Bottle Shock* (2008), an entertaining movie based upon the "Judgment of Paris" – a blind wine tasting held in France in 1976 that exposed Parisians to California vintages and ended up putting Napa Valley on the map of the world's best-known wine regions.
- *Cycling with Molière* (2013), a highly praised Philippe Le Guay film in which a very popular TV star travels to the Ile de Re in an attempt to convince his friend who is a retired actor and now very much a recluse to star with him in a Molière film.
- *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (2014) A talented chef and his family leave India after personal loss from the



political unrest of their country and settle in France. Circumstances find them opening a restaurant across the street from the Michelin starred restaurant of Madame Mallory (Helen Mirren) and the competitiveness between the eateries begins.

- *Ventoux* (2015). A film from the Netherlands about four friends that reunite to cycle the iconic Mount Ventoux, 30 years after their first climb.

