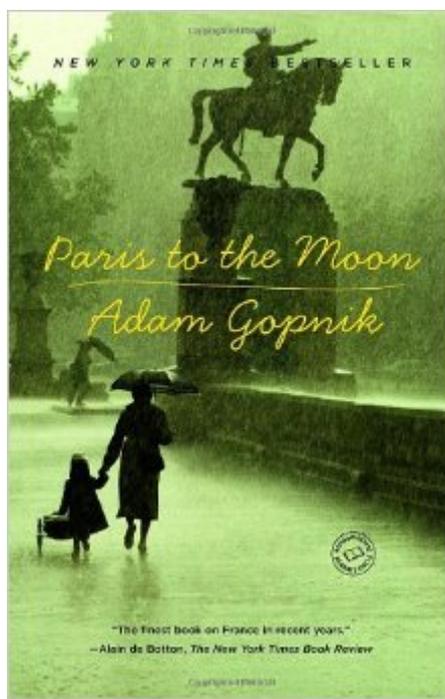


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Paris To The Moon



Synopsis

Paris. The name alone conjures images of chestnut-lined boulevards, sidewalk cafés, breathtaking façades around every corner--in short, an exquisite romanticism that has captured the American imagination for as long as there have been Americans. In 1995, Adam Gopnik, his wife, and their infant son left the familiar comforts and hassles of New York City for the urbane glamour of the City of Light. Gopnik is a longtime New Yorker writer, and the magazine has sent its writers to Paris for decades--but his was above all a personal pilgrimage to the place that had for so long been the undisputed capital of everything cultural and beautiful. It was also the opportunity to raise a child who would know what it was to romp in the Luxembourg Gardens, to enjoy a croque monsieur in a Left Bank café--a child (and perhaps a father, too) who would have a grasp of that Parisian sense of style we Americans find so elusive. So, in the grand tradition of the American abroad, Gopnik walked the paths of the Tuileries, enjoyed philosophical discussions at his local bistro, wrote as violet twilight fell on the arrondissements. Of course, as readers of Gopnik's beloved and award-winning "Paris Journals" in *The New Yorker* know, there was also the matter of raising a child and carrying on with day-to-day, not-so-fabled life. Evenings with French intellectuals preceded middle-of-the-night baby feedings; afternoons were filled with trips to the Musée d'Orsay and pinball games; weekday leftovers were eaten while three-star chefs debated a "culinary crisis." As Gopnik describes in this funny and tender book, the dual processes of navigating a foreign city and becoming a parent are not completely dissimilar journeys--both hold new routines, new languages, a new set of rules by which everyday life is lived. With singular wit and insight, Gopnik weaves the magical with the mundane in a wholly delightful, often hilarious look at what it was to be an American family man in Paris at the end of the twentieth century. "We went to Paris for a sentimental reeducation-I did anyway-even though the sentiments we were instructed in were not the ones we were expecting to learn, which I believe is why they call it an education."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is hilarious, erudite and amazingly enjoyable, making it the best piece of travel literature (but it's more *living* literature than travel literature, I think) I've ever read. It's full of insights on French culture -- cuisine, labor unions, childbirth and everything else -- and, more affectingly, thoughts on the bittersweet experience of watching a child grow and change. Gopnik, a New Yorker (the magazine as well as the city) writer known for his wit, chronicles in this book his years of living in Paris with his wife and young son. Sure, they enjoy an enviably plush lifestyle, with nothing to do but...well, observe all day. But the observations are worth the envy. Who else could describe the music (or muzak) inside French department stores so perfectly? Who else could describe the plight of the French garcon in his favorite restaurant with such humor and sadness? Most wonderful, though, is the tender portrait of Gopnik's growing young family. It reads like a love letter to his son and wife. He chronicles Luke's first experiences, and eventual assimilation, in Paris with the eye of a brilliant naturalist, the kind of eye parents always seem to have. Far from being indulgent, this tendency is charming and makes me want to get pregnant and expatriate immediately, just to get a whiff of what Gopnik has experienced. This book reads like a set of essays. Like a set of essays in the New Yorker. I have read some of the preceding (negative) reviews, and would like to emphasize that if you have never picked up a copy of the New Yorker, if you don't enjoy the New Yorker, etc., that you avoid this book. Bear in mind that Mr. Gopnik is a staff writer for the New Yorker, and he epitomizes their dry, observational, academic reference-laden prose style.

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